

Report on the SGA's Environmental Initiatives

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Introduction

This report includes observations about the environmental status of Colgate, initiatives that the SGA has decided to undertake, and recommendations to the University of actions the SGA supports. These observations, initiatives, and recommendations are a result of ongoing conversations throughout the semester with many students including the SGA Leadership, SGA Senate, and several environmental groups on campus. The recommendations have been informed by discussions with many of Colgate's faculty and administrators, recent environmental research, and initiatives at our peer institutions. This report is offered as a clear statement to the Colgate Community of the initiatives that the SGA will pursue with the goal of increasing Colgate's environmentally friendly practices and decreasing practices that may be harmful.

Short-Term Initiatives:

Basic computer needs

Observation:

There is excessive waste of paper and energy in Colgate's libraries and computer labs. Turning off computers when not in use and setting double-sided printing as default will drastically reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emitted as well as save energy costs.

SGA Initiative:

1) The SGA will be encouraging professors to accept all work digitally via email or Blackboard. If an assignment must be turned in via hard copy, professors should encourage or require that it be turned in on reused paper and be printed double-sided.

Recommendations to the University:

- 1) Create a policy that will mandate workers in computer labs to turn off computers at close each night and set time limits at which an inactive computer will enter standby mode.
- 2) Encourage ITS to set all printers on campus to print double-sided by default.

Bottled Water

Observation:

There is widespread use of bottled water on campus. Recent research has shown that not only is bottled water of the same or lower quality than tap water, but it has a significant carbon footprint attached to its production and distribution.

SGA Initiatives:

- 1) The SGA will be engaging in a public education campaign to help the Colgate Community understand the impact of bottled water upon the environment and the benefits of reusable containers.
- 2) The SGA will pursue options for funding to purchase and distribute Colgate-branded Nalgene water bottles to all members of the Colgate Community.

Recommendations to the University:

- 1) Release and publicize the most recent campus water quality report.
- 2) Publicly pledge to no longer purchase bottled water with University funds except under extenuating circumstances.

Downtown Hamilton

Observation:

The O'Connor Campus Center utilizes biodegradable flatware and take-out containers (at a similar cost to their previous product). These boxes are an option for downtown restaurants, who often serve food to customers in containers for take-out or delivery. Currently, most downtown restaurants are less environmentally friendly than on-campus dining facilities.

SGA Initiatives:

- 1) The SGA will write a report summarizing Sodexo's biodegradable product options and lauding their recent environmental initiatives.
- 2) The SGA will approach downtown restaurants to let them know of the successful transition on Colgate's campus and ask them to make the shift as well. If changes are made, the SGA will communicate the positive steps taken by downtown restaurants to the student body.

Recommendation to the University:

- 1) Encourage restaurants, particularly those that are Colgate-affiliated through the Hamilton Initiative, to use environmentally friendly products and any other venues of communication available.

Recycling Campaign

Observation:

Expanding recycling on campus is something that has been attempted by every environmental organization on campus but has had little success. There is enormous potential to increase the types and amount of material recycled on campus.

SGA Initiatives:

- 1) The SGA will conduct an audit of buildings to identify which are lacking proper recycling facilities.
- 2) The SGA will administer a survey to students in order to understand student recycling habits and how they can be improved.
- 3) The SGA will develop a recycling education tutorial for Colgate students covering New York State guidelines as well as other greening efforts on campus.

Recommendations to the University:

- 1) Invest in recycling stations (like those currently in Persson Hall) for each academic building and one bin for each room currently without.
- 2) Obtain a moveable recycling station for each building that hosts Brown Bags or events with food or drinks.
- 3) Integrate the recycling tutorial in the First-Year Experience so that all students are aware of the facilities available on campus and how to properly utilize them.

Long-Term Initiatives:

Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs

Observation:

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) use between one-fifth and one-quarter the energy of an incandescent light bulb. Colgate has taken successful steps by using such high-efficiency lighting systems in many academic buildings and is slowly replacing the older incandescent bulbs (as funding permits).

SGA Initiatives:

- 1) The SGA will work with the C-Store and Bookstore to make CFLs available for student purchase.
- 2) The SGA will work with the Office of Residential Life to discuss the possibility of a program that would make CFLs more readily available in the residence halls.

Recommendation to the University:

- 1) Publicly pledge to replace all current incandescent light bulbs in academic buildings and residence halls with CFLs by an achievable target date.

Energy and Water Efficient Appliances

Observation:

Gradual replacement of energy-intensive machines such as refrigerators, washers and dryers, and high-water-use toilets would be a good way for the school to show its commitment to the environment. Additionally, there are bathroom facilities on campus such as toilets, sinks, and showerheads with outdated high-water-use technology.

SGA Initiatives:

- 1) The SGA will educate students about the need to use high-energy-use appliances and high-water-use bathroom facilities minimally to conserve natural resources.

Recommendations to the University:

- 1) Publicly pledge to replace energy intensive machines with Energy Star-approved machines when needed.
- 2) Publicly pledge to replace bathroom facilities with low-flow water-efficient models when needed.
- 3) Incorporate conservation in one's campus residence into the Vision for Residential Education and implement it utilizing Residential Life staff as leaders and role models.

Solar or wind energy for campus**Observation:**

Many students on campus are calling for Colgate to become carbon neutral and develop a program to utilize alternative energy. While complete carbon neutrality may not be possible at this time, this is perhaps the environmental issue in the forefront of Colgate student's minds and is the center of national environmental debate.

SGA Initiatives:

- 1) The SGA will look to partner with the appropriate University faculty and administrators to carry out an assessment of the University's current energy contract.
- 2) The SGA will work with Spring 2008's ENST 480 seminar to determine how they can help in addressing the feasibility of alternative energy for the campus or its ability to sponsor an alternative energy project with the goal of excess output being returned to the power grid.

Recommendations to the University:

- 1) Engage in a community-wide conversation about Colgate's current energy contract and make available past feasibility studies of alternative energy utilization.
- 2) Enable, encourage, and allow students or student groups to purchase offsets for their carbon emissions directly through the University (i.e. offsetting international travel for study abroad).

Conclusion

While there are many environmentally friendly practices at Colgate, there are some improvements that can be made. The SGA looks forward to working with all members of the Colgate Community to continuously develop opportunities for Colgate to be a more environmentally friendly campus. Through cooperative work and partnership, the SGA hopes to help implement optimal solutions for the challenges discussed in this report.