

Focus the Nation

Meeting Minutes

Date: 26-February-07

Time: 3:00 – 4:00 pm

Place: Sem II – B3109

Agenda: Introductions; History of Focus the Nation; Planning/Organizing.

Attendees: Justin Bombara, R.J. Burt, Tillman Clark, Rob Cole, Karen Gaul, Kathleen Haskett, Elly Osborn, John Pumilio, Kathleen Saul.

Topic 1 – Introductions:

- Our kick-off meeting presented us with an excellent mix of faculty (2), staff (2), and students (5). We were also encouraged by the relatively large number of Evergreen community members who expressed interest in participating in the Focus the Nation event but were unable to come to this scheduled meeting.

Topic 2 – History: Visit Focus the Nation online: www.focusthenation.org

- **How did we learn of Focus the Nation?:** Eban Goodstein (economics professor at Lewis and Clark College) is spending his sabbatical initiating and organizing this nationwide event. Members of Evergreen's Sustainability Task Force first became aware of Focus the Nation during the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) conference at Arizona State University in October of 2006.
- **Focus the Nation to Evergreen:** *Focus the Nation* fits really well with Evergreen's strong record of social and environmental activism along with our renewed commitment to sustainability (as specified in our updated strategic plan). Furthermore, one of the most ambitious goals recommended by the Sustainability Task Force is to be a carbon neutral college no later than 2020. For these reasons the Sustainability Task Force decided to get behind this initiative and begin initial preparations for January 31, 2008 (the culminating day for Focus the Nation). The Sustainability Task Force introduced Focus the Nation to the Evergreen community during the week of January 31, 2007 (the one year inauguration to the event). Karen Gaul attended faculty planning unit meetings, we also sent campus-wide emails and published an article on the front page of the Cooper

Point Journal. Karen made another announcement during the all-faculty meeting of February 7. Finally, several members of the Sustainability Task Force and the student coordinator for SYNERGY met with President Purce to ask for his support.

- ***Evergreen as a Regional Leader:*** Evergreen is poised to be a regional leader in the planning and coordinating of this event and President Purce offered his support. Recently he articulated this in an all-campus email, “For my part, I will take a personal role in raising the regional and national visibility of global warming issues by reaching out to higher education institutions in our region and to leaders in the community, in an effort to generate broad-based momentum for *Focus the Nation*.”
- ***The first meeting – planning for Focus the Nation officially begins:*** Though we only met for an hour our first meeting was productive and some excellent ideas were exchanged as we begin to conceive how to make Focus the Nation a reality and what we hope to accomplish. The remainder of this memo will highlight some of the ideas that were generated. Obviously, these are initial thoughts that will hopefully evolve and continue to refine in the weeks ahead.

Topic 3 – Brainstorming:

- ***Evergreen’s Intended Purpose/Goals of Focus the Nation:***
 - *Education:* the year leading up to January 2008 and the day of January 31 should be a time of education around the causes, impacts, and potential solutions to global warming.
 - *Solutions:* to engage the community and to move beyond rhetoric organizers of Focus the Nation should make a concentrated effort on search for solutions.
 - *Changing hearts and minds:* another proposed goal of the Focus the Nation event should be to get people to care enough to take action to slow global warming. This may be changing personal behaviors, voting priorities, purchasing habits, etc.
 - *A political event:* a major reason for the timing of the event and one of the national goals is to engage politicians in order to encourage policy action. Evergreen (being in the state capital) is especially well-positioned to influence policy-makers.
 - *Beyond January 31, 2008:* we discussed the importance of having the impact of Focus the Nation extend far beyond January 2008. We can create new relationships and implement solutions and

continue with the overall intent to take action against global warming.

○ ***Pick a message – what is our focus?:***

We discussed having a clear message that is not too broad and that will have a lasting impact. Some ideas came up that we should focus locally. Help people understand the direct impacts of global warming on their lives right here in Washington State. Another idea was to focus on tangible solutions. What can people play a role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions? How can they get involved?

○ ***“The Event” – what will Focus the Nation look like?:***

▪ Lecture Series: Some ideas were to have a week-long lecture series leading up to January 31, 2008. This would take advantage of the wealth of knowledge and experience right here at Evergreen, but may also include reaching out to local organizations (i.e. climate solutions).

▪ Field Trips and Community Activities: organizing field trips and community activities with a strong tie to global warming. For example, beach walks, tree planting event, nature walks that emphasize realized and potential impacts to biodiversity, etc.

▪ The Day (January 31, 2008): one initial idea for how the day might unfold would be to begin with on-campus activities and then end it with a large community event held in a prominent location that will bring our regional community together to raise awareness and discuss global warming solutions. The day could include entertainment, forums, roundtable discussions, lectures, a global warming solutions competition and awards event, etc...

○ ***“Needs” – we identified several areas that need to be addressed in the weeks ahead:***

▪ Organization: we need to form a steering committee that will guide our planning and keep us on task. We also need to be well organized here at Evergreen in order to foster better communication and planning with local and regional organizations.

▪ People-power: we need dedicated support as well as volunteers and other people willing to participate as much as they can. Perhaps we can utilize existing structures to encourage dedicated support such as thesis projects, individual learning contracts (though we must be conscious of the short-term time-span of contracts), educational programs with a theme of global warming;

- Schedule: we need to establish a timeline with set targets and goals to keep us on track;
- Speakers: we need to identify and have commitment from local legislatures, community activists, scientists, educators, etc who strengthen the message and help us meet our objectives.
- Publicity: we need to collaborate with local radio stations, newspapers, create a webpage, perhaps flyers/brochures;
- Outreach: both internally and externally to raise awareness and harness support during our planning phase;
- External Collaboration: coordinate with regional institutions of higher education; other schools, community organizations, neighborhoods, businesses, churches, indigenous groups, etc... for co-sponsored collaborative events.
- Sponsors: reach out to local businesses, organizations, etc. who may be willing to donate space, time, money, commodities, etc. that will help Focus the Nation reach its full potential.
- Regional Event Location(s): where will venues be held? ...on campus, regional community centers, field trips. And, we need to reserve space

Topic 4 – The Steering Committee:

- We discussed the priority of establishing the steering committee. This should be our next immediate step and the focus of our next meeting. This committee should be organized in a way that addresses each of the “needs” mentioned above.

Topic 5 – Next Steps:

- **Familiarize yourself with the Focus the Nation website:**
www.focusthenation.org.
- **Consider what areas of the steering committee you are most drawn to. In other words, which of the needs would you be most willing to address.**
- **Reach out to three more people and encourage their participation in Focus the Nation.**

Next Meeting: Monday, March 7, 2007 (SEM II B3109) from 3-4pm.