

Environmental Affairs Committee End of Year Report 2019-2020

Submitted by Emma Rollings: Voting Senator, Committee Chair

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Projects:

This section refers to projects undertaken by the committee during the 2019-2020 session.

A) The Fair Grounds Labyrinth:

- a) This project is a continuation of a construction project initiated by the previous Environmental Affairs Committee.¹ The labyrinth is intended to be a meditative greenspace for students in the former Fair Apartments lot. The initial timeline for the project was for construction to take place either during summer of 2019, possibly extending into the beginning of the fall semester. This timeline, due to reality and misjudgement, was scrapped. After an initial setback related to wet weather, the project was further delayed by miscommunication with Physical Plant, who were initially understood to be the ones to construct the labyrinth itself. It was erroneously expected that volunteers from Student Government could provide some of the labor. (As it turns out, students *not* employed in the Physical Plant cannot be used as labor.) The project was pushed back to the spring 2020 semester, as labor was apparently not available for the fall. Further delay occurred when the project was revisited by the campus planner, who discovered that Physical Plant did not possess the necessary equipment to adequately complete the project. Going forward:
 - i) Lori Shook is an invaluable resource. She helped secure a bid for Student Government, attached at the end of this report, for an outside contractor to complete the labyrinth. She will be the main contact for this project going forward.
 - ii) Funding: Previous environmental affairs chair Jared Kolok secured initial funding for the labyrinth, valued at approximately \$1000. The bid from the outside contractor is \$3,800. The committee explored co-sponsorship options to raise funds, but after social distancing measures were put in place that closed campus and halted other student government projects in response to COVID-19, funding became available from the general budget. At this point, the project is ready from a financial perspective.
 - iii) Next steps: The only portion of the project currently paid for is the landscape fabric with the outline of the labyrinth. Next, the bid must be accepted through Lori Shook. Once construction is underway, the committee recommends

¹<https://senate.truman.edu/files/2019/07/The-Environmental-Affairs-End-of-Year-Report-for-the-2018-2019-Student-Government-Term.pdf>

advertising/communication of the project to be directed towards academic departments, outdoor organizations (such as TruOutdoors and the Environmental Campus Organization), student wellness groups (such as Positive Peers), and Residence Life.

- b) Final thoughts: Due to inexperience on my part and a series of misunderstandings and miscalculations, this project took up a great deal of time in the fall semester. Communication with Physical Plant was, at times, hit or miss. Often, the expectation was that we were close to breaking ground, but one thing or another delayed the project. Going forward, my suggestion is to utilize campus planner Lori Shook as a valuable source of institutional expertise to get the project completed. Had I realized this sooner, we might not have had such delay and wasted effort.

B) Missouri State Parks Informational Brochure

- a) This project was conceived as an extension of a previous initiative to highlight greenspaces available to students around Kirksville and headed up by committee member Nick Dolson. Given that many students are from Kansas City and St. Louis and may be unfamiliar with a number of stellar Missouri state parks, the pamphlet was intended to give students an idea of what state parks could offer, as well as details about drive time and any potential costs.
 - i) After some consideration, it was determined that this brochure may be more useful for students in an online format, to be potentially posted during Earth Week and distributed to members of environmental and outdoor organizations on campus for their members. At this time, due to COVID19, Earth Week only occurred online and in concurrence with postings of other major student government events like elections. This could be a project for future committees to roll out in relation to greenspace initiatives on campus or for a future Earth Week or Sustainability Week.

C) Earth Week:

- a) Vision: The original vision for Earth Week this year was to capitalize on the committee's familiarity with policy organizations with an eye towards encouraging on-campus conversation about and engagement with environmental policy. At the same time, this differing focus was intended to allow the Sustainability Office to do the type of programming they do best and have traditionally focused on, which tends to be hands-on experiential activities related to waste-reduction and sustainable food activities. This approach seemed to work well, as it allowed us to offer complementary, rather than potentially competing or redundant, events. Our committee was also providing funding for stickers and poster advertisements.
- b) Events:
 - i) Panel on politics and the environment: working title "All Politics are Climate Politics":
 - (1) We secured speaker agreements from the Republican and Democratic Parties on campus, the local non-partisan Citizens' Climate Lobby Chapter, and Great Rivers Environmental Law Center. This discussion was not a debate, but an open forum for discussing different approaches

to climate policy and where common ground could be found. We would have questions prepared ahead of time for speakers and then open the panel for questions from audience members at the end.

- (2) Our partner on this project was the Global Issues Colloquium (main contact was Dr. Amber Johnson), and we were intending to utilize their advertising apparatus along with Earth week postings to advertise the event.
 - (3) The end of the event was to feature a postcard writing activity. We had price quotes from the Bad Acids print club on campus, postcard material selected, and a design from Caroline Lesch. Concerns were raised by Student Government's faculty and staff advisors about political affiliation issues, and the concerns were not resolved before the event was called off due to COVID-19.
- ii) *Atomic Homefront*, movie showing at Take Root:
 - (1) This is a documentary about the history of illegal radioactive waste disposal and ongoing environmental hazards related to it in St. Louis. The movie website for information and rental options is below.² Our committee selected this film as a way to communicate concrete and local environmental concerns relevant to the student population of Truman.
 - (2) The venue was to be provided by Take Root Cafe, and since it was completely free to the public, they allowed us to utilize their not-for-profit/educational policy, giving us access to their theater free of charge.
 - iii) Earth Week Festival:
 - (1) Our committee was intending to be present at the Earth Week Festival planned for Saturday of Earth Week. Michael Lakey led planning for this event. In order to promote native Missouri plants, our booth would have a "seed ball"³ activity which students could create to take with them. He was going to buy topsoil, red terra cotta clay, and black-eyed susan, Purple Coneflower, and Prairie blazing star seeds. He was going to print out about 150 copies with instructions on how to make native seed balls, and present them at our booth.
- c) Advertising:
 - i) Our committee was working closely with the Sustainability Office on posters for Earth Week, but while a final design was created, it was not confirmed by all participating organizations before campus activities were suspended.
 - ii) Stickers were designed by Brayden Hawkins (bch1142@truman.edu) and approved by all participating organizations.

² <https://www.atomichomefront.film/>

³ <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/children/making-seed-balls.htm>

- d) Final Thoughts: Our committee was disappointed that on-campus activities were suspended due to COVID-19, as we felt we had exciting and relevant events planned for students. We hope that our ideas might be used as inspiration for future activities. Fortunately, our committee did not spend any funds on materials for this week, meaning no student funds were wasted on events that did not occur. Going forward, the committee recommends a continued working relationship with the Sustainability Office for Earth Week, but it is important for future committees to remain firm and realistic about Student Government's involvement.

Policy:

This section details resolutions crafted by this committee and accepted by the Student Senate.

A) PSAC Resolution:

- a) This resolution is in support of the information-gathering process initiated by the President's Sustainability Action Committee. Truman State University has made explicit commitments towards achieving carbon neutrality, but lacks the institutional knowledge currently to begin to realistically plan a path forward. First steps include participating in sustainability evaluations by independent organizations and reaching out to other universities to learn best practices. See the attached link below for the full resolution.⁴

B) Bike to Campus Resolution:

- a) This resolution established monthly (fall and spring semesters) "Bike to Campus" days. Truman is fortunate to be a part of a highly "bike-able" community and has, in the past, been officially recognized for its commitments to being bicycle-friendly, and this resolution is intended to encourage Truman community members to consider cycling as a viable form of regular transportation.

Committee Member-Specific Activities:

This section details activities committee members participated in throughout the 2019-2020 year.

- A) Emma Rollings: Participated in the monthly meetings of the President's Sustainability Action Committee. This is an activity that is strongly recommended for future committees. Donna Liss is the main contact (dliss@truman.edu).

B) Trey Maddelena:

- a) I, along with Bruce Dolenz (ACS Green Chemistry co-chair [de facto Bulldog Biodiesel campus organization]) submitted an ESFAC funding proposal in February (I think?) on behalf of the Bulldog Biodiesel program. The proposal covered the refurbishment of an older biodiesel processor that had fallen out of use, as well as additional hoses and fittings to accommodate it.

C) Nicholas Dolson:

- a) Currently working on my main project: developing the Missouri State Parks pamphlet in both a physical and electronic form. Work will continue over the summer and should be ready by next semester

⁴<https://senate.truman.edu/files/2020/04/Resolution-119.014-A-Resolution-Supporting-the-Direction-and-Current-Recommendations-of-the-President%E2%80%99s-Sustainability-Action-Committee-on-Carbon-Neutrality-Planning-1.pdf>

- D) Ethan Kershaw:
 - a) Member of the Environmental Sustainability Fee Accountability Committee
 - i) I would advise continuing having at least one member of the Environmental Affairs Committee serve with ESFAC in order to encourage communication between the groups.
 - b) Started work on a vision doc aimed at environmental concerns on Truman's campus, could use more work to be considered close to a finished product, but holds some valuable information and links.
- E) Michael Lakey: planned the Earth Week festival activity.

Projects Moving Forward:

This section identifies potential projects/policy areas for future committees to consider, in addition to continued involvement in PSAC and ESFAC.

- A) Recycling Concerns:
 - a) The longevity and feasibility of Truman's current recycling model is a growing concern for sustainability/waste reduction efforts on campus. Conversations with Sam Guth, director of Physical Plant, have revealed that our present recycler has had difficulties collecting and processing Truman's recycling, leading to a pileup of recyclable materials on campus. Laura Bates has confirmed this issue. This buildup has led to both safety and aesthetic concerns. While campus recycling has been suspended at the time of writing due to the pandemic, Mr. Guth is interested in meeting with student government in fall of 2020 to discuss next steps, as our present reliance on a single external recycler leaves us vulnerable to disruptions in our waste-stream.
- B) Cycling Infrastructure
 - a) When presenting the "Bike to Campus" Resolution, several individuals raised concerns that Truman's present bike rack capacity was inadequate for the potential demand. There has also been discussion of aesthetic quality, as many racks on campus are antiquated, rusted, or simply eyesores. Dave Rector, Vice President for Administration, Finance, and Planning, suggested discussing with Lori Shook potential replacements for present racks and expansion of available bike parking sites.

Final Recommendations and Comments:

As a committee, Environmental Affairs tends to deal with questions of physical infrastructure on campus. Thus, it is useful to make connections with individuals and campus institutions that oversee this infrastructure. We strongly recommend reaching out to Lori Shook as a place to start for institutional questions and to have clear lines of communication with Physical Plant. While not always readily apparent, Truman does have a robust online record of sustainability initiatives. One resource for reference and potential inspiration for future projects is the Truman Strategic Sustainability Plan (2016-2020), which details potential areas for campus to improve through policy and infrastructure.⁵ The committee also recommends reviewing old sustainability projects to see how they are fairing and if any operational

⁵ <https://sustainability.truman.edu/files/2018/06/PSAC-Strategic-Goals-and-Initiatives-public.pdf>

changes can be made to improve efficiency. The issues with recycling, for example, were made apparent only after discussion with Physical Plant following an off-hand comment. Similarly, Bulldog Biodiesel has been a star sustainability project, but desperately needed continued support to have it operating well. Reviewing old projects is well worth the time and effort if it means ongoing improvement. Looking forward, Truman has made repeated commitments to carbon neutrality. As committee chair, I highly recommend continued involvement with PSAC to convey student opinion on sustainability measures. While campus environmental policy is a complicated undertaking, committee chairs and members should know that sincere questions and institutional connections can take projects and initiatives a long way.

Respectfully Submitted,
Emma Rollings, Committee Chair 2019-2020