

Cornell Center for a Sustainable Future

Overview for Engineering
Conference
March 2008

Frank DiSalvo
Director of CCSF

CCSF Mission

- Create real-world solutions to sustainability problems
 - Coordinate, leverage, and amplify Cornell research
 - Over 300 faculty on campus are now active
 - Foster partnerships with external collaborators for impact
 - Government, industry, foundations, NGOs, other orgs
- Focus on three interconnected themes:
 - Energy
 - Environment
 - Economic Development
- Campus-wide:
 - Agriculture, business, economics, engineering, medicine, policy, physical sciences, life sciences, and social sciences.

Why CCSF?

- Already 300+ faculty and 30+ centers/institutes in sustainability research at Cornell.
 - This is a large investment in people, space and resources
- BUT
 - Many are unaware of others at Cornell in similar areas
 - Are not addressing interconnected nature of the problems
 - Teams not primed for large collaborative response to RFPs
 - Poor internal & external visibility in sustainability arena
 - Potential external partners have no easy entry to Cornell
 - Further investment in this area would have limited impact if the mode of organization remains the same
 - Total impact is “less than the sum of the parts.”
 - Optimal return on investment is not being realized.

Why else CCSF?

- **Alumni Push:**
 - Constant refrain. High priority for many alum individuals/groups.
 - Capture this enthusiasm for CCSF and larger campaign?
- **Faculty and Student Pull:**
 - Recommended by multiple committees and task forces.
 - Faculty want to be involved, but do not have resources to organize.
 - Attracting partners often requires teams that are already functioning, promises to do so after obtaining funding rarely succeed in winning.
 - Students “get it.” Many organizations on campus.
- **Peer Institutions:**
 - We will be left behind if we don’t move ahead quickly
 - Most peers have organized activities in one or more of the three Es.
 - Some are already building endowment to support programs.

CCSF: 6 functions to amplify impact

1. Use competitive seed grants to catalyze new team research
2. Vigorously pursue external partnerships and investment
3. Proactively communicate with internal & external stakeholders
4. Stimulate innovative education for undergrads & grads
5. Engage the public in understanding the nature of sustainability
6. Assist in hiring and retaining key faculty

- The first three activities form the core focus and bulk of initial resources.
- Must be successful at the first three functions. Metrics and milestones agreed to at start of each seed grant.
- Focus on problems that have high impact potential and probability of attracting external partners as collaborators and/or “investors.”
- Workshops and symposia to define central challenges and paths to impact.

Academic Venture Fund

- Similarities to Traditional Venture Funds:
 - Competition for funding of “great ideas” that will leverage initial investment, either financially or in overall effort/impact.
 - Meeting goals defines success. Should be able to transition to other support from outside. Must focus on this from the beginning.
 - Some teams will fail and funding will terminate.
 - Whether success or failure, resources re-invested in new teams.
- Differences from Traditional Venture Funds:
 - Any leveraging of Cornell funds through external investment will NOT accrue to CCSF, but to the successful teams. CCSF would withdraw from management and oversight, unless individual teams see advantages to continue such interaction.
 - However, benefit does accrue to Cornell in increased visibility, impact and external support for research.

Current Status of CCSF

- Working closely with many stakeholders, on campus and off.
- The CCSF team now consists of:

Prof. Frank DiSalvo	Director	8/07
Prof. Sid Leibovich	Assoc. Dir. for Energy	10/07
Prof. Anurag Agrawal	Assoc. Dir. for Environment	2/08
Prof. Chris Barrett	Assoc. Dir. for Economic Development	3/08
Dr. Helene Schember	Executive Director	12/07
Dr. David Dieterich	Partnerships Director	1/08

Two part time staff
Other capabilities are being contracted for as the need arises.
- Faculty Advisory Committee
 - 16 of approx. 18 members of Faculty Advisory Committee accepted
 - 4 ex officio representatives from Colleges/VPR
- Space: currently in bootlegged space in Baker Lab.
 - Move to temp space in Rice Hall for 1 – 4 years following refurbishment
- More permanent home to be determined.
- If CCSF successful, eventually in LEED platinum space (> 10 years?)

Faculty Advisory Committee

Energy

Sid Leibovich (M&AE)
 Paulette Clancy - C&BE
 Natalie Mahowald - E&AS
 Larry Walker - B&EE
 Dick Schuler – Economics
 Sandip Tiwari – E&CE

Environment

Anurag Agrawal (E&EB)
 Todd Cowen – C&EE
 Kieran Donaghy – C&RP
 Anthony Hay – Microbio
 Mike Hoffmann – Ag Exp
 Bob Howarth – E&EB

Economic Dev.

Chris Barrett – (AE&M)
 Michael Jones-Correa - Govt
 David Sahn – Econ/NS
 Linda Williams – Dev. Soc.

Ex Officio from each college. So far:

Nelson Hairston (E&EB-A&S), Barbara Knuth (NR-CALS), Steve Kresovich (PB&G- VPR), Chris Ober (MS&E- Eng)

- Staggered appointments

Plans for remaining FY08

- Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) in place, first meeting March 13.
- RFP developed and advertised by June 1 (workshops and teams).
- More concrete milestones and metrics for programs developed with FAC, but input from proposers also will be sought.
- Proposals due in late summer – early fall.
- Jump start program using directors fund, nucleate thinking and groups through meetings & discussion
- Many interactions with alums through Cornell Club and special visits through Development

FY08 Sources and Uses of Funds- until 7/1/08

