



Environmental Science and Sustainability Department Newsletter

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Junior Seminar Investigates Divestment

Eric Pallant's junior seminar is focusing on Allegheny's shares in the fossil fuel industry, and whether Allegheny should "...divest its investment and its endowment from fossil fuel companies?" Allegheny College's endowment in June 2019 was just over \$230 million and around 3-5% of that goes to fossil fuel companies like Shell, Chevron, and Exxonmobil (Our Allegheny, n.d.). The main questions about divesting are; would divesting in these companies have a significant impact if someone else buys the shares and the companies are allowed to keep polluting? Where should we invest this money that will be beneficial to the environment? Would we be able to get the same return on our investment if we invest in different companies? And where do we draw the line on investing in "companies that make a profit from oil and gas and companies that depend on making that profit or [depend on] steel production" such as pipeline or train companies that move the fossil fuels? On the other hand, divesting in these companies would align more with our ethical standpoints on the environment and could potentially improve our green school rating (conducted by both Princeton and the Sierra Club) which would catch the eye of potential students.

Eric stated that it has been a "mind-bending seminar" and the more they are "learning, the more confused [they are] becoming" which seems to be the case for many environmental issues. He stated that they did not choose this topic to "accomplish an agenda [and it was] really to try to answer the question." The students have been looking and the potential benefits/drawbacks if they divest and its impact on Allegheny's finances, the politics of the situation and the other companies they are invested in/accept money from, the choices of other campuses to/not to divest, and the people's opinions on the situation.

They have not been able to come up with a clear answer yet. For every reason to divest, there is a reason to keep our investment in fossil fuels. Eric stated that if we really wanted to divest in fossil fuels, we would turn off the heat the the whole campus. However, because this is such a complex issue and they believe just choosing to/not to divest is a short-sighted question, they are now focusing more on what we should invest in to "accelerate climate action and climate resilience... rather than just being opposed to [an issue]," they want to focus on a long-term solution.

For this year's Earth Day, Katie Brozell cleaned up Lake Canadohta, here in Crawford County. Together with some friends, she gathered and removed plastic litter that had accumulated in a small lagoon. The Lake is home to a diverse variety of freshwater fish and amphibians, including white crappie, northern pike, painted turtles and panfish.

Pictures Courtesy of Katie Brozell



Allegheny College Reaches Carbon Neutrality

Allegheny College is exceptional in many ways, and managed to distinguish itself once again this year. Earlier this year, representatives from Allegheny were invited to attend the Higher Education Climate Leadership Summit in Atlanta, Georgia. Among them were President Link, President Emeritus Mullen, previous President Richard Cook and our own Eric Pallant, who together accepted an award for achieved carbon neutrality. Yes, our school is now one-hundred percent carbon neutral, a goal finally completed since this goal was decided upon over a decade ago. This huge victory is the culmination of a plan started in 2008 by then-President Richard Cook, who set a goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2020. Allegheny being carbon neutral is impressive itself as an accomplishment, being only the eighth institution of higher education to do so in America and the first in Pennsylvania, but this is doubly remarkable because of its speed. Twelve years to achieve this is no small feat, as Professor Eric Pallant described the situation to me. This is something the school and the ESS Department are very proud of, and students should be too. We now attend a college whose carbon footprint is zero, a shining example of how higher education does not need to be tied into greenhouse gas emissions.

This monumental achievement was accomplished via a portfolio of strategies, seen through to its conclusion by three Presidents of Allegheny College. This included improving energy efficiency across campus and buying carbon credits for wind energy. Although we have come a long way in becoming carbon neutral, Eric Pallant assured me that we're not yet finished with sustainability. Allegheny College will continue

fulfilling its commitment to sustainability and I look forward to our school's future accomplishments.

Four Garner Campus Sustainability Awards in Statewide Recognition

The Pennsylvania Environmental Resource Consortium has awarded the title of Campus Sustainability Champion for 2020 to Rene Benoit, Bella Petitta, GreenSocs, and Kerstin Ams. Rene, an Allegheny senior, was honored for her work as a departmental research assistant, leading forest education activities in Creek Connections and the Foundation for Sustainable Forests, leadership within the Society for Environmental Action, assisting with the climate strike, and numerous contributions to ESS. Bella, a junior, has been a project assistant for Creek Connections, Allegheny College's environmental education outreach program since she arrived at Allegheny, working on both academic as well as summer programs. Bella has twice taken part in alternative spring break to clean trash from the Mississippi River watershed, co-leading the trip last year.



Photo Courtesy of Delia Byrnes

Green SOCS (Students of Color) has organized, participated in, and hosted a series of all campus events: The International Climate Strike; sewing and patching workshop to repurpose used and vintage clothes and promote sustainable fashion; The Green New Deal for Meadville, Pennsylvania; a sustainable eating and homemade pizza workshop; hiking events; muraling; and education on food deserts. Kerstin, who teaches the small-scale agriculture course, was honored as the inaugural manager of the Carrden, her mentorship of garden interns and work-study assistants, guiding gardening trips for elementary students, helping to organize the annual DeHart sustainability dinner, spreading her green thumb by partnering with community members in her "Grow Meadville" initiative, and launching the Mobile Market. The Campus Sustainability Champion title is awarded annually to students, faculty, administrators, and staff of Pennsylvania colleges and universities who have made meaningful contributions benefiting social, economic and/or environmental sustainability on their campus, in their community, or in society at large. The award signifies outstanding leadership in the transition to a sustainable future.

New Faculty to Join ESS Dep. In Fall 2020

Next fall, two new faculty members will be joining the Allegheny's ESS Department: Delia Byrnes and Jesse Swann-Quinn. Delia Byrnes comes to Allegheny from Texas, where she earned her PhD from The University of Texas at Austin. Ms. Byrnes brings a different dimension to Environmental Science than what most of us are used to; her research has focused primarily on the

literary and cultural aspects of Environmental Science. She is interested in finding out how “contemporary storytelling can help us imagine more just and sustainable environmental futures.” She is exploring this through authoring a book on America’s Gulf Coast and the impact of the oil industry, including how it connects to environmental racism. At Allegheny, Ms. Byrnes will be teaching Introduction to Environmental Humanities and a course on Environmental Problem Analysis.

Jesse Swann-Quinn has similarly studied how film and media interact with environmental science, and spent time producing wildlife documentaries for National Geographic. After graduate school at University of Arizona and Syracuse University, Mr. Swann-Quinn is currently exploring the environmental politics of natural resources, among other interests. At Allegheny, he will be teaching Intro to Environmental Science and Environmental Research Methods, as well as Environmental Problem Analysis.

In addition to their academia, Ms. Byrnes and Mr. Swann-Quinn are looking forward to exploring the area around Meadville and enjoying the outdoors. I trust Allegheny will welcome them with open arms, and all of us in ESS look forward to them joining the department!



Photo Courtesy of Jesse Swann-Quinn

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