



To: Bemidji State University President, Dr. Faith Hensrud

From: Environmental Advisory Committee

Regarding: Role of the EAC and Ensuring Prioritization of Environmental Stewardship

Date: January 21, 2020

President Hensrud,

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC), originally the Environmental Task Force, was created to provide internal feedback to administration on environmental issues relevant to BSU. To quote former President Duly:

"It is important that the University becomes more environmentally literate and sensitive. To this end, I would like to establish an Environmental Task Force to make recommendations to the University Cabinet on pertinent environmental issues."

—The late Dr. Leslie Duly 10-22-92

A catalyst for President Duly's action was BSU's involvement as a defendant in litigation surrounding the Kummer Landfill and its Superfund designation (see Appendix A). The original intent of the EAC was to ensure a proactive approach to pertinent environmental issues to prevent similar reactive damage control.

Since its inception, the EAC has participated in drafting BSU's Environmental Policy Statement (1998), encouraging adoption of the Talloires Declaration (2006), supported the signing of the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment (2008), Second Nature's Climate Commitment (2019), and has lent its voice to the strategic planning processes embodied by BSU's Climate Action Plan (2011), Landscape Master Plan (2013), Strategic Plan for Sustainability 2009-2013, and Sustainability Plan 2017-2020. These milestones support the institution's commitment to environmental stewardship by promoting awareness and instilling passion for the Earth. Our institutional commitments to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and building a more resilient campus and community in the face of a changing climate are directly informed by our collective mission. Likewise, the Shared Fundamental Value of Environmental Stewardship is a key component to the strategic vision of our institution.

These institutional commitments are simultaneously impressive and daunting. They define us yet require intentional action. It is important that the University take advantage of all reasonable opportunities to make progress on fulfilling these aspirations. On several occasions over the past few years the EAC has found itself without a chance to be involved in decision-making processes in a timeframe that allows meaningful input. The EAC believes its role necessitates involvement in key planning processes, particularly those with long range implications for our infrastructure and programming. Therefore, members of the EAC believe it necessary to clarify how the committee fulfills its role of providing internal feedback on environmental issues.

The EAC's involvement should take two forms: first, as an active voice on committees and working groups; and second, as a reviewer of plans prior to ratification. The former role entails EAC representation on committees to enable proactive recommendation of environmental best practices and information sharing between committees and the EAC. The latter role requires an official review of relevant proposals prior to their approval. We feel the upcoming facilities master planning process exemplifies the need for these two forms of involvement.

As BSU embarks upon the process of renewing its Master Facility Plan, it should acknowledge the important ways in which facilities management impacts our carbon footprint and environmental stewardship. Though we should celebrate the accomplishment of a 10% reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions compared to our 2010 baseline, we also need to consider the thirty years remaining to eliminate our carbon footprint by 2050. Recognizing our limited time for action affirms the need to incorporate energy and efficiency metrics into every decision we make. Substantive progress toward our climate commitment will be more difficult if we fail to incorporate innovative and forward-thinking strategies for energy management, infrastructure improvement, and preservation of our Northwoods identity. Allowing representatives of the EAC to proactively participate in the planning process will enable inclusion of and greater accountability to these strategies. Beyond participation, empowering the EAC to review and approve strategic documents and planning decisions prior to their ratification will further increase our likelihood for success.


We, as members of the EAC, seek to proactively uphold our institution's identity and goals. Ultimately, we hope for your support of the following actions:

- 1.) Integrate the EAC into pertinent committees and working groups, particularly those making decisions with environmental implications;
- 2.) Ensure the EAC reviews and comments on all strategic documents and planning decisions prior to ratification.

Members of the EAC represent the collective knowledge and critically important expertise necessary for effective leadership. They join the conversation with backgrounds in wildlife biology, toxicology, environmental chemistry, sustainable energy planning, environmental education, social psychology, and more. Serving on the committee enables each member to share their diverse perspective and individual expertise in supporting our institutional commitment to environmental stewardship. Empowering the committee, and by extension its members, through the aforementioned actions will facilitate greater accountability to our commitments and progress toward our goals.

The EAC meets in person for conversations monthly. We cordially invite you to attend any meetings to discuss our endeavors on behalf of the Bemidji State University community. We appreciate your time and continued commitment to environmental stewardship.

Sincerely,



Jordan Lutz, Carl Isaacson, and Alyssa Hauser
Co-Conveners, Environmental Advisory Committee

Voting outcome:

Yes – George McConnell
Yes – Brian Hiller
Yes – Thomas Dirth
Yes – Dan Alosso
Yes – Brian Udenberg
Yes – Alyssa Hauser
Yes – Mia Haugan
Yes – Anna Carlson
Yes – Erika Adams

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