

Note: This document is embargoed until 4:30 p.m. (Central Time) Tuesday, April 22, 2008.

**Sustainability University Initiative Presentation
UI Faculty Senate Meeting
Senate Chambers, Old Capitol
Sally Mason, President, The University of Iowa
April 22, 2008**

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak with you today. And thanks to you Senators for your service to the University this past year. I also thank the Staff Council and UI Student Government for their service. Through shared governance, we have moved forward on a number of important issues—our smoking policy, our new comprehensive safety and security policy, the research track, and the revised parental leave policy. I also want to express my appreciation to Board of Regents President David Miles not only for his leadership this past year, but also for coming to this very group to answer your questions and energize our discussions about the future. I would finally like to thank publicly our legislators, legislative leadership, and Governor for their continued financial support and commitment to higher education in Iowa. As the session ends, we remain optimistic about public higher education thanks to their efforts.

I come before you on this Earth Day 2008 to talk about an issue of increasing importance to all humanity—sustainability. Exactly sixty years ago yesterday, on April 21, 1948, a great American and a great Iowan passed away. Aldo Leopold, who many cite as the father of the modern environmental movement, was born and raised in Burlington, Iowa. One year after his death, the publication of *A Sand County Almanac* introduced Leopold's revolutionary "land ethic" to the world. "The land ethic" underlies our modern ideas of a sustainable world. Leopold said, "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. . . . The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land."

Just one month ago, this body, the Faculty Senate, passed a resolution to promote a more sustainable campus, introduced by Urban and Regional Planning Professor Jim Throgmorton on behalf of a dedicated group of faculty, staff, and students who have been working hard on this issue for some time. They encourage our University to advance our progress on sustainability through further leadership and action.

One of our current Presidential candidates often quotes Dr. Martin Luther King's phrase "the fierce urgency of now." The Senate's resolution emphasizes that "fierce urgency of now" for us today. We face a world that must become more environmentally responsible and sustainable. And **we** in higher education are the source of discovery and new knowledge in the world that must lead the way. Therefore it is incumbent upon us to advance our leadership in this critical challenge of our time. So I join you today to

announce that The University of Iowa is formalizing a sustainable university initiative. Sustainability must and will become a central priority of all aspects of our university enterprise—our operations, our academic mission, and our responsibilities to the greater society.

Please let me outline four broad areas in which we will take immediate action.

First, we are acting on the challenges that our state leadership has set before us. Last fall, Governor Chet Culver appointed the membership of the new Iowa Climate Change Advisory Council established by our legislature. The Governor named as its chair our own Jerry Schnoor, co-director of the UI College of Engineering's Center for Global and Regional Environmental Research and Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering. This important new body has challenged public institutions, private individuals, and business and industry to work together toward determining ways of reducing Iowa's greenhouse gas emissions substantially by 2050.

Two months ago, the Governor issued Executive Order Six, which launched Iowa's Green Government Initiative. The Initiative aims to ensure that clean energy, environmental protection, and resource conservation are integrated into government policies and procedures. Toward that end, Governor Culver directed that the sustainability goals, practices, and procedures of Regents institutions be coordinated with this Initiative. Starting in the immediate future, we will be participating with our sister institutions to use the organizational principles of this Executive Order to guide our University efforts. This will be a major inter-institutional, University/state government collaboration for the benefit of all Iowans.

In our second major area of effort, we are forming an organizational structure that will coordinate and prioritize our sustainability initiatives, enabling us to ensure that our efforts are successful and ongoing.

At the head of this structure will be a Sustainability Steering Group that will report directly to me. I will appoint several top administrative officials to this group, which will be assisted by a broadly based Advisory Committee on Sustainability, with faculty, staff, and student representation. The first task of the Sustainability Steering Group and its Advisory Committee will be to work with Senior Vice President Doug True's office to conduct a comprehensive review of the University's environmental policies to assure that they promote exemplary environmental behaviors by the University. I am asking them to report back to me the results of that review by the end of this summer.

I am also pleased to announce that we will be creating an Office of Sustainability, housed within Facilities Management and reporting to the Sustainability Steering Group. This office will have the responsibility of facilitating and promoting sustainability efforts on campus, including those focused on new or emerging sustainability issues.

A number of campus task forces already exist to address sustainability issues. For example, the Green Power Task Force, co-led by College of Engineering Dean Barry Butler and Director of Utilities and Energy Management Glen Mowery, has been instrumental in improving our reliance on renewable energy. The excellent work of such task forces will continue and, where necessary, will be redirected. New task forces will also be created by the Sustainability Steering Group to ensure serious attention is focused on emerging issues.

Third, we will continue to enhance our commitments to make the University's operational practices more sustainable.

In 2002, The University of Iowa took a major step forward in energy conservation by establishing the UI Biomass Fuel Project. Through a partnership with Quaker Oats that allows us to burn oat hull byproducts in our power plant, we are a national leader in using biomass fuel to displace coal. Twenty percent of our fuel is now biomass. We are committing ourselves to further capital investments and increasing that amount to 30%.

The success of this project was a key factor that allowed us to join the Chicago Climate Exchange in 2004, the world's first—and North America's only—greenhouse gas emission trading system. Currently we are one of only five public universities in the exchange. As of today, we are actually earning credits on the CCX and lowering our carbon emissions per CCX regulations and standards.

Also in 2004, we created the Energy Conservation Advisory Council, composed of administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Through their work, we now have a campus energy plan that is a leader in the Big Ten and nationally. Among the plan's ambitious goals are a 10 percent energy reduction and 15 percent overall renewable energy use by 2013. Today, I am asking the new Sustainability Steering Group and its Advisory Committee to consider moving those targets earlier, by 2010 if possible.

As we move forward and set new operational goals, we will focus on continued progress in four key areas: energy conservation and renewable energy; a sustainable materials and life-cycle cost policy, including recycling and purchasing; green buildings and environmentally friendly designs for new construction; and reduction of the carbon footprint of University-related transportation and travel.

In a fourth major area of commitment, we will make sustainability an integral part of the academic mission. Many of our faculty and staff are already engaged in research and teaching focused on creating a sustainable world. I have already mentioned Jerry Schnoor and Jim Throgmorton, but we could also point to Professor of Engineering Gregory Carmichael and his groundbreaking work on air pollution; Professor of Geography Raj Rajagopal and his innovative work on place-based water pollution testing; Professor of English Barbara Eckstein and her imaginative work on literature, storytelling, and sustainability; Professor of Occupational and Environmental Health

Laurence Fuortes and his work in environmental toxicology; and many more talented University community members.

I will work with Interim Executive Vice President and Provost Lola Lopes and Interim Vice President for Research Jordan Cohen to create a faculty-led task force to focus on sustainability in the academic mission. The task force will examine our role as a teaching and research institution in preparing our students and our society for the technological innovation, entrepreneurial research, and social and cultural understandings required for us to lead the state, nation, and world in sustainability. Interim Associate Provost for Academic Administration Barbara Eckstein has already started us on this academic road by recently issuing a call to consider a sustainability curriculum. Faculty are being asked both to assess what current courses, programs, certificates and degrees address issues of sustainability, and to assess the need for coordinated, University-wide efforts in this area.

I am also pleased to announce today that we will create five new tenure-track faculty lines dedicated to supporting our interdisciplinary sustainability efforts. Colleges will be able to submit proposals to the Provost for these lines, and they will be judged on how well they will support the academic and research aspects of sustainability. These proposals will need to be interdisciplinary. We intend this cluster of new hires to be a start in building the UI's expertise in and reputation for sustainability.

Finally, I would like to announce two important commitments that will help ensure that our path toward sustainability is resilient and remains intellectually based. I have recently approved our institutional membership in the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. Participating in AASHE will enable us to learn from other colleges and universities and to share our successes with other members of the higher education community. And internally, sustainability will be one of the underlying principles as we begin drafting the UI's next strategic plan.

I cannot leave you today without acknowledging the important contributions of our students. As with many important issues on our campus, our students have been passionate leaders. Through such organizations as the UI Student Government, the Civic Engagement Program, the UI Environmental Coalition, and numerous others, student efforts have helped lead us to more local and organic foods on campus, recycling and compost programs, and innovative environmental programming.

The University of Iowa is known as a national and world leader in the health sciences and health care, writing, the fine arts, physics and astronomy, and many other areas. Today I challenge the entire University community to join me and all of those faculty, staff, and students who have paved the way so far to make us a national and world leader in sustainability. Universities have always been places where new ideas are nurtured and social progress is born. In taking up the challenge of sustainability, we

are not acting only in our own interest, but more importantly in the interest of our children, our students, the society we serve, and future generations we will never know.

In summary, I challenge you 1) to commit yourselves to preparing the next generation of thinkers, innovators, and entrepreneurs who will help the world meet its profound environmental and social challenges; 2) to hire new colleagues across the entire campus who can help us advance our sustainability responsibilities—who can prepare our students for leadership, who can help us develop the core research base that we need to develop solutions, and who can engage us with the larger community in service to all; 3) to ensure that sustainability enjoys a prominent place in our learning, discovery, and engagement activities and mission; and 4) to think about how you, as individuals, can contribute to our University becoming a more sustainable institution and leading others in meeting the serious challenges that face us.

Perhaps that great Iowan Aldo Leopold's most famous statement of his "land ethic" says, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." As we follow his advice and extend our stewardship to the interplay between the human and natural worlds, we do so because it advances integrity and beauty, and because it is right. It is right that we lead in developing a culture of conservation, environmental stewardship, and sustainability.

Thank you again for your attention today and the opportunity to present these ideas to you on this most important day, Earth Day 2008. This fall, I will report back to you on the specific progress we have made on this sustainability initiative. I look forward to speaking with you again about the challenges that lie before us and the successes that we have achieved.