

Sustainable future

Honoring our green legacy as we plan for our second century

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›LAST MONTH, STUDENTS, faculty and staff crowded Ernst Common Room to discuss how the College can become more environmentally sustainable. We started with a report on the status quo — a comprehensive assessment of the College's sustainability record conducted by an outside consultant over the course of a year.

The assessment revealed many points of pride. For example, the College's longtime emphasis on land conservation puts us among an elite group of colleges — just 8 percent nationwide — that manage more than 70 percent of their land for conservation. In fact, with the leadership of the Arboretum, 75 percent of our land is managed for conservation.

The report also gave us high marks for recycling, carbon offset programs and low use of water to irrigate athletics fields. Most central to our academic mission,

we were among the first schools in the nation to implement an environmental studies major. Today, our Goodwin-Niering Center for the Environment is a nationally recognized leader in interdisciplinary approaches to environmental issues.

All these achievements provide a strong foundation for the next level of sustainability planning. The report provides a road map for bringing sustainability into the overall strategic planning structure of the College. First steps include the creation of a Sustainability Steering Committee under the leadership of Dean of the Faculty Roger Brooks and additional data collection that will allow us to better understand the potential for using energy and other resources more efficiently.

As a college, we are operating now in what is arguably the most difficult economic environment in our 99-year history. I am proud that we continue to be successful — as evidenced by this year's

record 5,282 applications, a 12-percent increase over last year. And I believe that one of the reasons for our success is the careful and collaborative approach we take to planning and implementing our institutional priorities.

In recent years, we have made careful and strategic investments in a number of key areas: new educational programs in the residential houses, increased support of diversity, expanded international programming, additional alumni and career programming, and improved campus facilities. In each of these areas, we are continuing to move forward and we are seeing positive results of our investments.

In this context, it may seem daunting to be elevating yet another institutional priority — environmental sustainability. And clearly becoming more environmentally sustainable will require investments, expenditures that will have to compete against other priorities that are equally central to the College's educational mission. Yes, it's challenging — but after four years as president here, I have complete confidence in the Connecticut College community's ability to weigh options, consider priorities and make the best choices for the College's future.

The basics of this process are prudent financial management, thoughtful decisions about which expenditures will have the greatest impact on our students and a clear vision for the future.

This careful approach has served the College well through its first century. Now as we approach the Centennial of our founding, I feel confident and optimistic about Connecticut College's sustainable future. ■



PRESIDENT HIGDON INTRODUCES A PANEL DISCUSSION ON SUSTAINABILITY IN FEBRUARY.

BOB MACDONNELL