

A Proposal for Sustainable Practice at Rhode Island School of Design

PREPARED BY THE MEMBERS OF RESPOND | DESIGN INQUIRY SEMINAR, WINTER 2008

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I. INTRODUCTION

This proposal was developed through research and discussions undertaken by a seminar given at Rhode Island School of Design in January 2008. The seminar, sponsored by Graduate Studies and the Office of Public Engagement, reflected interdisciplinary participation, inclusive of perspectives from Furniture Design, Graphic Design, Industrial Design and Landscape Architecture.

The course, Respond | Design Inquiry Seminar, posed three questions:

1. What is the current state of sustainability at RISD?
2. What would it take for RISD to be a carbon-neutral institution?
3. How can RISD students, administrators and faculty collaborate on campus design and sustainability projects in an effective and on-going way?

After establishing a set of broader inquiry questions, the seminar broke into working groups that reviewed the literature, met with experts from the field and interviewed key stakeholders on campus. After presentations of collected data, the seminar refined its area of focus and established a second set of working groups to develop proposals in specific areas. As the seminar proceeded, it became clear that proactive efforts were needed to coordinate the many individual sustainability efforts already underway on campus and that new, bold leadership is necessary to achieve the larger goal of carbon neutrality and institutional sustainability.

This proposal is a work in progress and signifies a first step toward developing a comprehensive plan for addressing these issues. The detailed sections provide a blueprint for further inquiry and the action steps described at the end of the report reflect the seminar's belief that concrete steps need to be taken quickly to achieve the larger aims of the proposal. We do not expect that every proposal in this document can be undertaken. However it is clear to us that RISD faces a challenge and that it must now do the difficult work of defining the process through which it accepts and acts upon its responsibility as a global citizen and educational leader.

In writing this report, the seminar has struggled with the question of voice. Should we speak from our relative isolation as a group of a dozen concerned people, or should we speak with the voice of the institution? The urgency of the planet's current environmental crisis prompted us to risk some hubris and speak as RISD. In doing so, we invite others in the RISD community to join us and to voice their own concerns about, and commitment to, addressing the on-going environmental crisis.

Ultimately, in choosing to adopt sustainable practices,

RISD is making a commitment to its own future and that of the planet. In this instance, the writers of this report are not simply referring to the institution. RISD represents a network of individuals who are and will be leaders across the planet. The commitments we make to these issues in Providence can have a profound collective affect in communities across the world.

We ask that readers of this report consider it thoughtfully and ask questions of our proposals. While we are convinced that the need for action is both urgent and necessary, we also understand that conversation and on-going discourse about these issues is central to making change. The crisis we face isn't simple nor will it be easily resolved. It requires all of us to consider how individually and collectively we can shift our point of view and commit to making life better while doing things differently.

II. BACKGROUND

The time for debating the existence of global warming is over. Unsustainable practices of the last century have catalyzed environmental change that is measurable and felt by people across the planet. The actions we take today will not fix the current problems, but reflect an understanding that we must prevent further planetary damage in order to avoid an even greater crisis. Indeed, the questions we face today are not simply questions for our historical moment, but are the questions that will define our culture for future generations.

In reviewing the literature, we understand that the institutional process for addressing these issues often begins with internal research. It's our opinion that this was a necessary step twenty years ago, but that it has become a political red herring, a way to slow the process of change. In a way, RISD is lucky that it can benefit from the institutional research and learning of colleges and universities that have been considering these questions over the past two decades. We believe that RISD can learn from and match their bold leadership.

For example, our sister school, Brown University, has had a director of sustainability on staff for nearly eighteen years and has recently committed to reducing its carbon emissions to 42 percent below 1990 levels by 2020. The decision to take this step certainly reflects Brown's commitment to institutional leadership, but it also reflects thoughtful economic planning. While Brown's energy costs are a relatively small percentage of its overall budget, like all institutions they reflect an unpredictable line item. By investing in regional wind power, Brown will become an energy producer equal to and exceeding its use. This means electrical costs will soon become a predictable and rational component of their institutional planning.

Similarly, through its Campus Resource Monitoring

System, Oberlin College has undertaken a persuasive campus educational program that raises individual awareness of energy use and carbon emissions by showing, in real time, the energy use of campus buildings on its website. Such programs, at Oberlin and elsewhere, demonstrate to the community the real affect individuals have on what can seem to be an insurmountable problem.

Among other initiatives, specifically relevant to art and design schools, Pratt Institute has organized a group of faculty, students, administrators and staff called Sustainable Pratt. This group has the objective of educating, maintaining and facilitating sustainable practices on and around their campus. Within Sustainable Pratt, a program called Design Incubator for Sustainable Innovation has been established to provide start up support and guidance for students who want to start businesses revolving around ideals of sustainability.

In addition to particular campus initiatives, we've also learned that the economics of sustainability often are at odds with our conventional wisdom about cost. At Pennsylvania State University, students wanted the institution to buy only 100% post-consumer recycled paper for printers and copiers. While the cost of this paper initially seemed higher than first-use paper, by undertaking comprehensive research on paper use, students and faculty proved the short-term inefficiency of that business practice. By taking three steps in one department – setting default margins at .75", setting font size to 10 point and making double-sided printing the institutional norm – Penn State demonstrated how it can cut its paper usage by two-thirds. Regardless of the higher upfront costs, by simply reducing the default margins on college-owned computers (adding 19 percent use to each page) Penn State estimates that an institution can reduce its per capita paper costs by \$25. At RISD, these measures could conservatively save the College \$50,000 annually.

Finally, in our review of successful programs, we've learned that those colleges with the deepest commitments and most effective results have hired a director of sustainability to steward the institution's goals. Quite often this position works closely with both the administrative and academic divisions and utilizes the energy and passion of students through internships, work-study positions and academic courses.

As our peer institutions have demonstrated, making commitments, setting goals and achieving tangible results is possible across a range of institutional types. RISD need not delay in moving forward out of a sense that the answers to these complex questions are beyond our institutional means. Indeed, RISD has the inherent resources to enhance and advance the current work around institutional sustainability, new energy sources and innovations in design curricula.

III. SUSTAINABILITY MISSION

Sustainability is a central concern of a RISD Education. As stated in its academic plan, "the mission of the Rhode Island School of Design is to educate students to make lasting contributions in our communities." Artists and designers, as producers of material and consumer culture, hold a special obligation to be aware of and engaged with the questions posed by the current environmental crisis. The decisions of artists and designers can help to either catalyze sustainable practice or deepen the crisis. Like the use of new technologies a generation ago, engaging with sustainable practice is not a choice for artists and designers. It is an essential element that will shape our effectiveness and relevance as practitioners.

Sustainability is a process of improving the quality of life for all people. RISD's approach to sustainability must be inclusive of the entire community, providing relevant and accessible information and action steps. For RISD to become both a sustainable institution and a leader of sustainable art and design, it commits to making sustainability a transparent and present concern across the institution. A holistic approach to education will empower students to become local and global stewards. RISD is in a unique position to promote positive change in the world through making. As artists and designers, natural resources are our most valuable commodity; it is our responsibility to cultivate respect and preservation. By harnessing our collective creative potential, we will work across disciplines to develop innovative solutions to address social and environmental challenges.

IV. PROPOSAL

The following sections outline a series of proposals that span the curricular, administrative, residential and professional interests of the College. While some of the proposals are broad and reflect the need for new institutional committees, policies, and business models, others are more modest and can be acted upon quickly by individuals and ad hoc groups within offices and departments. Regardless of scope, it is clear that undertaking these efforts will require leadership, resources, stewardship and recognition.

1. American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment

Established in 2007, "the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment is a high-visibility effort to address global warming by garnering institutional commitments to neutralize greenhouse gas emissions, and to accelerate the research and educational efforts of higher education to equip society to re-stabilize the earth's climate." To date, RISD has not signed the Commitment.

Signing AC&U's Climate Commitment will signal RISD's serious commitment and leadership in the global effort to reduce carbon emissions. Over 300 college and university presidents have already signed the Commitment, enabling their campuses to use its structure as a means for significantly reducing carbon emissions, embedding issues of sustainability into their curriculum and creating new efficiencies within their business practices. Signing the declaration and beginning the institutional process of reducing RISD's carbon footprint will connect RISD with its institutional peers, enhancing the opportunity for collaboration both on an institutional and curricular basis.

RISD has already taken several steps outlined in the Commitment, notably providing free access to public buses for all students, faculty and staff; purchasing from local food sources; and participating in the national RecycleMania competition. Furthermore, the intentions of the Provost's Green Committee parallel the steering committee that the Commitment requires. By enhancing this committee and charging it with oversight of the Commitment, RISD could quickly develop a comprehensive plan to achieve climate neutrality.

The AC&U Commitment is appended to this proposal.

2. Energy

RISD, if it is to continue to maintain its leadership role, needs to make decisive steps in order to reduce the environmental impact of its energy consumption. Institutions of higher learning across the country have made significant efforts to reduce their ecological

impact, many making pledges to become entirely carbon neutral. In order to become carbon neutral, RISD must first accurately calculate its carbon footprint. It is the recommendation of this group that RISD allocate faculty and student time to begin research in order to calculate its carbon emissions, while also, in the short term, take immediate steps to reduce its environmental impact.

In the short term, by instituting a policy to burn only natural gas at its cogeneration power plant, RISD could significantly reduce its emission of greenhouse gases, particulates and mercury. The power plant heats and powers 21 buildings on campus and has the capability of using either natural gas or oil for fuel. The 2007-2008 school year was the first year in which the plant burned exclusively natural gas. This decision by facilities was primarily an economic one, though the beneficial environmental aspects of burning gas played a factor in the decision making process. In order to lessen its carbon footprint RISD should adopt an official position to burn natural gas at its plant so long as the price of gas does not exceed that of oil by more than fifteen percent. This allowance for a fifteen percent price fluctuation (which covers the average range of seasonal fluctuations in the oil and gas market) places a value on emission reductions but ensures that RISD does not suffer exorbitant costs. RISD should also adopt a policy of replacing old oil boilers in its buildings and dorms with new gas burning furnaces. These furnaces burn more efficiently (96% vs. 85%), require less maintenance, and because the gas is piped in, further reduce emissions through eliminating delivery by diesel trucks.

In the long term, instead of buying costly green energy certificates as other schools have done, RISD should instead use its influence to push for more sustainable energy projects in the region. Rhode Island holds huge potential for wind energy, and RISD, as one of the foremost academic institutions in the state, should begin exploring using its prominence and strong credit rating to develop a new wind farm. Other colleges and universities have already demonstrated the feasibility of such a project, with an average return on investment of eight to ten years. Wind power could also be generated on a much smaller scale through the purchase of Vertical Axis Wind Turbines (VAWT) to be placed on RISD buildings with exposed rooftops. The VAWT's low profile, silent operation and high output, make them ideal for urban settings, and through a strategic partnership could even serve as a learning model for students.

It is important that when RISD reexamines its consumption of energy it does so in a manner that capitalizes on RISD's strengths. Through the creation of a green lab and strategic partnerships with companies on the leading edge of sustainable design, RISD could begin to use its creative strengths to bear on issues of sustainability

and consumption. By creating classes in green roofs, solar and wind energy, RISD could push its students to consider new and better innovations in these fields. Student findings and final projects could be vetted over time, in real life conditions, with RISD benefiting from their work.

ACTION STEPS:

- * Conduct a comprehensive energy audit by 2009
- * Institute a policy to buy solely natural gas for its central power plant unless gas prices exceed oil by fifteen percent
- * Commit to replacing inefficient and old oil boilers in buildings with furnaces burning natural gas
- * Use the institutions strong credit rating and influence to push for the development of new wind farms
- * Install VAWTs on buildings with favorable conditions
- * Create new courses that partner with energy companies in need of design expertise
- * Create a Green Lab to incubate and test student ideas/projects

3. Facilities

RISD is a world leader in design and creative innovation, as well as a responsible member of a local and international community. As such, our architectural environment should reflect the ideals of this institution as well as the values instilled in its students.

RISD buildings are a large contributor to the institution's energy consumption and greenhouse emissions. A stringent audit of our current facilities will indicate ways to not only reduce our energy consumption, but also reduce our energy costs. A practice as simple as reducing the temperature during low use periods will have a major impact on our annual utility expenses. A tool such as Oberlin's Campus Resource Monitoring System will increase awareness of energy usage, energy costs, and waste and will encourage a culture of conservation at RISD.

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program has developed an architectural certification system for green building development. The certification process is based on a point system, in which the number of points one gets determines the level of LEED certification one obtains; there is the minimum certification, followed by Silver, Gold and Platinum, the highest certification. The purpose of the LEED rating system is to measure operations, improvements, and maintenance on a consistent scale, with the benefit of maximizing operational efficiency while minimizing costs and environmental impacts. It is in RISD's best long-term interest to immediately adopt LEED certification

at the highest level. Achieving these goals is imperative, not only for our personal health and well-being, but also to communicate our institutional leadership as a design innovator.

ACTION STEPS:

- * Conduct a comprehensive facilities audit by 2009
- * Adopt LEED standards in new construction and renovation
- * Analyze patterns of building usage to best define where heating and cooling costs can be minimized; lower room temperature during off-hours, weekends and holidays
- * Establish a campus resource monitoring system placed at campus hubs and on-line
- * Make existing reports on energy use and sustainable practice readily available to the campus community.

4. Curriculum

Recognized across higher education as a critical issue, sustainability is a central educational concern of RISD. Enhancing and developing RISD's curriculum to include innovative teaching and learning opportunities that encompass classroom experience, research opportunities and internships is critical to maintaining RISD's leadership position in the world of art and design. An effective strategy for achieving this goal is to establish a Concentration in Sustainable Design that would encourage the development of new courses across the curriculum, provide collegial support for faculty, and connect student learning in an interdisciplinary manner.

Furthermore, a Concentration would enhance RISD's efforts to connect student learning with real world concerns, encourage students and faculty to work directly with collaborators, utilize RISD as a laboratory for solving institutional sustainability gaps, and promote active participation in sustainability competitions like Metropolis Magazine Next Generation. It would also build upon and enhance existing efforts at RISD, such as the Solar Decathlon.

While some students will opt for a Concentration in Sustainable Design, it's vital that RISD introduce all students to these issues. Establishing a peer-to-peer sustainability orientation for new students is a means of achieving this goal. Such a program will establish sustainability as a cultural norm across the campus.

ACTION STEPS:

- * Establish a Sustainable Design Concentration by 2010
- * Promote design competitions that focus on sustainable issues
- * Enhance partnerships with Brown
- * Sponsor faculty forums on integrating sustainability in the curriculum
- * Establish a program to orient new students to Sustainability at RISD

5. Recycling and Waste Management

The current recycling system at RISD is comprehensive in scope, but it is not widely used by students, faculty and/or staff. Bins are almost always located outside of studios in the hallways, and their size and matching lids are often not large enough to house art and design-related materials. Larger, clearly-marked, departmentally-specific, student-designed bins should be available across campus. To ensure increased utilization, they must be placed in multiple locations throughout each studio on campus and should be tailored to the individual needs of each department. An accompanying student-, faculty- and staff-run recycling awareness campaign would inform the RISD community about what can and can't be recycled, the cycle of consumption and disposal (RISD specific) and the steps involved in responsible disposal of toxic materials (if they must be used at all). This campaign should have a unified look (almost as a brand), so that our message is clear and relevant to all parts of RISD campus. By making this information more visible, individuals will think more critically about the impact their material choices have on the environment.

RISD culture must undergo a dramatic shift in order to move towards true environmental stewardship. A part of this shift involves a comprehensive reassessment of the materials required in each department. For example, instead of encouraging and allowing students to use non-biodegradable materials, professors can encourage the use of recycled materials instead. In seminar and lecture classes, electronic note-taking can be encouraged to reduce our use of paper. Expanding and implementing 2nd Life as a more visible facet of the College would provide further support for students to reuse materials. So that this can operate at normal business hours, we recommend that 2nd Life become part of the RISD Store.

Some have suggested that to truly promote the reuse of materials, RISD could provide space for an on-campus, student-run thrift store where members of the campus community can donate clothes, furniture, electronics, etc. and members of the RISD and Providence communities could purchase these items for a nominal fee. As a stop gap, RISD could provide end of the year drop-off days for useable clothing, household items and furniture. These items would be collected in convenient places around campus and taken to the Salvation Army or other charitable organizations. Our long-term goal is to ultimately hold each student accountable to dispose of their oversized, non-recyclable materials, instilling a greater sense of responsibility for the material selections each student makes.

ACTION STEPS:

- * Conduct a comprehensive audit of campus waste management by 2009
- * Increase and enhance the use of current

recycling program

- * Institutionalize a culture of creative re-use & waste management

6. Transportation

RISD has scored a B in the transportation section of the College Sustainability Report Card. RISD already does several things to encourage the reduction of emissions for its campus users including RIPTA passes for all RISD students and staff and Hybrid vehicles for its public safety. The RIPTA passes are a great incentive for students to use public transportation, but many students do not know this opportunity exists, and there is very little signage or information communicated to students to support this endeavor. One easy step toward communicating this campus perk might be to print the RIPTA logo directly onto RISD student ID cards. Information kiosks, including RIPTA bus schedules and route maps, placed throughout the RISD campus would also greatly improve the use of public transportation.

More incentives could be established to further reduce the use of cars on and around the RISD campus in the following ways: placing additional bicycle racks in safe and convenient locations would both support those who already cycle to school as well as encourage others to do so through visibility and convenience; scheduling frequent shuttles to places visited most by RISD students, such as Whole Foods and the East Side Market, leaving from a central location; improving the Safe Ride program by expanding its reach to drive students home to the West Side as well as the East side of Providence; and improving signage throughout the campus to increase Safe Ride usage and promote a better understanding of how the program works. Selecting fuel for Safe Ride vehicles is a good place for RISD to start investigating the possibility of using natural gas from already established fueling stations or biodiesel fuels derived from its own dining service waste.

As an international school, one of RISD's greatest sources of carbon emissions is air travel required for students to go home during breaks, and for faculty and staff to commute to and from school. By offering students alternative planned activities during vacation times, perhaps more students would stay on campus. For students leaving the RISD campus with regional destinations, RISD might create a shuttle service to common destinations during break times, such as New York and Philadelphia. Likewise, offering faculty and staff incentives for using public transportation, such as the commuter rail, Amtrak and buses, carpooling, or a Go-LoCo type program, or even living in Providence, would improve a sense of community at RISD, as well as lessen its carbon footprint.

ACTION STEPS:

- * Encourage more prolific use of RIPTA:
 - Print RIPTA logo on RISD ID cards

- Provide information kiosks throughout campus with routes and schedules
- * Install more bicycle racks to encourage alternative transportation:
 - Offer better placement for safe lock up, and bicycle protection
- * More bicycle racks for ease of access
- * Reduce carbon footprint due to travel:
 - Offer alternatives to leaving campus during school breaks
 - Provide student shuttles to regional destinations
 - Offer incentives for faculty and staff for using public transportation such as Amtrak, buses
 - Create RISD specific Go-LoCo type networking to encourage and enable carpooling for faculty and staff

7. Business Practice

Every institution faces the difficult task of balancing revenue with expense. Indeed, the current environmental crisis is tied to a long process of attempting to create efficiencies of time, economy and productivity. However the economics of sustainability often are at odds with our conventional wisdom about cost. Short-term savings often reflect long-term inefficiency and expense. By implementing a strategy of sustainability, small changes will yield significant future savings.

In addition to economic benefits, the choices RISD makes in purchasing have an effect on the health of our community and the vitality of the local economy. Through our buying power we can encourage the availability of more sustainable products in our region. Similarly, through RISD investments we have the ability to support businesses that share our commitment to sustainable and responsible practices.

ACTION STEPS:

- * Establish a policy that prioritizes investment in companies and organizations demonstrating sustainable practices and research in manufacturing
- * Establish purchasing procedures that give priority to vendors that demonstrate responsible practices and to local/regional vendors
- * Adopt the standards of the Sweat-Free Campus Campaign, mandating that the products bearing RISD's logo be manufactured under fair and ethical conditions
- * Establish purchasing policy that requires all new campus equipment to meet Energy Star ratings
- * Reset the defaults on RISD computers for word processing to 10 point fonts with a .75 margin
- * Set a protocol that all RISD documents be double-sided
- * Use only 100% recycled paper
- * Establish a faculty requirement for student assignments that they adhere to the above paper use standards
- * Eliminate "mailbox stuffing" by consolidating all announcements into a single, daily or weekly campus-

wide email and/or including all announcements on the RISD website or on RISD Daily Jolt

- * Institute direct deposit for all work/study and Assistantship positions in order to eliminate the need for paper paychecks
- * Purchase only 100% post-consumer recycled paper towels and toilet paper for all bathrooms
- * Investigate and enter into purchasing and investment partnerships with Brown University when possible
- * Institute a school-wide policy that all computers, copy machines, and other office appliances be powered down at the end of each day
- * Create a communication labeling system for retail

8. Center for Sustainability

When facing the work entailed in adapting an institution to the realities of climate change, many colleges and universities (such as the University of British Columbia, NYU, and Pratt) have chosen to create an office devoted exclusively to addressing these challenges. A center for sustainability at RISD would integrate the nuances and complexities unique to our institution. By working as a cohesive entity, the office of sustainability would provide the focus and people power necessary to meet RISD's sustainability goals.

Central to this idea of a Center for Sustainability is the notion that there should be representation from all areas of RISD life - faculty, staff, administration and students - in order to ensure that efforts and input from all elements of RISD are utilized and incorporated. Because clear communication has been identified as an important aspect of reaching these goals, the Center for Sustainability would be the campus body responsible for communicating issues of sustainability both within and outside of the RISD community.

In speaking with various members of the RISD administration about their efforts to make RISD operations more sustainable, it has become clear that having a central office to facilitate, oversee and coordinate efforts from a position of cross-departmental influence would greatly improve their ability to make important changes in the way their department operates.

Lastly, the most important benefit of creating a Center for Sustainability would be to monitor RISD's progress in meeting its sustainability goals. This would be accomplished through research of new and appropriate technologies, partnerships, and strategies that would have the input of faculty, staff and students, but also have the resources, time, and people-power that a supported entity such as a Center for Sustainability would have to accomplish the many multi-faceted initiatives demanded by the RISD community.

CENTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY PROPOSAL

Structure examples to research: NYU, Pratt, University of British Columbia

Director: a viable position to advocate for the agenda within the school while making RISD a leader in sustainability among art schools

Fundraising / Finance staff: ensure the success and future of the program

Communications/Outreach: focuses on making connections within and outside of RISD

Representatives: faculty, administration, staff, facilities and student representation

- Enable strong communication and participation from all facets of campus life
- Assistantship positions from all departments
- Monitor inter-departmental recycling; work with 2nd life

AREAS OF FOCUS

Meeting Carbon Emissions: Follow through in carbon emissions reduction; publish identified goals; monitor goals and success

Improve Recycling: Make recycling easier, more efficient, more widely practiced

- Investigate a shared recycling center between Brown & RISD for re-using paper & other materials

Art and Design Health and Safety: Work with Office of Environmental Health and Safety to audit workshop conditions and investigate safer alternatives

- Audit all departments for materials used
- Make product information and safety guides available to students and staff on the Intranet and elsewhere
- Add in-depth safety program orientation (showing direct effects of materials)
- Train student monitors to be informed and proactive in material education
- Buy organic/green material for artistic practices (green foam instead of pink foam or yellow foam)

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Inside RISD

- Know what is going on in each department with regard to sustainability, identify areas of overlap and connection
- Develop an iconic/graphic system (through stickers, signs, etc.) to communicate changes or sustainable features wherever they may exist (to alert students to biodegradable cups, non-toxic materials, motion-sensor lights, etc.)
- Be the go-to office for anything sustainability-related at RISD
- Maintain part of the RISD website dedicated to sustainability
- Communicate the sustainability message to students, faculty and staff in a contemporary and attractive way

- Create a system (like Oberlin's) that displays real-time energy use to inform students while creating a sense of shared space, resources, and experience
- Use other methods to publish and publicize goals and achievements, create accountability, and communicate shared vision for change

Outside RISD

- Communicate to the outside world what RISD is doing to become more sustainable; promote RISD's efforts
- Communicate with other colleges, universities and art and design schools to share information and resources
- Use the website to highlight sustainability at RISD
- Find outside opportunities appropriate for RISD students interested in sustainability such as competitions, internships, projects, grants, etc.

CAMPAIGN TO FINANCE SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS AT RISD

- Hire a fundraising and finance expert
- Organize a campaign to pay for sustainability efforts
- Track and show how conservation efforts save money and resources

GREEN GRANTS

- Raise money for RISD-specific projects as well as student competitions that focus on sustainability

Create a Laboratory for Sustainable Design

- Partner with the Nature Lab, Brown
- Utilize pre-existing opportunities such as the Nature Lab's facilities or the RISD farm

INTERDISCIPLINARY ZONE

- Facilitate testing of design ideas
- Provide resources for students and faculty to gain further information about sustainable materials
- Create more cross-departmental classes
- Establish incubator-style program for sustainable business ideas

Meet campus needs with student designs

- Facilitate the meeting of design needs on campus by students who want to focus their work on sustainable goals
- Operate and support 2nd Life

V. CONCLUSION AND IMMEDIATE ACTION STEPS

The detailed action steps proposed in the previous sections represent work to be undertaken through existing departments, RISD committees and by the proposed Center for Sustainability. In order to move forward, immediate action is necessary. Taking these steps will ensure that RISD begins the process of making an institutional commitment to sustainability.

IN 2008

- * Sign the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment
- * Establish a college-wide committee on Carbon neutrality and sustainability
- * Hire a Director of Sustainability
- * Establish a Center for Sustainability

IN 2009

- * Complete an energy audit of the College
- * Complete a waste audit of the College
- * Establish a plan for achieving carbon Neutrality by 2020

IN 2010

- * Launch a Concentration in Sustainable Design

VI. APPENDICES

A. American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment

We, the undersigned presidents and chancellors of colleges and universities, are deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale and speed of global warming and its potential for large-scale, adverse health, social, economic and ecological effects. We recognize the scientific consensus that global warming is real and is largely being caused by humans. We further recognize the need to reduce the global emission of greenhouse gases by 80% by mid-century at the latest, in order to avert the worst impacts of global warming and to reestablish the more stable climatic conditions that have made human progress over the last 10,000 years possible.

While we understand that there might be short-term challenges associated with this effort, we believe that there will be great short-, medium-, and long-term economic, health, social and environmental benefits, including achieving energy independence for the U.S. as quickly as possible.

We believe colleges and universities must exercise leadership in their communities and throughout society by modeling ways to minimize global warming emissions, and by providing the knowledge and the educated graduates to achieve climate neutrality. Campuses that address the climate challenge by reducing global warming emissions and by integrating sustainability into their curriculum will better serve their students and meet their social mandate to help create a thriving, ethical and civil society. These colleges and universities will be providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to address the critical, systemic challenges faced by the world in this new century and enable them to benefit from the economic opportunities that will arise as a result of solutions they develop.

We further believe that colleges and universities that exert leadership in addressing climate change will stabilize and reduce their long-term energy costs, attract excellent students and faculty, attract new sources of funding, and increase the support of alumni and local communities. Accordingly, we commit our institutions to taking the following steps in pursuit of climate neutrality:

1. Initiate the development of a comprehensive plan to achieve climate

neutrality as soon as possible.

- a. *Within two months of signing this document, create institutional structures to guide the development and implementation of the plan.*
- b. *Within one year of signing this document, complete a comprehensive inventory of all greenhouse gas emissions (including emissions from electricity, heating, commuting, and air travel) and update the inventory every other year thereafter.*

- c. *Within two years of signing this document, develop an institutional action plan for becoming climate neutral, which will include:*

- i. *A target date for achieving climate neutrality as soon as possible.*
- ii. *Interim targets for goals and actions that will lead to climate neutrality.*
- iii. *Actions to make climate neutrality and sustainability a part of the curriculum and other educational experience for all students.*
- iv. *Actions to expand research or other efforts necessary to achieve climate neutrality.*
- v. *Mechanisms for tracking progress on goals and actions.*

2. *Initiate two or more of the following tangible actions to reduce greenhouse gases while the more comprehensive plan is being developed.*

- a. *Establish a policy that all new campus construction will be built to at least the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Silver standard or equivalent.*
- b. *Adopt an energy-efficient appliance purchasing policy requiring purchase of Energy Star certified products in all areas for which such ratings exist.*
- c. *Establish a policy of offsetting all greenhouse gas emissions generated by air travel paid for by our institution.*
- d. *Encourage use of and provide access to public transportation for all faculty, staff, students and visitors at our institution*
- e. *Within one year of signing this document, begin purchasing or producing at least 15% of our institution's electricity consumption from renewable sources.*
- f. *Establish a policy or a committee that supports climate and sustainability shareholder proposals at companies where our institution's endowment is invested.*
- g. *Participate in the Waste Minimization component of the national RecycleMania competition, and adopt 3 or more associated measures to reduce waste.*
3. *Make the action plan, inventory, and periodic progress reports publicly available by providing them to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) for posting and dissemination.*

In recognition of the need to build support for this effort among college and university administrations across America, we will encourage other presidents to join this effort and become signatories to this commitment.

Signed,

The Signatories of the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment