

Dear Dr. Gillis:

Thank you very much for meeting with us, the students of Univ 303, on March 27, 2002, to discuss environmental policy at Rice. The discussion was both educational and empowering.

Following our meeting with you, our class drafted the attached environmental policy per your request. Italicized portions of the document provide the rationale for various aspects of the draft policy. We welcome your comments and suggestions. We would like to receive your general comments via e-mail to the attached class list, but if it is more convenient, please send them along with any written comments on the draft to Dr. Paul Harcombe, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Department, MS 170, and he will send them on to us.

Although our formal class responsibilities will have ended by the time you send your comments, several of us are committed to continuing to work on the project, either over the summer or as an independent study project next fall with Professors Harcombe and Ostdiek. We look forward to your guidance on how we might be of most assistance.

We appreciate your continuing commitment to the environment and to student initiatives at Rice.

Sincerely,

Univ 303 class, Spring 2002
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Environmental Sustainability Policy

Introduction

Rice University students, faculty, staff, and administration have a responsibility to assume a leadership role by actively seeking to protect the environment through administrative actions as well as academic pursuits in and out of the classroom. As a responsible leader, the Rice University community will promote and conduct programs that fully implement the policy outlined below.

Policy Objectives

- Comply with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Engage in sound reuse and recycling practices and explore feasible opportunities to minimize the amount and toxicity of waste generated.

Rice is currently involved with recycling and hazardous waste reduction and disposal efforts. It is the consensus of the class, however, that areas such as undergraduate laboratories may be in need of further attention.

- Reduce consumption of fossil fuels and decrease our contribution to greenhouse gases.
- Reduce total water consumption.
- Minimize environmental impacts of new construction, facilities maintenance, acquisition of goods and services, and operations.
- Encourage individual responsibility and compliance through employee training, performance reviews, and other incentive structures.

We realize that the efficacy of this policy relies largely on the efforts of individuals. Therefore, we envision the policy to have enforcement mechanisms that recognize the efforts of individuals. Also, we think it is important that these mechanisms not be punitive, but rather aligned with current university incentive structures already in place to encourage compliance with existing performance criteria.

- Foster the expectation that all employees, students, and contractors on University premises will be stewards of this policy, reporting environmental concerns and potential areas for improvement to appropriate Rice University management.

Infrastructure

In order to realize these policy objectives, the following changes will be implemented.

1. Expand Decision-Making Criteria. Rice University shall add consideration of sustainability to the criteria used to evaluate major operational and budgetary decisions.

Environmental impact (including effects on non-renewable resources, air quality, and water quality) will be added to the existing criteria, which include: urgency, financial payback,

economic efficiency, contribution to mission, etc. We believe that the long-term institutionalization of environmental consciousness and action will be ensured if it is integrated fully into the university's operational procedures. Also, we feel that complementing the existing suite of decision-making criteria with a criterion of environmental impact assessment will incorporate environmental responsibility in a way that is respectful of individual authority and discretion.

2. Environmental Sustainability Standing Committee

To oversee environmental sustainability efforts at Rice University, a Sustainability Standing Committee will be established. In addition to faculty and students, the committee will include representatives from Facilities & Engineering, Project Management & Planning, Finance & Administration, and Housing & Dining. The committee charge includes, but is not limited to:

- Monitor progress via periodic environmental audits and reviews of purchasing practices; make recommendations for improvement as appropriate.
- Make periodic reports to the President regarding Rice's environmental footprint.
- Propose policy modifications as necessary.

Some actions that the University might take in order to achieve the aforementioned objectives include:

- *Reinvest financial savings gained from environmental actions into other environmental projects. In many instances, environmental actions lead directly to financial savings. We envision the creation of an Environmental Fund in which these savings could be accumulated and then redistributed*
- *Obtain supplies and resources from environmentally responsible suppliers.*
- *Evaluate the potential utility of private sector practices, such as innovations in green architecture and product life-cycle assessment. We see this as an important aspect of continuously improving performance. Perpetually looking inward while simultaneously exploring the insights discovered outside of the university will do much to keep Rice on the leading edge of environmental performance and impact management.*
- *The Environmental Sustainability Committee should evaluate the feasibility of naming an Environmental Coordinator to serve as an information resource for the committee. Such a staff person could also review environmental considerations in project evaluations and budget decisions, maintain contact with the departments, and implement appropriate staff training programs.*