

Environmental Affairs Committee End of Year Report 2020-2021

Submitted by Ethan Kershaw: Committee Chair

Maddie Meyer, Voting Senator
Emma Rollings, Associate Senator
Caroline Vogl, Associate Senator
Krishna Chebolu, Associate Senator
Blaine Smallwood, Associate Senator

Projects:

This section refers to projects undertaken by the committee during the 2020-2021 session.

A) Missouri State Parks Brochure

- a) The final draft¹ of this document was completed early in the Fall 2020 semester by Nick Dolson before he resigned from his duties as part of the committee.
- b) Final Thoughts: There are still copies of this document in the Sustainability Office, and it may be most beneficial to pass out these brochures to freshmen during Truman Week or at another early event because most older students are aware of nearby locations.

B) The Fairgrounds Labyrinth

- a) This project has been in progress (more in limbo really) for each of the past three chairs of the Environmental Affairs Committee, including myself. This year we were at least able to pass a resolution² allocating the necessary funds and securing a contractor to begin work on the actual construction. That process was supposed to begin in February 2021, however, as of April 2021, the project has yet to begin.

C) Compostable Takeout Boxes in the Dining Halls

- a) This project was undertaken in response to changes in the dining hall process because of COVID-19 restrictions. The dining halls this year allowed for a takeout option and the original boxes they provided were made of styrofoam and this created a huge amount of waste with no real chance of recycling them. We were able to work with Sodexo, the Sustainability Office, and Dr. Seipel, who works on the Compost Project, to order new takeout boxes that are compostable and set up a system of compost bins in the residence halls. This led to a reduction in the number of takeout boxes going to landfills and, despite the suspension of

¹ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xdQB01xY-uBcF0s5Ww9X_s2Sx_jgxqJS/view?usp=sharing

² <https://senate.truman.edu/files/2021/02/Resolution-120.011-Allocating-the-Budget-for-the-Construction-of-the-Labyrinth.pdf> - Res. 120.011

the Green Box Program (to be addressed later in this report), a to-go system for students who wish to minimize their waste.

- b) Final Thoughts: The issue of to-go boxes in the dining hall was a laborious process early in the year that showed me how slow projects can progress sometimes. Despite this, the project was successful and student concerns were answered. Don't be afraid to email people, they are almost always willing to listen and do their best to help.

D) Sustainability Week

- a) This is usually one of the first annual events of the year and it is mainly organized by the Sustainability Office as a way to advertise environmental groups on campus to students. We had a table at the event and handed out the State Parks Brochures and other giveaways that Student Government had purchased previously for Truman Week.

E) Awake at Standing Rock Documentary & Discussion

- a) This was a joint event with the Diversity and Inclusion Committee designed to educate on the issues of Indigenous rights and environmental justice. We split the costs of purchasing the rights to the film and printing posters between our committees. The actual event took place in the SUB Georgian Rooms and allowed for Zoom attendance of discussion, but provided a separate online access link for virtual participants to watch the film. Once the film concluded, there was a combined in person and virtual discussion with topics/questions created ahead of time, but attendees were welcome to ask their own questions.
- b) Final Thoughts: This style of event is a great way to provide programming for students while following COVID-19 restrictions, especially when they center around timely topics such as environmental and racial justice. The Environmental and Diversity and Inclusion Committees can have a lot of overlap, and the possibilities for future collaborations are many.

F) Divestment

- a) This project was one I was inspired to begin after reading Naomi Klein's book This Changes Everything. Many other schools have made the move to divest from fossil fuel stocks, and Truman State has already committed to divesting as part of carbon neutrality.
- b) My first contact was Dr. Ernie Hughes who is the Vice President for University Advancement. We met over Zoom once in the fall semester but he has not contacted me since despite a promise to and my several attempts to reach out to him.
- c) The Bulldog Student Investment Fund (BSIF) was willing to speak with me directly and followed up with me on divestment and added an Environmental, Societal, and Governmental (ESG) selection factor to their stock selection process.

- d) These developments led me to draft the resolution included in the policy section of this report, and I would direct the next chair to consider the ideas and suggestions it contains.

G) ENVS Major Program

- a) This project did not really begin until April, but it is related to academic policy on campus and arose partially from discussions with the Student Climate Union. Blaine Smallwood will likely continue his work on this project as an associate senator, so he will be a good resource. Just be aware of the limitations of student government policy on academic programs.
- b) Important things to consider:
 - i) How will this major look to employers?
 - ii) Is there student demand?
 - iii) How can it be used as recruitment? (Only program of its kind in Missouri)
 - iv) Will this affect enrollment in the IDSM program?
 - v) What classes need to be offered to create this?

H) Earth Week

- a) Earth Week is the big one, but you've got all year to prepare, so don't wait to start thinking about this in April.
- b) Tips
 - i) Order items in advance (Like 3-4 weeks in advance, I had stickers arrive the day of Earth Fest after ordering them 3 weeks earlier).
 - ii) Send events in to Truman Today and the Truman Events Calendar.
 - iii) Reserve rooms ASAP.
 - iv) Don't be afraid to partner with non-environmental clubs and departments in order to bring different perspectives to events and boost turnout.
 - v) Have a strong social media presence.
 - vi) Work with the Sustainability Office, they can be very helpful in planning and help lessen your own burden.
- c) Final Thoughts: Earth Week was a great success this year, all of the events went by without issue and the weather cooperated on Earth Fest and Earth Day. It is unlikely you will be as lucky with the weather. I also made several great contacts with Missouri environmental advocacy groups just by emailing them and asking them to participate, so don't be afraid to reach for things that you think would benefit the student body.

Policy:

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

- A) Amendment to the Standing Rules Adding the Position of Environmental Liaison³

³<https://senate.truman.edu/files/2021/03/Resolution-120.018-Amending-the-Description-of-the-Environmental-Affairs-Committee.pdf> Res- 120.018

- a) This resolution created a position to help facilitate communication among the many environmental-interest groups on campus, especially with the Sustainability Office. It would be good practice to recruit students to serve as Associate Senators from multiple environmental groups and therefore provide multiple connections to student perspectives. In choosing someone to appoint to this position (I would recommend delegating this duty) you should look to someone with experience and contacts in groups across campus, it may even be a good idea to connect them with the Sustainability Office. They hold a useful email list of campus groups. The next chair could also choose to utilize a Facebook group that was created earlier this year, although it needs a lot of development, or another method of group communication that they find more successful.
- B) Divestment of the Endowment Fund from Fossil Fuel Stocks
 - a) This resolution⁴ provides a timeline for furthering the divestment process and documents the progress of my efforts. It also recognizes BSIF for working with us and cites many university documents it could be helpful to read before pursuing this policy.
- C) Additions of Sustainability Sections to Residence Life Website and Guidebook
 - a) This resolution⁵ should spur action from Residence Life to add sustainability topics to their website and guidebook, but the next chair will likely still need to keep the committee involved and be in contact with Zac Burden and Dr. Van Boxel.

Committee Member-Specific Activities:

This section details activities committee members participated in throughout the 2020-2021 year.

- A) Ethan Kershaw:
 - a) ESFAC Representative:
 - i) There is a large backlog of projects in physical plant so we did not approve many new infrastructure projects.
 - ii) My term as ESFAC representative is up, someone new will have to be appointed and it should be someone serving on the Environmental Affairs committee if at all possible.
- B) Maddie Meyer: Explored the viability of birdhouses on campus and bringing birds to campus. Also helped with organizing speakers during Earth Week and connecting us with Tri Beta.
- C) Emma Rollings:
 - a) Fair Apartments Lot Labyrinth:
 - i) “Contractor has been hired for the labyrinth project’s construction. Lori Shook remains our main contact with campus planning. She has received all the paperwork necessary from both the student government and the

⁴ <https://senate.truman.edu/files/2021/04/Resolution-120.022-Divestment-Resolution.pdf> Res- 120.022

⁵ <https://senate.truman.edu/files/2021/04/Resolution-120.023-Sustainable-ResLife-Guidebook.pdf> Res- 120.023

business office at this point. Construction should begin this summer. (As a reminder, should something be amiss with the plans, the Physical Plant has the physical template for the labyrinth's design. If necessary I would suggest retrieving it from there and moving it someplace with Campus Planning instead. [This is a \$700 piece of landscape fabric, so if they lose it we have a problem.]”

- b) Bike Racks/Infrastructure:
 - i) “Truman has purchased a number of newer bike racks (in the design of the black stand-alone ones), but Lori Shook has been unable to get them prioritized for installation. A future project should definitely be to work to get student-endorsement of these newer and more secure style of racks, so as to get it on Physical Plant's priority list. The older models of racks are both less secure and a complete eyesore.”
- D) Caroline Vogl (de facto Environmental Liaison):
- a) Earth Week:
 - i) “I helped design the stickers and posters and managed most of the advertising through social media. I ran most of the EW meetings and checked in with the organizations when they needed help.
 - b) Environmental Forum/Facebook Page:
 - i) “While this wasn't as established as I wanted it to be, I think this is a concept that people after me will want to take part in. Most of what I've done this semester is talk with individuals about the page and what it could potentially look like for organizations in the future. I have discussed with other people in the Sustainability office about what they should do to progress this page.”
 - c) Local Foods Day with Sodexo:
 - i) This one was kind of a bust but I know it's something that is possible. With Green Boxes coming back, this is something that can be done for a Sustainability or Earth Week next year, no matter what the Covid restrictions are looking like. Just needs earlier planning and contact with Sodexo.”
- E) Krishna Chebolu: “I have helped make various social media posts for the Student Government's Instagram page. I have supported the pitch to BSIF for the divestment of fossil fuel using companies. I helped write Student Government Resolution 120.023: A Resolution to Add a Sustainable Living Section to the Residence Life Guidebook and Website. I also supported Student Government Resolution 120.022: A Resolution to Encourage the Divestment of the Truman State University Endowment Fund From Fossil Fuel-Based Companies.”
- F) Blaine Smallwood: “Since joining the Environmental Affairs Committee in January, I've helped work on two different projects. The first project was presenting the idea of

divestment to the Bulldog Student Investment Fund along with Ethan and Krishna. The second project that I, along with the rest of the committee, worked on was expanding the Environmental Science Minor program into a major. I will continue to work on expanding the minor program next fall.”

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) Divestment

- a) Look to the resolution that was passed this year for most details.
- b) Might want to continue to inquire about a public release of how Endowment Funds are invested.
- c) Just keep putting pressure on the university, they will likely delay and ignore a lot of communications on this issue if they feel like there won't be any repercussions.

B) The Fairgrounds Labyrinth

- a) See Emma Rollings' report section for a full update.
- b) Money is already allocated, just work with the executive board to ensure this project actually gets completed.
- c) Lori Shook is the main contact.
- d) Advertising
 - i) Maybe get some forward thinking PR on this and brainstorm some ideas for how to show students what it is, remind them of it.

C) Sustainability Week & Earth Week

- a) These are two of the only events programming-wise that environmental affairs is involved with every year.
- b) Sustainability Week
 - i) This will likely be your first project of the year and a good lesson in how to plan a tabling event. Hopefully there are some Earth Week stickers left so you can hand them out.
- c) Earth Week
 - i) Earth Week is one of the final events of the school year and it will likely occur during part of the student government elections season, so plan ahead, delegate, and order things far in advance. I mean like 4 weeks ahead.

D) ENVS Major Program

- a) I recommend working with Blaine, the ENVS Minor Committee, and possibly the Student Climate Union if you need broader student support. It might even be useful to use a survey to determine how many students would be interested.
- b) This could also be a good collaboration project with Academic Affairs.

E) Possible Future Plans

- a) Updates on Carbon Neutrality

- b) The Strategic Sustainability Plan- 2016-2020
 - i) There should be another in progress? This is now expired so it would be good to speak with PSAC about this.
- c) Energy Efficiency in the Dorms
 - i) The university should have data on this and should have plans in place to improve it, if not they could be called out.
 - ii) Star Rating? Truman hasn't applied for this program in several years, and if you can find a passionate partner in the administration this could be good for recruitment even. Donna Liss might be your best bet.
- d) Biking-related Issues
 - i) There are a bunch of bike shelters just sitting with physical plant that are supposed to go up this summer, so hopefully that happens. Also see Emma's report for more Bike-related topics.
- e) Green Boxes
 - i) This program was paused because of the pandemic making reusable containers in the dining halls a non-option, but the infrastructure already exists. Just make sure Sodexo doesn't delay the reimplementation of the program unnecessarily.

Final Recommendations and Comments:

There are a few lessons I will restate here, but I will try not to repeat myself. First, Physical Plant is tough to work with. Second, it is important to work with Donna Liss, the Sustainability Office, any other groups you can, you shouldn't be afraid to collaborate with everyone possible. Third, keep an eye on the President's Sustainability Action Committee (PSAC), you'll want someone on this committee as a representative. Lastly, I recommend using Google Folders or some other online, easily shareable system to store project information and allow for collaboration among your committee members. I will share my folder from this year with the next chair and be available to answer any questions about it.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ethan Kershaw, Committee Chair 2020-2021