

Academic Senate Resolution

Endorsing Focus the Nation: Global Warming Solutions for America

Whereas global climate change poses a serious threat to people and natural systems across the planet;

And whereas public and private policy decisions in the near term will have impacts lasting for generations;

And whereas the mission of the University of Utah is "to serve the people of Utah and the world through the discovery, creation and application of knowledge; through the dissemination of knowledge by teaching, publication, artistic presentation and technology transfer; and through community engagement," . . . to "advance rigorous interdisciplinary inquiry, international involvement, and social responsibility";[1]

And whereas, in the arena of Public Life, "The University facilitates the application of research findings to the health and well-being of Utah's citizens through programs and services available to the community. The University's faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to contribute time and expertise to community and professional service, to national and international affairs and governance, and to matters of civic dialogue";[1]

And whereas, to focus the state and the nation's attention on the critical issue of global climate change, University of Utah students and faculty, with leadership and coordination provided by the University of Utah's Office of Sustainability, and in conjunction with colleges, universities, and other educational institutions across the country, will organize a series of events about Global Warming Solutions for America on or around January 31, 2008, which will include diverse disciplinary perspectives;

Be it resolved that the University Academic Senate endorses this effort.

And be it further resolved that, during January 2008, faculty are strongly encouraged to participate with their students in scheduled programs on campus about climate change, or, as appropriate, to devote class time to discussion of the subject.

Financial Impact Statement

The event will be organized by faculty and student volunteers with additional support provided by Office of Sustainability staff. These educational events will occur in rooms available on campus, using available audio-visual equipment, with little or no additional expense to the university. Student organizers may choose to request limited funding from ASUU and the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center to cover any anticipated advertising, room rental, or speaker fee costs.

[1] See University of Utah Mission Statement, <http://www.admin.utah.edu/president/mission.html>

Debated: December 3, 2007.
Outcome: Resolution was approved unanimously.

Focus the Nation January 2008—Request for Endorsement by Academic Senate

Background

Focus the Nation is a project of the Green House network, “a Portland, Oregon-501(c)3 non-profit organization . . . committed to creating the grassroots movement needed to stop global warming. The Green House Network has no paid staff, but hundreds of active members across the country.” <http://www.greenhousenet.org/about.htm>

Volunteer Executive Director of Green House, Dr. Eban Goodstein, serves as the lead coordinator for the Focus the Nation project. He is a professor of Economics at Lewis and Clark College.

According to Focus the Nation organizers,

“In the next few years, we as a nation will make, or fail to make, critical decisions regarding global warming pollution and clean technology investments. These decisions will have far-reaching and irreversible impacts on the lives of today’s students and the lives of their children. At this moment in time, we owe our young people at least a day of focused discussion about global warming solutions for America.

Focus the Nation is organizing a national teach-in on global warming solutions for America—creating a dialogue at over a thousand colleges, universities, high schools, middle schools, places of worship, civic organizations and businesses, and directly engaging millions of students and citizens with the nation’s decision-makers. Focus the Nation will culminate January 31st, 2008 in simultaneous educational symposia held across the country. Our intent is to move America beyond fatalism to a determination to face up to this civilizational challenge, the challenge of our generation.

Focus the Nation is an educational initiative, but we also promote civic engagement. Each Focus team will invite local, state and federal political leaders and decision-makers to come to campus and participate in a non-partisan, round-table discussion of global warming solutions. . . .Currently over 1000 institutions, mostly colleges and universities, have signed on to participate, and dozens of college and university Presidents have endorsed the initiative.”

<http://www.focusthenation.org/about.php>

The Focus the Nation organization provides a set of templates for planning events at campuses nationwide. At the University of Utah campus, a coalition of student organizations, led by the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center student group SEED, is planning to host a series of events throughout the month of January, 2008. Other participating student groups to date include the ASUU Board of Sustainability, Net Impact, and Service Politics and Civic Engagement (Bennion Center). Additionally, faculty are being invited to devote a portion of one class period during the week of January 28, 2008 to the topic of global climate change in the context of their discipline as appropriate.