

March 2009 Sustainability Forum



Sustainability Forum
Wed, Mar 11 | 6:00-7:30pm | Latimer 105
Come and share your thoughts, concerns, or inquiries
with others working to help the environment!

Open to
anyone
Snacks will be provided.

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Sustainability Team
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Berkeley bright green
Office of Sustainability
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
<http://sustainability.berkeley.edu/OS>

Summary

On March 11, 2009 from 6 to 7:30 pm in 105 Latimer Hall, The Office of Sustainability and ASUC Sustainability Team (STeam) hosted a campus-wide forum for those working to help the environment. Students from various groups such as Building Sustainability @ Cal (BS@C), Students for a Greener Berkeley (SGB), Berkeley Energy Resources Collaborative (BERC), Residential Sustainability Education Coordinators (RSEC), Society for Agriculture and Food Ecology (SAFE), and many more came together to represent their organizations and get updates what other groups are doing.

Using a rotating small group discussion format, the forum had three tables that were each designated with a thought-provoking question. One question was, "What is your most pressing issue and how are you addressing it?" A student responded that merely preaching simple "green" tips hinders creativity in fostering sustainability, therefore people should be continually building on what they know while simultaneously brainstorming new ideas.

While, at another table in response to the question "What do you not know and how do you learn it?" several people mentioned how they are often unaware of what other clubs are up to. With multiple discussions going on at once, participants were able to interact with each other on a closer scale. The connections made at the forum will hopefully encourage communication between separate groups as well as increase the number of collaborative projects.

Notes from the March 2009 Forum

- [1. What is the most pressing issue and how are you addressing it? \(anchor page link to question\)](#)
- [2. What do you not know and how do you learn it? \(anchor page link to question\)](#)
- [3. What is the most interesting thing you've done? \(anchor page link to question\)](#)

These notes were created and compiled by Alex Cole-Weiss, Lisa McNeilly, and Joanna Young.

Downloads

March 2009 Flyer

March 2009 Handout (Informational Sheet)

March 2009 Forum Notes (or see below)

Photos

None Available

Other Past Forums

May 2009 Forum ([link to May 2009 past content](#))

1. What is the most pressing issue and how are you addressing it?

-Apathy of people about issues such as using the elevators instead of the stairs or wasting water

Possible solutions: get them to join environmental groups using tactics to attract them, people address it by joining campus organizations that get involved with greening up corporations or enrolling in the College of Environmental Design and focusing on creating green buildings

-Teaching sustainability to others is tough

Possible solution: people respond to visual rather than huge statistical numbers, don't exaggerate the truth like Al Gore sometimes does, make sustainability convenient and accessible

-There is a lack of education regarding the environment and sustainability

Possible solutions: focus on education, educate youth, sow responsibility in the young because that's where it starts, have high schools offer AP Environmental Science, helps foster basic environmental knowledge, make events consistently fun and attractive

-The nature of the campus' quick officer turnover in clubs and organizations, you never know who is in charge

Possible solution: focus on communications and interactions, make long term connections, outreach to other groups

-UC Berkeley is not sustainable enough

Possible solution: focus on policies that support waste reduction, energy saving, and reduction, outreach to the students, have them do community service

-Lack of a common, popular sustainable lifestyle

Possible solutions: joining grass root movements, bottom up approach, allowing local people to address, allow autonomy and communities to begin changing, ensure creativity, not just simple little facts and tips, foster a living doctrine that is constantly being improved

-Green-washing is a problem

Possible solutions: make sure people know the complete story, identify the fake solution

-Wasted energy through heating inefficiency in buildings that can be easily fixed

Possible solution: talk with the building manager, work with construction, foster sustainable building practices, turn the heater down a couple of degrees

- There is a lack of awareness about sustainability, awareness needs to be year around and consistent

Possible solution: increase marketing, make it like a corporation, unfortunate due to the lack of funding, utilize different groups, go out and meet other people besides environmentalists through traveling, create a larger network

-Make sure authority is taking charge and promoting sustainability

Possible solution: elect politicians that have green practices, go through businesses and corporations to encourage sustainability, using effective programs, they set the example and everyone follows

-Having public policies that support sustainability

Possible solutions: vote, Kyoto Protocol

-Making sustainability more convenient

Possible solutions: having building infrastructures to support sustainability friendly practices such as having the stairs visible before the elevator, make the stairs more accessible

-People don't see the bigger picture

Possible solutions: gain complete understanding and knowledge of processes, composting isn't perfect, people think composting is great but it's better to reduce, composting releases nitrous oxide, nuclear is not as clean as you may think

-Environmental justice

Possible solution: join activist groups, get the word out, instill and encourage corporate social responsibility because companies are large and influential

-Current infrastructure of cities is very unsustainable

Possible solutions: analyze how we use resources and then design and engineer accordingly, change the industries and then change behavior, policy affects sustainability on a grand scale, focus on effective public transportation, cities are compacted in one area, high rise industrial cities develop, but a green city would be built for pedestrians

2. What do you not know and how do you learn it?

What We Do Not Know

- Up to date plans and events happening in other groups
- Logistical issues about environmental issues: how do things work (in greater "environmental" sense, i.e. technologies, ecosystems, applications of technology, etc)
→ Being in an academic setting helps us understand major environmental issues and problems, and then how to contextualize and prioritize them
- Not aware of all the resources available (on campus), monetary or other
- Not sure if there is even a complete list of environmental groups somewhere
- Hard to find interested people to join group, Sproul? Class announcement?
- Need to know why people aren't motivated (to engage in sustainability)

Comments & Observations, How We Learn Things

- Information is out there, but the question is how to coordinate it and make things visible
- Decentralized nature of activity makes communication difficult

- Identifying key people and networks is usually the way we find out things; we are dependent on specific people rather than structures with institutional memory
- Developing clearly defined goals allow for people and groups to understand each other
- Clear visioning on an organizational level is important
- Accident is common way of finding out things
- List-serves (can) keep you updated
- Classes can help folks understand
- Convenience can be an important factor in providing sustainable alternatives
- Convenience is embedded in infrastructure
- BIE website is helpful! Enviro.berkeley.edu, is a good clearinghouse for events/info
→ There are lots of ways to expand info on website

Suggestions & Ideas

- We should reach out to other to other folks on campus to understand other needs and issues
- Asking others what they want or need is a very effective way to deepen understanding
- Don't necessarily assume that people know what you're talking about; be proactive in providing support to others
- Need to institutionalize sustainability
- Dynamic communication and updating should be prioritized
- Need to look to and draw upon "sustainable" (i.e. more institutionalized) orgs/groups as models for our own orgs
- Groups need to bridge across issues and find common ground on issue!
→ Environmental justice during justice week is a good example of this
- Create space on BIE to put up goals and projects; have someone be accountable to the update; also, space on BIE for Q&A/Forum discussions to occur
- Maybe we could develop an "update" summit/newsletter
- News! I.E. Central place with a lot of information
- Update websites!!!

Important Questions

- How do we stay in effective communication and collaboration without losing autonomy?
- What are our shared goals, if any?
- What should Berkeley's approach be to understanding diversity within environmentalism?
- How do my skills fit into other people's work? What's the best way to offer support?
- What is equity and inclusion in climate action at UCB? What does it look like?
- How do we mediate different goals and stay true to core values regarding sustainability?
- How do we connect to the greater activity and resources in the area? (CSSC for example)
- How do we understand feasibility of sustainable solutions?
- How to implement feasibility analyses into the work we do?
- How to provide opportunities for follow-up, i.e. activism, direct involvement in the issue?
- How do we facilitate collaboration?

3. What is the most interesting thing you've done?

- Trip to Honduras with Amigos de las Americas to teach elementary school kids
- BERC-SEED education program on climate change in East Bay middle schools
- Visited wind farm in Bird's Landing (ER 100)

- Started Earth Week at my high school, including a walk-a-thon fundraiser
- Participated in the bike to school week in Santa Cruz for whole community
- Was in a gardening club in high school
- Class retreat to Mendocino on consensus volunteering (ED193)
- This semester's LEED DeCal (taught by Lindsey Baker). The Clark Kerr project manager taking it – agreed to replace 150 incandescent in construction lighting to CFLs and talking to CP to do for all construction projects
- Why isn't drought talked about more?
- Trash to treasure donation drive at end of school year -- that is then sold in August at a garage sale
- Waste audit at Haas
- Leadership Conference at UCSD
- Non-profit work in China with my sister to do micro-finance loans and help train and educate so small businesses are more sustainable
- Engineers for a Sustainable Future - doing a display at Earth Week
- Exposure of sustainability issues: the 8-year-old telling his/her mom to buy organic
- San Francisco green festival with vendors and booths, overwhelming but many really committed organizations
- BEREC symposium
- How to do things you can't do without \$? If you do more than just at the personal level, need to know how to get started.
- How much do larger efforts (like JBI) trump smaller initiatives?
- So much energy that's wasted by divisions (e.g., "sell outs" vs. direct action) – need to have multiple tactics to have solidarity, need to "show the other option"
- RSEC elevator awareness campaign and paper towel composting pilot
- Making a behavior more inconvenient discourages folks from doing it
- Over winter break San Diego, found a community garden flooded with sewage (related to immigration fence)