

*Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.
Begin it now.
—J. Goethe*

STUDENTS' GUIDE TO COLLABORATION ON CAMPUS

The Students' Guide to Collaboration provides recommendations for students who are interested in making positive change on their campuses. Here you will find reasons to collaborate, how to bring more people into the process, how to make change last, and what to avoid when working with others in the campus system. This guide serves to foster discussions with other students, and as a tool for sparking ongoing collaboration with faculty, administrators, staff, other students on campus, and the community.

Students are higher education's most crucial stakeholders—without them, these institutions would not exist. By virtue of sheer numbers and their capacity to organize, students can play a leadership role to bring all members of the university together to work on a shared agenda; and collaboration by all sectors of the campus is key to real, transformative change.

**How can I create permanent, institutional change? What do you mean, *collaboration*?
Who can I recruit?**

Efforts for change will be most successful if people from different areas of the college community have a stake in them, and provide their voice and resources. Faculty, operations staff, administration, alumni/ae, trustees—everyone. Instead of trying to get the physical plant to change on your own, start a student group with that goal. Establish leadership roles that rotate yearly. Then use the student group to create a faculty, staff and student committee on your campaign issue. By working toward this goal you act to build bridges that connect the disparate cultures on campus.

Bringing More People to the Table

Why it works. We encourage you to recruit people from all realms of your college or university life to work together for sustainability. We've found that the collaborative efforts enacted by a consortium of faculty, operations staff, students, administrators and alumni/ae are the most effective, efficient, and long-lasting. When Second Nature holds workshops to facilitate change in colleges and universities, we ask that each school send a group of people from different areas of university life to attend as a team so that they may continue to work together and draw upon one another's resources after the workshop.

Universities and colleges are notorious for being departmentalized—academic disciplines, administrative departments, and campus physical operations tend to be disconnected parts of the campus. Even students are divided along departmental lines,

as well as by graduate and undergraduate levels. However, progress toward sustainability requires that you look at the big picture, see the university as a **system**, and enact solutions that reach across all of these boundaries. For example, dining services needs to think about strategies for waste management, and faculty members must look at opportunities for education that engage and benefit the community at large.

When people come together from all the disciplines and departments of a university, they not only bring ideas and resources from their own areas; they also invent new strategies for change that defy compartmentalization. For example, an Environmental Advisory Committee composed of students, faculty, staff, alumni/ae, and community members will have much more to offer, and have more power to affect change, than any individual, or than a committee made up of students alone. Also, if others help to create the solutions and have a stake in the outcomes, they are much more likely to feel invested in its success.

How to do it. There probably are people in many different departments within your school who are already interested in sustainability issues. Faculty that teach related courses, administrators or staff people who have implemented environmental programs in the past, alumni/ae in certain job fields, and other students from all sorts of disciplines are probably already thinking about or acting to create sustainability initiatives on your campus. Taken together and organized, these efforts can be far more effective and lasting than they would be individually.

Working to establish connections among these constituencies has immediate advantages: information and resources can be shared; the power of the group can leverage action from the institution; and official recognition can give sustainability issues a higher profile on campus.

- < *First, find out what is already happening in the area of sustainability on your campus.* Duplication of pre-existing programs is a waste of valuable time and resources. Approach people in different areas of your university with ideas about forming a coalition. If you make your approach through a recognized student group, this adds credibility to your efforts.
- < *Get other students engaged!* Residence Life staff are always looking for issues that unify students in a positive way. Frame sustainability as an "alternative" to destructive behaviors (like binge drinking). By working with Residential Advisors, hall directors, or the Director of Residence Life, you can often gain access to hall meetings that you might not otherwise know about.
- < *Use the system to your advantage.* Work within established processes at your institution. Students have the power to affect change—even more so when they work within the parameters of institutional culture. Administrators will usually appreciate this and be more interested in supporting your efforts.
- < *Start with administrators that you already know.* As with any change process, relying on interpersonal relationships and communication is critical. Specifically, which Student Affairs Administrators do you know and feel comfortable approaching: the Director of Residential Life, Director of Service Learning, Dean of Students, Athletic Coaches,

others? Also think about administrators who might be your work-study supervisors. Engage them and get them excited first!

- < *Tap into faculty you know.* You can reach administrators indirectly through faculty who often have influence on campus.
- < *Ask familiar faculty and administrators to tell you who are the "change agents" on your campus.* Who are the movers and shakers? Engage others in approaching the movers and shakers with you.
- < *The Dean of Students is a good source for advice on reaching the diverse members of the campus community .* For example, food service. Food service personnel are often frustrated by vague student complaints, yet eager to serve students well, fix specific problems, cut costs and receive positive press! Offer specific alternatives to their activities (for example, replace Styrofoam cups or exchange salt and pepper packets for salt and pepper shakers.)
- < *Approach the Director/Coordinator of Service Learning (if you have one) or Internship Coordinator.* Ask them about finding placements that link to sustainability issues. These folks are eager for ideas to get students' attention and please their interests.
- < *Use people's time wisely.* Not many students will want to spend their valuable time collating and copying documents for the organization—especially if they are not involved in the "good stuff" to begin with. If a person has only a brief amount of time to work with you, make that time valuable for you and the member. After a few good experiences, the student may fit more time into their schedule for your organization. Faculty and administrators are often even more strapped for time. Be sure to use their time wisely, or be prepared to be shuffled down to the bottom of their list of priorities.
- < *Write an article or do an interview for publication in the student newspaper.* Get creative - provide a top ten list of ways students can reduce their impact on campus. Solicit their ideas and conduct a contest to publish the best. Start a sustainability column.
- < *Print table tents on cafeteria tables.* This is a relatively minor expense for a message that will receive high visibility.
- < *Improve your presentation skills.* Everybody gets nervous before an important presentation, and the style and presentation of the message are important to catching administrators' attention. Before making a presentation to an important administrator, seek help from the theatre department or from a public speaking professor. Ask the faculty member for guidance, an hour of their time, to help you prepare to deliver your message most effectively.
- < *Study up on:* innovation-diffusion theory, change agency; campus models similar to your own that illustrate replicable processes/money savings strategies; and basic negotiation and communication skills.

Making Change Permanent

Why it's necessary. Students have a limited number of years to influence their college or university. Too often, even the most successful student initiative is forgotten once the student leaders graduate. Therefore, it is critical to take your individual ideas and efforts and institutionalize them, so that they will endure once you have left. Creating a collaboration of people across campus is a great way to make this happen. Faculty, administrators, staff, and, most importantly, institutional policies or committees, tend to outlast a student's stay. And when change toward sustainability is institutionalized, the college itself becomes more sustainable, and will touch everyone at the university long into the future.

The permanence and recognition of a student group makes it easier to bring faculty, staff, alumni/ae and administrators on board, leading to the creation of a more permanent body of collaborators. This, in turn, can lead to institutional change, such as a University mission statement that includes sustainability, or an officially recognized committee that handles sustainability issues on campus.

How to do it. While this is not intended to be a comprehensive "how to" guide, the day-to-day operation of a student-initiated group has great bearing on its ability to succeed and to effectively collaborate with others on campus. Your organization must be perceived by everyone on campus as legitimate, serious and organized. Part of developing this image and the ability to reach to others outside of the student population has to do with how you recruit, maintain and sustain your membership. The following tips apply to all student groups who wish to manage their resources effectively for the long-term.

- < *Know your audience.* Many efforts begun on campus are diluted before they can really start by not being directed in the right way. Make your message relevant to the student body with whom you are working, even though you may have to frame the issue differently than you do with yourself or your colleagues. Remember, people can approach the same problem from many different angles. Try to address these angles in your campaign, and as the years go by, re-evaluate them.
- < *Take advantage of the fact that you are able to act directly.* Many young people in the 18-24 age group feel disconnected from the political process, even to the point that they do not vote. On the other hand, they are more likely to take matters into their own hands. Take advantage of your nimble position and let other students know that through your organization they have the opportunity to act directly and to see the impact of their work, without much bureaucratic hindrance.
- < *Hold orientation sessions.* Open meetings or orientation sessions allow people who are unsure about joining your group become familiar with your mission and goals. It also allows them to see how organized your group is (or is not!) and what types of students are involved. At these meetings be prepared to answer questions about the group and plan an activity to involve the people who come. Create a time for food and mingling afterward.

- < *Provide a clear understanding of the organization's or association's mission and goals.* Communicating this most basic of information is of utmost importance from the very beginning. This way, expectations of your members will be neither too high, nor too low.
- < *Provide a clear definition of a volunteer's or member's role.* The last thing you want is a volunteer or member who feels like they are not needed or valued. By defining a person's role, you are letting them know what you expect of them.
- < *Remember: Leadership is the domain of all people.* Those in "official" leadership roles are not the only people qualified to lead. Characteristics of good leaders include self knowledge, authenticity, empathy, commitment and competence. For your group to be a leader on campus, it should exhibit a high level of collaboration, have a shared vision and a division of labor, treat disagreement with respect and continuously learn.
- < *Establish a Volunteer Coordinator.* This position can be one of the most important for an organization that utilizes volunteers on a regular basis. The Volunteer Coordinator will be the point of contact for all incoming volunteers. This means he/she will need to present a good image of the organization, have a grasp of the organization's mission and goals, and have the ability to communicate through a variety of media as well as in-person. This person must also be extremely organized and must be responsible for scheduling volunteers on the calendar. The Volunteer Coordinator may want to set up a drop box in the student union that would allow students to express their interest in volunteering with the organization by writing down their contact information and placing it in the box, to be collected later by the Coordinator.
- < *Be flexible with members' time.* Create a monthly calendar for the group. The Ad Council recommends offering a variety of opportunities for participation—offer one day projects, once a week projects or "fit it in when you can" projects. Let volunteers and members participate over the internet. Include as volunteers those who just want to offer their opinions on your organization's process, either in special community meetings or on a listserv. One study showed that young adults care about the issues and want to get involved but, "They simply want to express themselves and get involved in their own way". Remember this as you make your plans for handling and developing members.
- < *Identify skilled people.* It is important for an organization to have an inventory of the particular skills and talents of its members. This may be as simple as having each person fill out a survey, asking what their hobbies are, what they're majoring in, what they enjoy doing, and what they believe they are especially good at doing. People generally like being asked to take responsibility when it is in an area they particularly enjoy.
- < *Emphasize results.* You may or may not have access to numbers that reveal your organization's impact. If you do, use these numbers to your advantage when trying to attract new volunteers. Recent studies have shown that one of the barriers to becoming engaged in a group working toward civil or social change is a lack of tangible evidence that you're making a difference. If you do not keep track of your impact, devise a way that you can and assign that job to someone who's interested (a

statistics major, perhaps?). Develop an "ecological footprint" analysis of your group, or even of your college. Use these numbers to create a baseline for improvements in campus sustainability. A consistent record of improvement is one way to make your group invaluable to the campus.

- < *Emphasize rewards and thank your participants.* Creating positive change on campus is not just beneficial to the campus community, it is an opportunity for you as well. Students often complain of stagnancy at colleges—taking a lot of notes, reading many, many books, but never actually participating in hands-on learning. Collaboration around campus sustainability is an excellent opportunity to engage your mind and to use what you've been learning. There are opportunities for leadership and learning from others—possibly even training for future employment or an internship. Campus sustainability planning is real world experience, and can be reflected as such on that all-important resume. The connections that you make and skills that you learn during this time can propel you into a great future career. And don't forget about the positive internal rewards that you will receive after seeing something great achieved on your campus. In addition to the indirect rewards, do not forget to thank your members and volunteers. This can take many forms, whether it is a thank-you note after a project's completion, or a pizza party for the entire group. Using these methods, you will be able to retain participants and make the groups stand out on campus for years to come.
- < *Create social opportunities for the group.* Group members will return if they perceive the group as a fun place to be. Be careful not to alienate those who may not be so "social", however.
- < *Use your student association or student government.* Administrators pay attention to organized efforts. Student associations can rally around a positive cause like a sustainability initiative. Through your student association, you can create committees or clubs, take advantage of volunteers and find funding. Inquire about the association's budget cycle and submit a proposal that will lead to resource allocation when you need it (not six months later!) By relying on student organizations that perpetuate after you've graduated, you can help tackle the challenge of students' short time stint on campus. The Student Activities Director is often the advisor to Student Association. Whatever administrators serve this advisory role are terrific resources as well.
- < *Build intra- and inter-campus consortia.* Inevitably, students on other campuses share similar concerns. If your group is small or new, it is helpful to pool resources and share the printing costs of posters, for example, with nearby (potentially more established) campus student groups. A group that is involved in such a network has a better chance of surviving.

What to Avoid

- < *Don't drop the ball when someone approaches you with a desire to participate.* Most volunteers will not return if they perceive an organization to be disorganized or not focused. Be ready with an informative pamphlet and a list of upcoming projects in which they can participate. This is where keeping a calendar and having a variety of participation options come in handy.
- < *Administrators do not care for in-your-face tactics.* Avoid anonymous posters and letters generalizing what students believe. Threatening approaches alienate administrators, whereas approaches that demonstrate your interest in working with administrators are likely to build support.
- < *Avoid subversive actions.* If you find an administrator challenging, don't go over his/her head to a supervisor or trustee to complain. You will risk alienating that administrator when you really want an ally. Instead, continue to work with that administrator or find an alternate administrator who is interested in what you propose. Particularly when sustainability is the focus, subversive tactics are inconsistent with the principles of harmony that you are advocating.
- < *Remember, administrators are concerned with:* keeping the peace, keeping students happy, finding ways to engage students meaningfully in campus life, improving the learning environment, and managing campus finances for the long-term benefit of students and the institution.

Collaboration in Action

Students for Socially Responsible Investing. Student members of the Barnard/Columbia University Earth Coalition were concerned with the investment policies of their school. They formed the club Students for Socially Responsible Investing (SSRI), and came up with a proposal that an advisory group be established to give concerned students, faculty and alumni/ae a voice in the investment decisions of the institution. Using the power of student numbers, they collected over 1,000 signatures in favor of this measure, and presented the petition to administrators. The result of their effort is the Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing, established by the Board of Trustees. The Committee is composed of student, faculty and alumni/ae representatives appointed by the University president.

University of Colorado - Boulder—The Wind Power Referendum. In the spring of 2000, students at UC Boulder initiated a referendum to increase student fees and fund the purchase of wind power for 3 campus buildings that are paid for by student fees and are student-controlled: the student union, recreation center and campus medical center. By a 6 to 1 margin, the referendum passed, resulting in a \$1 per student/per semester student fee increase that would generate \$60,000 a year to purchase output from one turbine at the Excel Wind Farm. The University began purchasing the wind power in September 2000, and it now provides 35-40% of the energy used by those buildings.

Connecticut College—Joining a Clean Energy Co-op. With the support of the student body, the Connecticut College Renewable Energy Club worked with faculty, staff and administrators to earn support to join the Connecticut Energy Cooperative. Students raised \$1,500 to join the Co-op through bake sales and conducted a petition drive that generated the support of nearly 75 percent of the campus' 1,670 students. They agreed to pay a \$25 fee that will enable the college to shift about 17 percent of its electric power use to electricity from renewable resources. By purchasing about 20 percent of the college's electricity through renewal resources would reduce the emission of sulfur oxide by 17,254 pounds per year, the emission of nitrogen oxide by 3,612 pounds per year, and the emission of carbon dioxide by 2.3 million pounds per year.

Second Nature is a Boston-based national nonprofit organization working to help higher education prepare future professionals for the increasingly complex environmental and social challenges we face. We offer colleges and universities a range of programs, training sessions, one-on-one consulting and resources to make the integration of environmental sustainability thinking "second nature" to higher education.
