

# **Environmental Stewardship Committee Vision Statement**

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## **I. Environmental Stewardship on Campus**

While for the moment it may appear that we can continue with our current set of campus practices and levels of resource consumption, with each new story of increasing demand for natural resources and decreasing supply (locally, regionally, and globally), it is becoming increasingly apparent that Augsburg College, like the rest of the world, will have to undertake a more careful stewarding of the natural resources which has been provided to us by our creator. As a compact, urban campus at the center of a large and growing metropolitan region, these environmental issues and resource scarcity are particularly pressing. Increasingly, we are borrowing those resources from future generations and placing the burden of payment of the Augsburg stewards of 2020 and 2060.

While we recognize the College has substantial on-going financial obligations, we must do what we can now to limit future costs to this College while minimizing both current and future environmental harm caused by our current resource consumption. This will require a financial commitment from the College as it works toward the goal of implementing environmentally sound and fiscally sustainable policies. Informed decisions will have to be made on all levels of society if we are to bequeath a healthy ecosystem to our descendents. Through providing accurate information, open discussion and decisive action, the Environmental Stewardship Committee seeks to cultivate and support this desire to be good stewards and to preserve nature's great gifts for posterity.

If we are committed to making smart, responsible decisions about the long term viability of the environment of which our campus community is a part, we should act on what we know, and take prudent steps to avoid doing harm. These decisions need to be based on solid evidence and good science that gets at real problems.

As an educational institution, we must be concerned not only with what we teach in the classroom itself, but what we teach our students through our own actions and through how we manage our own community. What kind of messages, we must ask, are we sending to students, by selling only Pepsi, spreading pesticides

and herbicides on our lawns, running air conditioners and lawn mowers all summer, and organizing our transportation largely around the automobile. Many of these practices require greater attention than they currently receive in terms of their educational effects.

During the first few years of its existence, the Environmental Stewardship Committee has addressed a number of environmental issues at our local level with encouraging results. Projects have included strengthening the campus recycling program, equipment and furniture reuse program, a bus pass subsidy for faculty, staff and most recently students. Committee members have been active promoters of the use of mass transit and bicycle for commuting to and from the campus and they have encouraged Augsburg to reduce the impact of automobiles on campus. The committee also facilitated a campus-wide waste management inventory (independent evaluation by outside agencies) that has encouraged us to continue efforts to make our energy consumption more efficient and less costly. The waste management inventory also opened doors to new resources (monetary and technical) that will assist us in becoming a more environmentally friendly campus. All of these efforts by the Environmental Stewardship Committee have been advisory and educational in nature.

It should be noted that while we have made modest gains on campus, companies, educational institutions, municipalities, and neighborhood groups have been forging ahead with sustainability initiatives. These issues and problems will only continue to become more important and we would do well to do everything we can not to fall behind.

## **II. Environmental issues and campus responsibility**

There are a number of environmental issues facing our communities today, and for each there are ways in which we at Augsburg can be part of the solution as opposed to contributing unnecessarily to wasteful or destructive behavior.

**Decreasing supplies of energy, water, and land.** Locally and globally, increasing demand for limited resources has resulted in increasing prices and real financial concerns for all users. With an additional million people predicted to join the Twin Cities in the next twenty years, all these problems will only get worse. If for no other reason, environmental stewardship is beginning to help the college meet the bottom line. From a strategic perspective, the college should strive to use fewer resources per campus citizen in the future if it expects to get the energy budget under control.

**Global Warming/Local Air Pollution.** As evidence mounts of an increase in global temperature, and studies emerge weekly of new adverse affects of global warming, we continue to increase our consumption of fossil fuels and emission of

greenhouse gasses. Furthermore, the college is exposed to high levels of air pollution from automobiles, power plants, and heating exhaust because it is in the middle of a large metro area. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency air quality monitoring on a variety of pollutants shows the neighborhood around Augsburg College to be consistently one of the worst areas in the metro area. It is therefore of particular concern that the college not be a willing contributor to this environmental damage by encouraging campus citizens' use of automobiles or power generated by burning coal. Every person who uses mass transit, bikes or walks to the campus on a daily basis reduces air pollution and reduces demand for parking space on campus.

**Consumer Culture of Waste.** On a broader level, the college is affected daily by a commercial system that tends to be short sighted, and which is supported by a culture of entitlement and a cornucopian vision of endless resources. The cost of hauling trash at Augsburg continues to increase in spite of efforts to recycle, reuse and reduce consumption. The main operational concern on campus seems to be the availability or cost of parking. Active demonstrations of environmentally sound alternatives to the dominant paradigm are essential for a sustainable and comfortable quality of life for all. Augsburg can say much about how one chooses to live, what consequences will be earned by our choices and how to respond to the consumerist influences of modern society.

**Urban Sprawl** – Augsburg is at the center of one of the most sparsely populated major metro areas in the country. The Twin Cities occupies two thirds of the area of Chicago with one third of the population. Urban sprawl increases pollution, increases traffic congestion, increases the cost and stress of living and decreases the effectiveness of mass transit systems. Augsburg contributes to this dynamic when it depends on students, staff and faculty from ever increasing distances from the campus. Although this is an issue that extends far beyond our campus, we should be doing everything we can to encourage “smart growth,” and use of mass transit. Our campus itself is fairly “compact” and this can serve as a model for other neighborhoods and institutions in the Twin Cities. The proximity of the highly successful light rail line provides more reasons and opportunities to pursue alternative transportation plans for the campus community.

**Water Pollution** – Augsburg uses a tremendous amount of water annually and as a result contributes to the stress of municipal waste water treatment system and the health of the Mississippi River. Just the cost of water and sewer service alone should encourage the college to reduce its use of water in any way it can. From a purely ecological perspective the college's use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and other harmful chemicals helps to pollute the water runoff from the campus and eventually the river and oceans. There are a number of innovative storm water management systems being used by local institutions and

properties that could serve as models for how we handle our water on campus.

**Environmental education** – Most citizens know little of the connection with their environment. People litter with no concern about its degrading impact on the social fabric. Consumerism is at an all time high with no thought about the environmental implications of these consumer choices or of where and how trash is to be handled. Planned obsolescence is constantly impairing the ability of society to see the true cost of the items they purchase. Convenience and entitlement blind the consumer to more economical options. Instant gratification has become the norm, while thoughtful, measured, consumption is considered not cost effective even when long-term gain is assured. All of these notions (and more not mentioned) contribute to a pervasive citizen neglect of the environment. Augsburg has an opportunity to help spread the good news that environmentally helpful decisions are part of its core beliefs and actions. Many of these choices can simultaneously help to improve human health, strengthen community, and address much of the sense of emptiness that accompanies the modern malady of materialism.

### **III. Direct Financial Benefits of Good Environmental Choices**

**Reduced College Operating Expenses** – Augsburg will save operating costs immediately (waste reduction, reuse and recycling) and in the future (energy usage, landscaping, parking). Augsburg College will save money by using fewer resources, creating less waste, using less energy, and using up less space on campus for things like parking. Meaningful measure of such economy should be cost per campus user (student, faculty and staff and visitors).

**Reduced Student Expenses** – Students could save between \$1500.00 and \$4000.00 annually if they chose not to own a car and instead used public transit. This money could go a long way in meeting their other living and travel expenses, not to mention the added benefit of giving them a more intimate knowledge of the city in which they live. Some colleges prohibit freshmen from having a car on campus to facilitate their orientation to the college and the city. Students could also reduce their expenses if they reused furniture from previous students and made use of the Reuse Table for school supplies.

**Retention and community building** - There is a solid base of concern for environmental issues among college-age Americans, and there is potential for Augsburg to draw on that in recruiting and retaining students. If we can demonstrate that we are an institution that takes these concerns into account, and is taking innovative and progressive actions in regard to them, this can be a

powerful attraction for many potential tuition-paying students. Augsburg could make a concerted effort to recruit new students who are passionate about the environment, who want to contribute to a more sustainable culture and who are eager to develop alternatives to the current system. As things stand now, these types of students are accidental on this campus. Augsburg could also be a leader in the community by hosting environmental forums and community action groups that will address environmental issues that affect nearby neighborhoods and municipalities.

**Supporting the goals of Augsburg 2004: caritas, stewardship, vocation, service, leadership** – Embracing good environmental choices for the campus is one of the best ways we can the work toward achieving the goals of Augsburg 2004. The stewardship of the urban and global environment can only be pursued if we take these steps toward using less, living more simply, and acting with the care and awareness of the impact of actions on the people and ecosystem within which we live and on which we all depend. Such choices take a commitment to a vocation that encompasses the ideas of personal restraint and public service. Such choices demand public leadership skills and clearly visible examples of those choices. Augsburg can lead its faculty, students and staff to a more sustainable future with supportive curricula and supportive campus policies.

#### **IV. Our Vision for the Campus (aka 2014: Greening Augsburg College)**

In ten years we see the Augsburg campus being a center of environmental activism, supported by an innovative Program of Urban Environmental Stewardship (PUES). Students will be able to graduate with Bachelor degrees in Environmental Science, Environmental Politics and Environmental Business Management. Following on the successful community conference held on campus in early 2004, Augsburg College will host periodic conferences of environmentally conscious colleges to share ideas and challenge students to apply good environmental decision making in all aspects of their personal, business, religious, and political lives. The campus will be seen as a model and center for environmental leadership that attracts significant grant funds annually.

In ten years, reflecting the growing interest in environmental issues among high school graduates, a significant number of the freshman class will be here because they want to major in some aspect of environmental stewardship. Most of these students will have aptitude test scores far above average and most will have several years experience in church, community and/or environmental activities. As the cities' highways have become increasingly inefficient and overcrowded, over 70% of the freshman class and over 50% of the day school students will travel by public transit, bicycle, walking, or car-pooling. In fact, students who choose not to own or lease an automobile during the school year will get public transit passes for the entire school year at deeply discounted rates

and students who live on campus and require parking spaces will pay the going market rate (\$90.00 / month) for parking spaces. The inner campus itself will be a pedestrian-centered green space with all parking limited to the periphery of campus. As such it will be a small oasis in the midst of the automobile-choked city.

In ten years, Augsburg will have a gateway entrance to the campus for light rail and bus users arriving from the Cedar / Franklin area. A commuter bus (possibly shared with the University of Minnesota) will pick up students from the light rail station and deliver them to a central campus location. Bike racks and commuter showers will be available for those who commute by bike. Commuter parking lot spaces will be given premium locations to encourage ride-share commuting. As envisioned by the current campus master plan, all parking on campus will have moved to the periphery and the heart of the campus will be car free, creating a much more peaceful, quieter, and more beautiful campus.

In ten years Augsburg will have a new Science Building that employs the most effective sustainable design features available for a building of that type. Even though the building does not meet the LEED certification, it has been built to the highest possible energy efficiency standards. The new science building will become another “environmental learning site” on campus and function as a teaching tool as well as building with classrooms and traditional equipment.

In 2014, Augsburg landscaping will have changed to native plants, organic fertilizers and an effective composting system using waste from food preparation and garden waste. This style of landscaping is easier and cheaper to maintain, since it requires almost no watering or weeding. No pesticides will be used and integrated pest management (IPM) will be used to control most problem insects. Biology students will have a rich living laboratory to study and learn from right on the campus grounds. In addition, watering the landscape will be far less expensive because runoff from building roofs and parking lots will be stored in underground tanks for landscaping use or routed into lawn or garden areas. Natural run-off catch basins will add to the diversity of the campus landscaping as well as control large amounts of rainwater.

Working with the Minneapolis Park Board, Augsburg College will have turned Murphy Park into a model Oak Savannah and prairie restoration site that incorporates both some recreational areas (for informal sports activities) and 3 outdoor classrooms with benches and tables arranged in semi-circles for having classes outdoors during good weather. Students will contribute labor and research to the restoration project and study the ecological health of the new park over its life.

In ten years, Augsburg's use of energy will be reduced by 50% per student by

using HVAC updates and refinements; off-peak scheduling of building AC, and computerized light controls that schedule lights out when spaces are not scheduled for activities. The football dome will also be heated and cooled with a geo-exchange system at half the cost of the current natural gas system.

In ten years, Augsburg's use of paper will be reduced drastically, and the paper use on campus will be part of a closed loop in which our waste paper is recycled into new paper that we then use for new copying. Student printers will automatically copy on both sides of the paper at the same time, thus reducing the cost of paper. Students will also be charged for paper automatically to encourage conservation of resources.

In sum, the Augsburg campus will be fully integrated with the city Minneapolis' goal of becoming a sustainable city. We will be well on our way to being a sustainable campus that will use up no more clean air, water, energy, and raw materials in a year than the earth can provide for it. Our students will leave campus with a much clearer sense of how they can effectively steward their resources and environment as well. As such, Augsburg will be well positioned to be an educational leader and responsible environmental citizen into the indefinite future.

Respectfully submitted,