



Intradepartmental Correspondence

DATE: June 28, 2005
TO: Biology Department
FROM: Biology Department sustainability working group
SUBJECT: Department sustainability initiative

Resource over consumption—especially by the US—is a major contributing factor to environment degradation worldwide. As scientists and biologists we have the knowledge and the responsibility to act and to set an example for the rest of the University and the community. A group of students and faculty have been discussing potential solutions to this problem and ways to increase sustainability. While much progress has been achieved in the past decade we think that there is still much more we could do to reduce our ecological footprint as a Department. For this reason we propose to start a Biology Department sustainability initiative.

GOAL: TO REDUCE THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT OF THE BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT AND TO BECOME A MODEL TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

Initial Plan of action

1. Establish a formal departmental sustainability group: We propose to establish a formal departmental sustainability group, to include faculty, staff, and students, but open to any who wish to participate. The sustainability group would oversee the planning and implementation of the departmental sustainability initiative.

2. Assess the ecological footprint of the department: The first step in becoming a more sustainable department is to assess how we collectively use resources. We proposed to have a “sustainability” seminar in which we obtain necessary information to develop and use scientific protocols to measure resource use and efficiency.

3. Recommendations and implementation: With broad collaboration of students, faculty and staff, we will produce a set of practical recommendations to reduce resource consumption at the departmental and individual levels. We will promote these recommendations through a combination of meetings, emails, a website, and posted information. This aims to be an adaptive process in which we will solicit feedback and incorporate it in future actions.

4. Assessing and reporting results: It is important to demonstrate that by modifying our actions, we are making a difference. Therefore, we will track departmental resource use on a continuing basis, and distribute periodical reports quantitatively describing our progress.

5. Future steps: Initially, all recommendations will be voluntary. However, we envision that at some future time, certain recommendations will become part of departmental policy. We anticipate the outcome of this initiative will enable us to create a framework for use by other UW departments in assessing and addressing their ecological footprints. We will work with other groups on campus that share a desire for sustainability, so that they may use what we have learned and apply it to their own initiatives.