

# Council on the Physical Environment

Annual Report for 2011-2012

June 4, 2012

## Members

### *Faculty Council*

George Billman, Medicine  
Allen Firestone, Dentistry  
Jesus Lara, Engineering  
Steve Rissing, Biological, Mathematical and  
Physical Sciences  
Lingying Zhao, Food Agricultural and  
Environmental Sciences

### *Office of the President*

Maria Manta Conroy, Engineering  
Dick Gunther, Social and Behavioral Sciences

### *Undergraduate Student Government*

James DeFrance, On-Campus, Chair  
Danielle Meyer, Off-Campus

### *Council of Graduate Students*

Marci Lininger

### *Inter-Professional Council*

Jacquelin Lewis

### *University Staff Advisory Committee*

David Fleming  
Erin Kimbrell

### *Ex-officio, Non-voting Members*

Geoff Chatas, Senior Vice President and Chief  
Financial Officer  
Amy Burgess, Senior Vice President for  
Administration and Planning designee  
Mike Boehm, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

This year the Council on the Physical Environment sought to review and participate in a broad range of areas' planning processes. The committee started meeting, upon being convened by Secretary of University Senate Tim Gerber, in November and took up as its first business filling the vacancy of committee chairperson. James DeFrance, an undergraduate in geography and international studies was selected.

A number of COPE's meetings were occupied by examining how the council could be more effective and focused since the relatively recent advents of bodies with similar tasks and purviews. These bodies, like the President and Provost's Council on Sustainability (PPCS), Integrated Physical Planning Liaison Group (IPPLG), the Faculty Council ad-hoc Committee on Sustainability Implementation, and temporary groups related to safety and parking have provided useful service to the university. They were, however, convened without clear lines of reporting and relation to COPE, each other and a number of preexisting groups of various degrees of activity, areas of responsibility, and extents of power. The result is a complex landscape overlapping committees, offices and concerned groups that

allows for processes to be primarily streamlined or transparent and open but not both in suitable proportion.

Bicycling accessibility and safety (to bikers, pedestrians, and drivers) was initially a major concern of the group. The committee in various ways interacted with Transportation & Parking, Bicycle Advisory Committee and an action group convened by Karen Patterson on the topic. For the year, those groups were engaged in good work and made progress. However as street construction settles down and the campus transportation stabilizes continued safety issues with bicyclists may need to be addressed in future policies.

Among the twelve meetings COPE held over the course of the year we heard from a variety of groups, including Transportation & Parking, Energy Services and Sustainability, Office of Academic Affairs, and Campus Partners. COPE joined with the Senate Fiscal Committee for two meetings in 2012 to weigh in on the Capital Investment Process priorities. The two committees conducted an exercise comparing eight different attributes of capital investment (as well as some subcategories) and how we perceived them as comparative priorities. The prioritization is to create a decision algorithm for capital investment for at least the next five years. The results of that process were combined with those of other groups conducting the same exercise and it is the understanding of the chair that a report on the matter is to be shared with the Board of Trustees this June.

In terms of public visibility, the greatest matter before COPE this year was the possibility of the university's parking operations being leased to a concessionaire. The members of COPE were given an opportunity to review the Concession Agreement to look for potential issues that would affect the physical environment and arise from the lease. This document was a topic of discussion with Geoff Chatas and others from his office. The document was viewed as well constructed and considered for the topics it included though it was not actually comprehensive of all physical environment issues. Certain topics, interactions related to construction and maintenance as an example, were fine. However, questions remained that were reportedly included elsewhere – car trouble services as an example are to have been included in a document about operations guidelines – but others were not touched. Those included some pertinent to the lease – where, for example, the concessionaire would have an on-campus presence – and others, like reactions to changes to City of Columbus stormwater policies and the potential for the university to begin reducing its impervious acreage – would have been unresolved questions regardless of the impending transaction. Though the committee was not united behind the administration in the wisdom to engage in privatization what information we were able to access did not cause specific concerns. It is important to note that these thoughts and feelings were made only in the scope of the limited information available at the time. The full extent of information in existence pertinent to the scope of COPE was not made available in-time with its creation, to the detriment of the committee's ability to provide feedback and guidance.

COPE would like to engage in more interaction with decision making bodies across campus. This year, Dick Gunther served part-time as a member of the committee and was the chair of aforementioned ad-hoc on sustainability. He was able to report that the committee had two major accomplishments for the year. The first was the completion of an accepted proposal to put a revolving

loan fund in place for academic units to engage in energy conservation projects of an appropriate scope and return on investment. The second was to succeed in bringing Environmental Health and Safety, Administration and Planning and science faculty together to implement a change in university building standards that would allow for the installation of fume hoods which circulate one third less air which equates to a similar drop in energy consumption. As a single culprit in energy waste inefficient fume hoods represent an important target for reduction and creates an important precedent in terms of addressing that safety rules should be reevaluated in the context of newer technologies. At least one faculty member commented that heat exchangers should be more common on campus.

The committee has worked together to create a long but focused list of groups and individuals to meet with and topics to address in the coming year. An overarching concern should be improving COPE's efficacy and creating defined and possibly procedural interactions with related groups identified on campus. The chair would like to thank COPE's dedicated members for their patience and hard work. COPE owes a great deal of appreciate to the support staffs of the vice presidents and provost represented on the committee and to Julie Anstine who had served the committee for several years while in Administration and Planning.

Respectfully submitted

James DeFrance, Chair, Council on the Physical Environment  
Undergraduate Student Government  
Bachelors of Science in Geography, Class of 2012