

Report on campus sustainability fieldwork by KUINEP students

Jane Singer, Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies

This time, we would like to introduce a report prepared by Associate Professor Jane Singer, Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University. In May 2012 Prof. Singer and Associate Professor Ben McLellan of the Graduate School of Energy Science led a campus sustainability module for international and Japanese students, part of a team-taught undergraduate KUINEP course called “Building a sustainable future: Principles and challenges.”

During the course, the students gave serious consideration to sustainable campus practices at Kyoto University and gave us many suggestions for improvements. We hope that we can have more chances to share information and hold discussions with all stakeholders.

Improving Campus Sustainability through Student Involvement

By Jane Singer, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University

In May 2012, 24 international and Japanese students at a spring 2012 undergraduate course offered by KUINEP entitled Building a Sustainable Future: Principles and Challenges (Course director: Associate Professor Tracey Gannon, GSGES) examined campus sustainability at Kyoto University. Student teams focused on five areas of campus environmental management - energy, transportation, waste, food and buildings and grounds. Led by teaching assistants – all graduate students at the Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies or the Graduate School of Energy Science - each team traversed the campus, looking for positive and negative examples of sustainability and they interviewed staff and faculty members knowledgeable about their topic. Then they met to share their observations and suggestions with each other as well as with visiting members of the Kyoto University Environmental Preservation Research Center.

Positive examples of sustainability

Students identified several positive environmental practices on campus:

- J-Pod seminar house uses domestic wood, cuts energy use
- Coop dining hall provides nutritional information about meals; used cooking oil is recycled for biodiesel fuel for municipal vehicles; food safety standards are strictly

maintained

- Solar panels are used to power a “smart office” at Graduate School of Energy Science
- Bicycles are used by many students and faculty rather cars or trains
- There is some sorting of waste by type on campus
- Coop stores do not provide plastic bags
- Many efforts seek to recycle paper or cut paper use

Problem areas identified

Students found several areas for future improvement:

Waste: Too much paper waste; no central system takes responsibility for disposal of waste and food; waste in labs and classrooms is not handled uniformly between the faculties

Buildings: Poor insulation; small, covered windows; poor relations between campus and dorms; improvements are piecemeal; only 10-20% of buildings have been renovated for improved energy conservation

Transportation: Hundreds of discarded bicycles; lack of parking space to accommodate 6700 bicycles; lack of recycling system for discarded bicycles

Food: No system for donating unserved food to those in need; lack of information about food sourcing

Energy: Kyoto University is one of largest consumers of energy in Kyoto and energy use isn't declining much; there is little government pressure for reduction in energy use

General: No common guidelines; decentralized decision-making; students and faculty lack motivation to cooperate; university rules and policies don't reach students; lack of awareness and coordination

Students offer suggestions for change

During a student feedback session the thematic groups generated several ideas for improving campus sustainability:

- Establish special campus-wide hub for sustainability policy, practices and education for comprehensive approach
- Promote solar panels and other new technologies on campus
- Set up a bicycle exchange or recycling system using the Internet, to supply incoming freshmen with bicycles donated by graduating seniors
- Establish uniform waste management policies
- Integrate management of waste and energy

- Communicate clearly and share responsibility throughout university
- Work more closely with student dorms to coordinate energy use and environmental practices
- Provide more vegetarian food options
- Include staff, faculty and students in environmental policymaking
- Educate faculty about sustainability
- Hold student workshops on environmental rules and policies, including recycling
- Work with student circles, esp. for bicycle recycling, waste recycling and paper reduction
- Educate students on how to change individual behavior

The student suggestions were presented again in late July at a meeting of the Kyoto University Environmental Report 2012 Stakeholders Meeting, where university faculty and staff listened carefully to these ideas and responded positively and in great detail.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND CAPTIONS



CAPTION: Interviewing energy managers on campus



Prof. Ishihara of the Graduate School of Energy Science explains conservation measures at his “smart office”

August, 2012



Students share their findings with the class



Prof. Hiroyuki Nakagawa and Mr. Junya Yano from the Environment Preservation Research Center respond to student comments.



TAs and students discuss their campus fieldwork and findings.