

Educating to Counter Oppressions and Create Just and Sustainable Communities (ECO) Assessment Follow-Up

March 1, 2007

In the Spring of 2006, the Educating to Counter Oppressions and Create Just and Sustainable Communities Steering Committee (ECO Steering Committee) published an extensive Assessment Report of Starr King School's counter oppressive commitments. That report, available online at <http://www.sksm.edu/research/publications/eco2.pdf>, identified key recommendations for the school as a whole, and for eight committees and working groups. Those recommendations begin on page 23 of that report.

From September 2006 to March 1, 2007, the ECO Steering Committee asked each working group that had received recommendations to report on how they have used the assessment in their work this year. Each of these eight working groups was asked to reflect upon ways that they had implemented the recommendations made specifically to them, as well as ways that they have been instrumental in implementing the six school-wide recommendations.

The progress reports of these working groups are presented below, as submitted by the chair of that working group, to assure accountability for the whole community.

The ECO Steering Committee will be reviewing these progress reports to help determine next steps for this work.

Thank you,

The ECO Steering Committee.
David Sammons (Chair)
Dorsey Blake
Gabiella Lettini
Makanah Morriss
Ada María Isasi-Díaz
Jacqueline Duhart
Mary Foran
Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward
David Dezern

Working Group 1: Student Body Report

Follow up to the ECO Assessment: March 1, 2007

Working Group: Student Body
Chair: Leon Dunkley, Student Body President

Part I:

How has your committee or working group been instrumental in moving forward each of the six school-wide areas of focus:

1. That *the school community as a whole* focus on sustainability, through identifying spiritual, theological, and economic resources for the work, examining patterns of ableism and perfectionism, and creating an infrastructure that will support, affirm, and demand that the ECO work continue.

The Student Body Officers have met and developed a means of interaction that is thoroughly consistent with the goals of ECO. This has engendered a fluidity between our mode of connection/interaction and the tenor of the student body as a whole. The Student Body Officers have also created a series of meetings and interactive opportunities through which the practice of ECO has been present. These include:

- Orientation Chapel Service
- Student Body Meetings
- Listserve/online conversations
- Feast Nights
- Socials/parties
- Loan Program
- Interpersonal Approachability
- Deepening of Public Conversation/Education
- Trouble-shooting Seminary-related Anxiety¹
- Possible Spring Retreat

2. That *the school community as a whole* become a place of permeable walls, looking to resources beyond ourselves that will help to sustain a creative tension between reflection and action.

The Student Body has created a Thea/ological Activist Discussion Group, the open forum of Evolving Dialogues continues with measured success and action is broad at the individual levels ranging from New Orleans Recovery work, School of the Americas Watch, independent media work (KPFA), self-defense trainings, homeless youth outreach, etc.)

3. That *the school community as a whole* focus on the gifts of ECO, through celebrations of the work and instilling a healthy attitude towards conflict.

Both the Moratorium and the ECO class generated a healthy reaction/resistance. We have been proactive in bringing these issues as healthily to the fore as has been possible. The nature of this work has forced parts of our conflict into the light and parts of our conflict into the shadow. We have been doing our level best to air what has been possible to air and to heal the parts that the student body, for a range of reasons, has chosen to

¹ Student Teaching Moratorium, Best Selves

leave unexpressed. There are limits to what is publicly possible when the conflicts that are private remain unresolved. Responsibility required that we created the opportunity for health and then, those voices not forthcoming, healthily move on. These goals were accomplished through Student Body Meetings and All-School Meetings.

4. That *the school community as a whole* focus on understanding the intersection of privileges and oppressions, including those specifically related to white identity.

See response to Question #1.

5. That *the school community as a whole* focus on ways to turn “conversation stoppers” into “conversation starters” by identifying those places where change stops but could begin.

The point of publicly airing the discomforts we could name and creating the opportunity for those that we could not has been an effort in finding joy. There are no targets for these meetings. They are not blaming or shaming events. That we have sometimes reacted defensively is quite normal. The level of intimacy, despite the appearance of conflict, has created a larger need for self-reflection and growth in community. We would do well to stay out of its way. The boat will right itself in the wave. It has in the past. It is in the present. It will again in the future.

6. That *the school community as a whole* examine the ways that our educational philosophy and pedagogy supports and hinders the work of ECO.

N/a

Part II.

How has your committee or working group implemented the following recommendations that were made to you, in particular:

7. That *the student body* seek out classes and projects that will allow for deeper study of ECO throughout their programs and their lives as religious leaders.

Intense amounts of self-reflection and introspection are taking place by way of and entirely apart from the work of the Student Body Officers. While we are not engaged at the individual level, we have situated ourselves to be responsive to the collective push of the student body as a whole and to create a sensibility about ways in which ECO has informed our lives and ministries.

8. That *the student body* look at ways that they can provide leadership to the school’s ECO commitments, including the creation of a white allies group, theological discussion groups, or meetings to discuss the intersection of differing oppressions.

Livable Wage campaign sensibility as engaged by Seminarians for Worker justice through the Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union as a whole have informed the Starr King experience. Black Seminarians group has been active, mainly as PSR. A movie series/discussion group with PSR and GTU students has taken place in the Fireside Room. Other events have taken part in activities or in group mentioned above.

9. That *the student body* make use of the resources available for dealing with emotional aspects of this work.

Dancing, ultimate Frisbee, prayer, laughter, food and shared time with one another. Weekly breakfast discussions, intentional walks and above all, the powerful embrace of [a student] in his dance with Prostate Cancer.

10. That *the student body* utilize all the resources available to them through CPE advisors, intern advisors, fieldwork supervisors, UUMA ministerial colleagues, Associate Faculty, Visiting Professors, and GTU and UC Berkeley faculty members, who can be role models in the work.

N/a

11. That *the student body* become more aware of their interactions with staff and faculty so that they do not replicate sexist, classist, racist or ableist trends.

This is largely what Student Body Meetings and Evolving are about—the practice of direct communication, the practice of grace and forgiving in good faith.

12. That *the student body officers* be more accessible and accountable for helping ECO-related programs.

The Student Body Officers have been appropriately available.

Part III.

Please also consider the following questions:

13. What other aspects of the narrative report have you helped to implement?

N/a

14. What new challenges have you encountered in doing this work?

The maturity of the Starr King community is yearly event and its curve cannot be adequately predicted—not from this station, at any rate. Our challenge is *loving what is* and seeing to it that *what is* is honest. ECO is a bold ask our growth and there are expectations *within the student body and about the student body* (if false ones) that our community will be thus and so. When these expectations are unmet, there is

disappointment. This is fine. It is part of our growth. As Thoreau said, we are rich in the number of things we can leave alone.

15. What new opportunities have you found for doing this work?
16. What else would you like to share?
17. What else should we be asking?

Working Group 2: **Staff and Administration Report**

Report from Starr King Staff review of ECO commitments/recommendations
January 25th, 2007

Staff Members: Dave Sammons, Acting President; Dorsey Blake, Acting Dean; Kelly Flood, VP for Advancement; Cheryl Bowlan, Chief Communications Officer; Anita Narang, Executive Assistant to President; David Dezern, Faculty Service Director; Trudell Webster, Admin. Asst. to Student Services; Cathleen Young; Online Education Director; Donna Sequeira, Annual Fund Director; Becky Leyser, Dean of Students, Drew Blackman, Admin. Asst. to VP for Finance and Administration. (Thomas Smith, VP for Finance and Administration, was unable to be present.)

The staff members above reviewed the following commitments and recommendations from our original assessment:

Part I:

How has your committee or working group been instrumental in moving forward each of the six school-wide areas of focus:

1. That *the school community as a whole* focus on sustainability, through identifying spiritual, theological, and economic resources for the work, examining patterns of ableism and perfectionism, and creating an infrastructure that will support, affirm, and demand that the ECO work continue.
2. That *the school community as a whole* become a place of permeable walls, looking to resources beyond ourselves that will help to sustain a creative tension between reflection and action.
3. That *the school community as a whole* focus on the gifts of ECO, through celebrations of the work and instilling a healthy attitude towards conflict.
4. That *the school community as a whole* focus on understanding the intersection of privileges and oppressions, including those specifically related to white identity.
5. That *the school community as a whole* focus on ways to turn “conversation stoppers” into “conversation starters” by identifying those places where change stops but could begin.
6. That *the school community as a whole* examine the ways that our educational philosophy and pedagogy supports and hinders the work of ECO.

Part II.

How has your committee or working group implemented the following recommendations that were made to you, in particular:

7. That *the administration* take a close look at wages, health care, and benefit needs, including honoring “comp.” time.
8. That *the administration* update job descriptions to reflect current workloads.
9. That *the administration* do an assessment with staff input on their own jobs and workloads, and bring in work-study positions as needed.
10. That *the administration* celebrate the ECO leadership that the staff provides.
11. That *the staff* engage in cross-training.
12. That *the staff* make ECO part of the staff-wide discussions, allowing all members of the staff to participate and be informed.
13. That *the staff and faculty* undergo more training on ECO issues, including explicit ECO training for new hires.

- we’ve held annual #13 (staff training) but realize we need to develop our own training processes and materials since most consultants we’ve hired thus far aren’t able to meet our need to go deeper.
- RECOMMENDATION: Create sub committee by May 1 to work on training in late August.
- RECOMMENDATION: outline steps in notebook of ‘proper procedures’ re: staff hires so we follow emerging ways to advertise and invite diverse people to apply for positions at SKSM. Continue cross training between departments to address sustainability and back up plans for each department.
- we’ve not done #7 or #8 (sustainability, clear, accurate job descriptions, benefits and salary parity; etc.) in wholistic way; Need to move from good idea on paper to plan of action that’s put into practice. Use our strategic planning process currently happening to address these concerns. Staff development plan is missing from our planning to date – get it added in. We need this to move forward with a sense of progress being made – and evaluations are another key place where staff development issues can be addressed. #9 (workloads for faculty) has been addressed to a degree with workstudy students for each faculty member.
- RECOMMENDATION: Training for supervisors and staff re: professional development plans for each staff person and how evaluations assist in furthering these plans.
- #10 (celebrating our achievements in ECO work) is in practice to a greater degree now with Dave Sammons regularly speaking to/advocating for our ECO commitments to outside constituents, including putting our assessment of our work on-line, for greater accountability. In addition, our admissions and recruitment people addresses ECO with all potential students. Students greatly interested. Our ECO commitment is key reason why students choose SKSM.
- RECOMMENDATION: Do podcast dedicated to ECO commitment to put on-line and use at GA.
- RECOMMENDATION: One-pager of sound-bytes about what ECO means to us – how we practice the work – so we are all saying/reinforcing a common message out.

- Need to stay with improving healthy attitudes toward conflict. Incorporate this as key topic in fall staff retreat. Some conflicts may never be ‘resolved’ but more, lived with. How do we learn this together? Understanding need for #2, permeable walls, as means to move out into the larger world and invite the larger world in here – moving beyond ourselves, as in homeless people, people of differing economic situations. How do we become/indicate we are welcoming to people not currently here?
- For example, our Islamic Studies work and our Luce Grant for the Adalusian project engage the idea of seminary with permeable walls.

Working Group 3: **Admissions and Scholarship Committee Report**

The main accomplishment of the Admissions and Scholarship Committee this year has been to revise our application form so that candidates are asked to describe how their commitment to counter oppressions and create just and sustainable societies has been reflected in their lives. They are also asked to describe how they plan to manifest this commitment in their religious leadership.

Because of illness and busy schedules, the Committee has had a difficult time meeting this year. I hope that this will not be such a problem next year.

Kay Pauling
Chair
Admissions and Scholarship Committee

Working Group 4: **Chapel Committee Report**

ECO Report to from the Chapel Committee
March 1, 2007

Part I **Sustainability**

- Adding one more student to share workload can make a big difference.
- Ordering green worship resources to be shared and made available to all offers fresh possibilities for
- Maintaining chapel reflection as a practice is a challenge due to its requirement of additional work on the part of faculty, but is valued as an important component of the community's learning.
- Lifting up economic sustainability in chapel this spring promotes understanding and commitment to justice.

Permeable Walls

- Inviting guest speakers to conduct chapels—four planned for Spring

- Publicizing SKSM worship services on the GTU listserv.
- Students have conducted worship at Church of the Fellowship of All Peoples and ABSW. (Note: individual students and faculty also frequently preach and conduct workshops in Unitarian Universalist churches in Northern California)
- Considering asking GTU website to include weekly chapel service information for all GTU schools
- GTU students are welcomed as worship leaders in SKSM services.

Healthy Attitude toward Conflict/Conversation Stoppers and Starters

- ECO 201 group chapel service in Fall
- Matt Alspaugh's Stress Fractures service in Spring
- Laura Ingram and Leonie Pickett's service in Spring
- Wendy Bartel and Lynn Kelly's service on Balance

Part II

Articulation of ECO/Proposals

- Expressed by example in this year's orientation, whose worship experiences focused on ECO.
- ECO lifted up in chapel proposal process
- Ongoing ECO awareness encouraged by chapel liaisons
- ECO lifted up in chapel training and chapel handbook
- proposal for an ECO "checklist" for use in the reflection process

Annual Survey

- We are not sure what this really means. We would appreciate clarification from the ECO committee.

GTU Services Awareness

- See above suggestions regarding GTU list serv and website calendar

Part III

Challenges

- Chapel Reflection gathering is unable to fully reflect the full range of reactions to worship experiences. We have to trust that the worship experiences are resonating in undocumented ways.
- Issues of accompanists being paid and given proper notice -- the school has been unable or unwilling to commit funds for a regular, professional accompanist. In the absence of Rebecca Parker, who often plays piano, this is a gap that becomes painfully obvious.
- Considering ECO as separate "work" instead of part of our way of life
- Struggles with language -- persons who might have been doing justice work but outside Starr King might not use the "official" SKSM terminology regarding ECO -- we must be alert that SKSM's ECO practices not become in themselves an insular, elite discourse.

- Stress about lack of resources which affect sustainability.

FINALLY

The institution of SKSM should consider formal observance of Black History Month and Women's History Month, for example -- which might be reflected in the Chapel experiences but not driven by the Chapel. The school can create other public spaces/environments that keep the Chapel from holding the burden/responsibility of being the primary public forum.

This could provide public synergy, and could have additional worship components that reflect commitments to permeable walls without depriving students of opportunities to develop their skills in worship leadership.

Chapel Committee
Starr King School for the Ministry
March 1, 2007

Working Group 5: **Curriculum Committee Report**

ECO Assessment Report – Curriculum Committee

Curriculum Committee: David Dezern, Patti Lawrence, Donna Sequeira, Justin Waters, Dorsey Blake, chair

If we – and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others – do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change, the history of the world.

These words from James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* have been a source of inspiration for many years. They posit the grand urge to achieve so much of what is embodied in Starr King's commitment to countering oppressions and building just, sustainable communities. That commitment is consciously embodied in the deliberations of the curriculum committee. Each member of the committee is thoroughly devoted to seeing that the spirit of the intent is actualized in tangible ways. What a deep joy that provides!

Sustainability

A guiding principle is discernment about what is need to shape a good solid program for students.

Starr King depends on adjunct professors to enhance the curriculum. This year we never questioned the stipend for adjunct faculty. There was recognition of the fact that they provide cheap labor. They are less expensive because they do not receive benefits. Many

schools are using adjuncts because of this. We must keep those dynamics in mind. Last year the stipend was raised, but not this year.

It was also stated that we offer little material support. We discourage photocopying at the school; meaning photocopying is at the expense of the professor. Is there non-monetary camaraderie? Some adjunct professors just hang around without interacting. Are they looking for interaction? One professor does use the computer in the student lounge. While he brings a presence, he does have to use the computers designated for students. It would be nice to have a space with a computer for our adjunct faculty. How to be just in our relations to adjunct faculty needs continued addressing. It was also stated that in the past Starr King did provide such a space; but it wasn't used. It would be good to have a private space for them to meet with students. Starr King does provide library privileges. One adjunct faculty stated that the library privileges were worth more than the monetary compensation.

The question was raised regarding whether changing the title from associate faculty to adjunct faculty subtly took away some of the non-monetary privilege.

The Curriculum Committee sponsors dinners in February. The dinners provide opportunities for adjunct faculty to become acquainted with each other and members of the curriculum committee. It is also a time for sharing and deepening understanding of ECO as not something superficial or imposed, but integral to our educational philosophy and pedagogy. Wonderful examples have emerged regarding how various professors have incorporated this work into their courses. There is a suggestion of providing additional dinners during the middle of the semester and combining the dinners with speaking to questions arising from mid-term evaluations. We could also have private conversations if there are problems. During orientation, we provide lunch for our adjunct faculty as a way of community building. Are there other ways we could devote for consecrated time to them?

Permeable Walls

We received the chart of statistics on who has taught here. On that chart, there is a pattern in terms of the number of people of color teaching. It happens in waves of 2-3 years. We have more people of color in the arts threshold primarily. For next year, we need to examine that when choosing courses by thresholds. In bringing such a voice, do we privilege or deny theological concepts of people of color. Why don't we have more people of color in theology, ethics, or Bible? How are we bringing narratives of different traditions? In what groups are they expressed? We hope we look at that next year. At the same time, the graph's gender and sexual identity categories are binary.

There was an abundance of great people and course offerings this year this year, much more so than in the past. We could not choose them all; but have a good balance. Some folks we count on to provide certain areas of study. This year we have a good mix of continuing faculty and new faculty.

It was good not to have to look for courses on Islam. David and Ibrahim gave leadership to developing this crucial component of the curriculum.

Intersection of privileges and oppressions

Our commitment to ECO brought out great courses and people. We have the class on Warriorship because of this commitment. In a sense we are building from last year. The commitment to ECO evolved last year in real ways. It was strengthened and we are living into it. It has carried over into how we pay attention and who is coming to us.

Conflict

This committee has had a healthy attitude towards conflict. We haven't discussed this frequently. The decision to suspend student teaching of half and full semester courses for next year could have gotten in the way of our work. It did not in practice. It was all right to not think alike, but we still worked together. We were able to deal with conflict in a wholesome manner. It was stated at the one of the dinners that too often conflict is suppressed in classes. There is a dangerous politeness that derails the work of ECO.

Conversation Stoppers/Starters.

This was discussed with the adjunct professors. Ideas were exchanged about how to facilitate this process. Faculty can model conversion in very instructive way.

Educational philosophy, pedagogy and ECO

The amount of thought on the answers to the ECO question in the application has increased. We selected professors based on those who answered that question, their excitement and dedication to ECO, and their understanding of how it contributes to pedagogy.

Are there ways our educational philosophy and pedagogy work against sustainability? Do some of the suggestions we have contemplated for increasing a sense of community work against it. Would some faculty not want the increased efforts toward inclusion? They are here primarily to teach a course. They have mid-semester evaluations and dinners. They may feel that additional efforts at community are too demanding. On a contractual level they may love the pedagogy but not want to be obligated to participate too much in the life of the school.

Those who have taught at Starr King before often are supplementing key parts of the curriculum. We need to look at patterns. Are there different ways of connecting with those professors who have taught over the years and those who are new? The needs may be different. The committee also raised the question of how do we assess ongoing relationships outside of just teaching. How do we sustain relationships?

We were not adequately supporting student teachers. The way we did it in the past hindered ECO because we made promises we couldn't fulfill. We had support on paper, but not in actuality. We were not following through with our philosophy or pedagogy.

We have been involved in increasing evidence of ECO in the overall community. We gave suggestions about the plan for orientation, and asked for a focus on permeable walls. The question raised is whether there was a concrete translation into the classroom? We

provided a platform for community ministers during orientation. That was a concrete suggestion for orientation. Hopefully, that would be translated into concrete fashion to students.

There is always an area where we could do more to make ECO concrete. It's easy for us here everyday. We know the nuances and connections. For a long time, we tried to say that we had to "do eco". How do we take it deeper in felt, embodied ways?

We communicated with students in the Spring [May] and that effected what proposals we looked for. We changed the course evaluations, including the way we talked about the educational environment. A letter went out with the evaluations asking professors to give time for students to fill them out.

This year we consciously looked for chances for co-sponsorship such as on the Environmental class. That was not successful however. We also worked with Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, the Center for Arts and Religious Education, the UUA, and the Waldensian Society.

Because co-teaching can take a lot of a professor's time – meetings with other professors, and many intricacies, there might be questions about the sustainability of co-teaching across the GTU. For example, many PSR students don't like the co-teaching model and are looking for survey courses elsewhere.

The committee attempted to help student negotiate the thresholds by defining foundational courses and sequencing. We haven't, sequenced around ECO. The Introduction to ECO class continues to grow and expand, and that came out of this committee.

The curriculum overall shows more depth in ECO, the Spirituality and Nonviolence and Howard Thurman courses for example. . But if we can point to a particular place, does that mean we're not doing it overall? We had intersession classes this year—Fred Garcia and Glenn Smith, about doing ECO effectively. Work is being taken deeper. We have not sequenced around ECO and may still need an advanced ECO series.

The committee wants to explore the possibility of an ECO class online, especially for ministers who want to engage congregations in this work. We need to do more education about the histories of marginalized peoples. We have focused on bringing more faculty, but students? Our school tries to bring narratives of historically marginalized people. How do we hold that up to both students and instructors? How do we incorporate their voices in the M. Div. Program in our teaching? How do we support faculty of color? How do we support students of color? We may have those stories brought forth, but what about the question of providing special attention to their needs, as asked here?

The attention we pay is to the selection of classes. This hopefully encourages students to come into the school, so they can find "something". Are we successful? Our intention is to find classes of interest to a large range of students.

We don't live into the way that the school lives on the margins. We pull ourselves to the middle too much, which discourages some students from participating. In some ways, it is an issue for the larger school. Our focus is on who is teaching and what they are teaching. We're not thinking of individual students who might choose a specific class.

We have three degree programs at Starr King: M. Div., MASC, and MA. How have we addressed the ways MASC students are part of the school. What does a well-rounded program look like for them, as opposed to M.Div.? Does our curriculum marginalize MASC & MA by focusing on M.Div.?

There has been an effort to reach beyond traditional adjunct faculty. That has to do with getting known in other communities, especially activist communities. We also need to be better known so students in marginalized locations are able to find us. It's about evangelizing the school.

We are also concerned about offering courses to meet the UU commitment to ministry. We may also want to look at our committee in terms of bridge building. We often ask David Dezern about the impact of our work on staff sustainability. We often serve as a vital link between students, adjunct faculty, and core faculty.

Working Group 6: **ECO Steering Committee Report**

Follow-Up Report by the ECO Steering Committee
for the Educating to Counter Oppressions Self-Assessment Report

Members of the committee: Dorsey Blake, David Dezern, Jacqueline Duhart, Mary Foran, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Gabriella Lettini, Makaanah Morriss, Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward, David Sammons.

Response to recommendations for the **Whole School:**

Regarding the **focus on sustainability:**

This issue has become a focus for this year's Community Consciousness Raising initiative, student-led Evolving Dialogue programs, and All School Meetings. Topics of personal sustainability have arisen in courses such as "Health and Healing from A to Z". SKSM has done little so far about "greening the campus", with the exception of a guest speaker co-sponsored by Shelley Page (a student) and the ECO Steering Committee. Future courses to be offered at SKSM will also address ecological sustainability. Issues of ableism continue to arise; one way to address these is by offering a program for SKSM community members which offers a power analysis of ableism and other oppressions. Devorah Greenstein, who will be co-teaching a course on this topic in January 2008, will be contacted by the ECO Steering Committee about the possibility of such a program

Regarding **permeable walls**:

SKSM needs to create vehicles to share what ECO-related work students do within *and* outside of the school. Suggestions from ECO Steering Committee members include postings on the community ministry bulletin board, soliciting information about students' involvement for publication on the school website and other publications, and inviting outside speakers (the Rev. Dwight Webster is a recent example) to lead chapel services with the support of the Chapel Committee. MASC student presentations, such as that by Som Pourfazaneh this fall, are a great example of public events which permeate our walls. Another example is the community panel on Activism and Personal Sustainability which the MASC program participants are coordinating this spring. The GTU Justice Collaborative and Seminarians for Worker Justice are also ripe with opportunities for involvement.

Regarding **gifts of ECO**:

Two student-led chapel services this year (one by members of the Fall 2005 entering class, one by members of the Fall 2006 entering class) have exemplified the goal of celebrating this work. We still need to develop healthy attitudes of conflict, and be able to talk about issues of privilege and oppression in ways that aren't just "nice", "polite" or "easy". How do we deal with evils in our world and speak truth to power? We have a pretense of politeness that relates to larger Unitarian Universalist culture and theology (i.e. the inherent worth and dignity of every person) which makes giving and receiving criticism difficult. Our theology and history also have elements of demonizing the "other" so we don't deal with our own ugliness or faults.

Regarding **intersections of privilege and oppression**:

We need to make sure we do not lift up any particular way of "doing ECO" that invite some, but not all, to take part in the work. We need to challenge any narrow-mindedness of what ECO is. A workshop or training about a power analysis of different systems of oppression might be useful in increasing community consciousness around this issue.

Regarding **"conversation stoppers and starters"**:

We must not fall into a binary of "getting" or "not getting" ECO. Education and knowledge on this topic is not something to be consumed, but a journey or process for all to take part in. We must be mindful of the language we do or do not use to describe ECO, as it may not be relevant or accessible to others, particularly those not affiliated with the school or with Unitarian Universalism.

Regarding **"educational philosophy and pedagogy"**:

We need to acknowledge how some members of our community (particularly those with racial and/or class privilege) may want to preserve their own self-image and

goodness when faced with ECO issues. At the same time, people from other social locations may worry about appearing “good *enough*”. Are people doing or not doing the work of ECO because of other people’s expectations (i.e. those of the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Ministerial Fellowship Committee?) This is why advocacy for ECO work is so important.

Response to recommendations for the **ECO Steering Committee**:

Regarding **helping to articulate theological foundations for ECO work**, we need to do more! We are investigating the possibility of co-sponsoring events that speak to this purpose. Examples of relevant theological explorations include the book event with SKSM President, Rebecca Parker in February and another event with SKSM Board member, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz this spring. We would like to support events that engage a multitude of intelligences, i.e. by using art, poetry and movement in addition to verbal discussion. We need to feature multiple approaches to ECO work, along with multiple vocational perspectives. We need to broaden the understandings of “who” does ECO work and “why”.

Regarding **building partnerships outside of the school**:

This year our committee has begun to build a relationship with the Dismantling Racism Committee at Pacific School of Religion, a neighboring theological school. This collaboration has provided both committees with a chance to reflect on their visions, successes, and challenges in institutionalizing counter-oppression work in a seminary setting. We are also in the process of investigating opportunities for partnering with Mills College, a local institution with a counter-oppressive student organization. We plan to share SKSM’s ECO assessment with the wider community (including donors, graduates, the local African American community, and Unitarian Universalist organizations with an explicit counter-oppressive commitment) for mutual accountability and feedback.

Regarding **accountability and ally work**:

There is student interest in hosting local “chapters”, or connecting in another way to the larger work of, Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (an organization of Unitarian Universalist People of Color), and Allies for Racial Equity (a newly-established organization of Unitarian Universalist white anti-racists). The ECO Steering Committee student representatives have communicated with the student body through email and public forums to identify the resources and energy available for coordinating this and other programs. We imagine that informal lunch gatherings, for example, might provide another opportunity for ally work.

Regarding **resources for “conversation stoppers and starters”**:

The ECO-focused chapel service offered by members of the Fall 2005 entering class is an excellent example of such providing such resources to the SKSM community. We have noticed a number of tendencies that run counter to our ECO commitment:

falling into “political correctness” or other modes of behavior that exclude others from ECO work, speaking with alleged authority on ECO work (we must be open to being challenged!), and becoming isolated in the SKSM context of counter-oppression work. We sometimes frame ECO issues in ways that are narrow, biased, or irrelevant to others. Community ministry is not as supported at SKSM as parish ministry – perhaps because people are reluctant to engage with folks unlike themselves. We need more cultural immersion experiences to better equip students with ways of continuing and bridging their ECO work. We must be mindful that learning language is not the same as actually engaging in counter-oppressive work. We need to identify ways for students to break out of their comfort zones in appropriate ways that are not cultural tourism.

Regarding **celebrations of ECO work:**

See “joys of ECO work” above.

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward
ECO Steering Committee

Working Group 7: **Faculty Report**

Follow up to the ECO Assessment: March 1, 2007

Faculty Report:

Faculty: Alma Crawford, Ibrahim Farajaje, Patti Lawrence, Gabriella Lettini, Rebecca Parker (On Sabbatical), David Sammons, Ibrahim Farajaje, Dorsey Blake, Acting Dean

Perhaps the seminary also has been a place of too much certitude, ready to sing before we grieve over our own deep ambiguity. Perhaps the seminary too easily embraces the norms of the academy, because it is easier to follow the right forms than to face the raw substance never fully caught in form. Perhaps the seminary has come to terms too fully with economic sufficiency, when members of the seminary – faculty, students, and board – count too much on treasures that comfort the heart. (That also is measure of our enmeshment). Perhaps the seminary has become too nearly a collection of “autonomous” believers, endlessly fascinated with ourselves and not very good at being the body of the one Lord. The voice of Rachel may be an imperative voice for our future.

The above quotation from Walter Brueggemann’s book, *Hope within History*, provides an interesting entry into the critical work of the faculty regarding our ECO work.

This assessment begins with acknowledgment of and appreciation for the dedication and skills each faculty members brings to this critical work.

Sustainability

The question of sustainability is a continuing one for the faculty. This year it has included re-visioning the ECO Seminar, shifting the management of faculty schedules to David Dezern, and providing a student assistant for each faculty member. In addition there have been numerous conversations addressing faculty workloads.

Permeable Walls

Dr. Lettini has given creative and effective leadership to worker justice. The MASC Program has organized participation from people outside Starr King. An example is the March 5th interactive panel discussion. In addition there have been guest speakers in chapel, classes, and orientation. There have been open events for the larger community. Announcements have been placed in Starr King This Week alerting the Starr King community to events outside the school. Students have attended and spoken at non-UU churches. Drs. Lettini, Sammons, Blake, and Professor Crawford have engaged in scholarly enterprises outside the school. Professor Crawford has preached at non-UU churches and serves as editor for the Journal of Liberal Religion, the scholarly journal of Meadville Lombard. Professor Patti Lawrence has incorporated the creation and recognition of permeable walls in her work with congregations, particularly with the building task force and children of Abraham.

Acting President Sammons, Dr. Lettini, Professor Crawford, and Acting Dean Blake serve as members of GTU committees. Blake spoke at PSR chapel during Black History Month celebrations. He and Crawford also work with the GTU Black Seminarians.

Dr. Amina Wadud (Visiting Scholar) and Dr. Lettini's appearances at General Assembly result from the LUCE Grant. The concept of permeable walls is also concretized by adjunct faculty who expand and deepen our curriculum in the study of Islam and other religions. They too are courtesy of the LUCE grant. Dr. Ibrahim Farajaje provided significant assistance in identifying appropriated courses of adjunct faculty to include in the curriculum.

Gifts of ECO/conflict

Conflict is invited rather suppressed. The faculty discussed airing conflict rather than having it deteriorate into passive/aggressive behavior. The importance of learning to live without resolution of conflict has also been discussed. Conflict is addressed in advising sessions.

Work continues with adjunct professors celebrating the ECO work and how they bring ECO into the classrooms. There is the recognition that adjunct faculty are paid less. This is also an issue of sustainability. The Islam and poverty class approved for next year is a good example of how the reality of permeable walls is incorporated into the curriculum through adjunct professors. Another example is the class of Warriorship.

Intersections

There have been informed conversations about white privilege in terms of expectations.

To a great extent People of Color discovered for themselves how to strategize. Giving away personal power is an example of white privilege. The question of how white privilege frames expectations has been discussed. How does it obscure personal and school needs? The course of Ethnic of Whiteness critically addresses this issue. We as faculty have named it; but, do students understand. We can't be free of that question. We also need to address class issues more fully.

Conversation “stoppers/starters”

Faculty discussions have focused on conversations starters and stoppers. A suggestion is that the faculty should authorize observations of Black History Month and Women's History Month. This would be a way to address specific oppressions. There is a tendency to fear being specific. We talk about class, not poverty. Specific concerns should be included in ECO consciousness raising. There is still a great deal of sexism in the institution. There is the need to address issues such as Women in Ministry. Having public events would increase the hospitality for delving more comprehensively into specifics of oppression. We need the institutional momentum. We could model engagement with these realities for church life/worship committees. We were pleased that Rev. Dwight Webster spoke in chapel for Black History Month.

Pedagogy

Much of our work critically examines this. It is amazing that the ECO committee continues. It has been institutionalized. The question of how our pedagogy hinders the work of ECO continues to be raised. How does this pedagogy support or hinder a student centered, privileged, “community?” There is a need to reclaim critical/skeptical parts of traditions, both the kernel and contradictions. Are we changing institutions and not ourselves?

ECO Seminar

We will continue to teach the ECO Seminar. We may separate ECO and thresholds. There is a need to focus more on analysis. The current class doesn't appreciate the many approaches available. What are valid questions in “ECO?” We need to discover different tactics, strategies, etc. The premise of the course is just one model. There is the need to challenge capitalism and more critically engage systems. Critique from within and without.

Research and Advising

We have discussed advising and research in faculty meetings and in strategic planning. Needs have been acknowledged; but, there has been no action yet. Action requires major changes to educational philosophy. There is a need to revision how we offer our program. Expectations need to change. Faculty could change how committees are staffed. We need to be accountable to hiring agreements, two not three committees. If demands are changed, requirements should also be changed. Work outside Starr King made us professionally viable. We may need to change committee structures. Faculty members have value on those committees. There is the need to restructure staffing and how often committees meet. We need reduction of committee responsibilities. Shifting

scheduling of faculty calendars to David Dezern has helped tremendously in protecting faculty time.

Educational policy, philosophy, and pedagogy

The faculty devoted significant time to developing a stronger student teaching component. This involved receiving suggestions from students. We had not been given the support needed or promised. We also addressed the justice issue by providing monetary compensation.

Collegial reflection

We have not done this because of other goals and responsibilities. We have raised the need for it to happen. We have not had sustained time for scholarship and research.

12. In strategic planning we have become more aware of challenges to staff regarding sustainability.

13 – 14. There were new challenges in ECO seminars, such as challenges of TA’s and discussion questions. Another challenge was inheriting another person’s class. The PSR model of co-teaching also has constraints. Guest teachers are not equal.

Opportunities:

What are the possibilities in peer-led education? Encourage more struggle with texts, not just personal reflection. It is not imperative to create synthesis product. It is not necessary to have a definition of “ECO” to do ECO work.

15. Encourage readers to work to make a just and sustainable institution. Social justice organizations are often the least just places to work. Worker justice issues such as compensation/benefits are critical.

Working Group 8:
Board of Trustees Report

2/14/07

To: ECO Assessment Steering Committee
From: Rev. Daniel C. Kanter, Chair
RE: Board assessment

Dear ECO ASC,

As a way of assessing the boards continual commitment to understanding and furthering the goals of ECO I wanted to give you my sense of where we are today. In short we have attempted to more fully engage the ECO commitments and integrate it into our work as a board. The efforts we have made seem to me just the beginning of a long-term vow that

may or may not be made formal by the board in the coming meeting. Thus far we have done the following:

- Requested that members of the board work with the ECO team.
- Engaged in ECO experiential learning with members of the faculty and student body who are working on expanding ECO understandings as part of the official agenda for the last three board meetings.
- Charged the strategic planning task force to observe ECO goals within the formation of the plan they are developing.
- Worked toward more equitable nominations of board members that transcend categorical thinking.
- Worked with the president to support the direction of making SKSM a sustainable work place for all.
- Granted leave and sabbaticals to faculty in honor of a commitment to having SKSM be a sustainable work place.
- Hired faculty members who exhibit a commitment to ECO values and educational philosophy and practice.
- Refused to relinquish ECO as one of four key SKSM commitments in the Meadville Lombard consolidation talks.

What will come next for the board and ECO? I believe we will need to make a formal commitment to ECO work as essential to board orientation, activities, and future developments. More work will need to be made with regards to consultations with ECO on board nominations and composition. Address policy changes that need to be made that will reflect a deep commitment to ECO for the school as a whole.

I look forward to hearing your assessment of the school as it stands with regards to ECO and our future.

Sincerely,

Daniel C. Kanter