

Educating for Leadership toward a Sustainable Human Environment

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of the Earth Charter to the United States in the fall of 2000 inspired a group of a dozen interested faculty from consortial Connecticut colleges and universities to explore ways of incorporating its principles (sustainability, equity, peace and justice) into their educational programs. The original planning group included representatives from Central Connecticut State University, Saint Joseph College, Trinity College and the University of Hartford. With the leadership of Dr. Thomas Malone, internationally known meteorologist and environmental scholar, Visiting Faculty at Saint Joseph College, they applied for a CT State TALENT Grant to be used for developing their mutual interests. Initial faculty representing eight academic disciplines were joined during the year by faculty from four additional disciplines and three additional colleges. An award of \$20,000 was approved for implementing the following strategies:

- * a major public inter-institutional symposium to promote interest in the Earth Charter
- * development of a website on our common future to facilitate use of the best informational technology resources available for furthering student research and interdisciplinary exchange
- * modest funding to assist faculty/student initiatives oriented toward expanding interest in issues of sustainability

The Symposium was held on September 28 2002. Robert Corell from Harvard's JFK School of Government and Stephen Kellert from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Science were keynote speakers. Breakout Sessions involved faculty from the collaborating institutions and local leaders. They featured Energy and Environment, Economic Equity, Education and Connecticut Initiatives. About 150 attended, a good mix of faculty, college and secondary students and interested public. Dr. Corell's discussion of the effects of global warming on the peoples who live within the Arctic Circle was webcast live to a network of 20 cities collaborating in promoting the Earth Charter.

The initial design of the website: www.ourcommonfuture.org <<http://www.ourcommonfuture.org/>> was developed by students of the Interactive Information Department of the University of Hartford. The basic sections are concerned with Environmental Sustainability, Economic Fairness and A Peaceful Society. A fourth section on Partnerships features groups with common interests and concerns from both

government and non- governmental sectors. The objectives are to promote interaction and build a knowledge base shared by academic and broader community groups. The URL has been registered and the website is housed at Saint Joseph College. The faculty collaborators have compiled the best available web referenced links for research and communication. It is under continuing development.

At the writing of this Abstract the sponsored faculty/student initiatives are still in process. Two were initiated in the fall semester, and included outreach to secondary and elementary teachers and students. Two initiatives are concerned with research on biodiesel fuels. One project involved explorations of freshwater resources. Others center around Earth Day. Evaluations of the impact of these activities will be included in the presentation.

Assessment of the ongoing benefits of the overall program, in addition to the website, will include curricular modifications in the participating disciplines, new orientation seminars for beginning college students, sustainability- focused internships and research seminars.