

The Earth Charter in Action at the University of Georgia, Athens

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Edited by Maria Kelly
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With a special thanks to:
 Leasa Weimer and Dr. Charlie Mathies,
 our fearless leaders
 &
 Dr. Quint Newcomer for introducing us to the Earth
 Charter and instructing this course.

This report is dedicated to the memory of Dr. J. Douglas Toma. As the founder of this spring break study abroad program, an enthusiastic traveler, and the Dean of the Franklin Residential College, he is--and always will be--dearly missed.



Photographs by Leasa Weimer

Foreword:



The University of Georgia

UGA Costa Rica

8 May 2011

The University of Georgia operates a satellite campus located in San Luis de Monteverde, Costa Rica. UGA Costa Rica has endorsed the Earth Charter, reflecting our institutional commitment to the spirit and goals of the Earth Charter, including building sustainable communities, stewarding our natural resources and respecting all forms of life, and offering engaging educational experiences for those who visit our Costa Rica campus.

During the Spring 2011 semester, 19 University of Georgia students signed up for a 3-hour credit Latin American and Caribbean Studies (LACS) course, *Costa Rican Culture and Ecology*. The course met once per week for two hours during the semester in Athens, Georgia, and included a 9-day field experience immersion in Costa Rica over Spring Break. The students kept journals throughout the semester, reflecting on their readings and guest presentations, and they made daily entries reflecting on their many experiences while in Costa Rica.

Given that the Earth Charter Secretariat is based in Costa Rica at the United Nations University for Peace, one of the things that the students in our course learned about was the Earth Charter. They read the book, *Earth Charter in Action*, and their final project assignment was to write a brief paper about an example of the Earth Charter in action at the University of Georgia. Each student was given one Earth Charter principle to serve as the focus of their paper. Two of the students, Amanda Lee and Maria Kelly, took the course for Honors credit and had the task of assembling all of the final, edited papers into one document which they have presented here.

The initial reaction following the first reading of the

Earth Charter was that this is a beautiful dream for a sustainable future, but totally idealistic and not likely achievable. Yet this assignment revealed to each of us that changing the world will not happen all at once; rather, through many actions and individual initiatives the shift toward a sustainable society is already *in action* all around us. We learned that rather than focusing on the gap between where we are and what the Earth Charter presents as our ideal for where we need to be, when we focus on the journey toward sustainability, we observe the changes taking place, we see individuals and groups embodying the Earth Charter principles all around us. It is along this journey where we – as individuals and institutions and communities – live out the Earth Charter in Action.

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Principle 1: "Speaking Out"

Human beings are one of more than two million species that inhabit planet earth. In addition to *Homo sapiens*, the planet is home to by a vast array of other beautiful and complex life forms. Some of these life forms are mighty, like the African elephants that wade in the Zambezi River on a hot day, or the Sequoia trees that loom hundreds of feet over the misty forest floor. Others are meager, such as the Monarch butterfly that floats along in the breeze, or the dainty Autumn buttercup that is found only in Sevier Valley, Utah. Each of these creatures is independent and has immeasurable worth. Sadly each of these species must be protected because humans, a minuscule fraction of the earth's population, have exploited them or their habitat. Losing these species, among others, has a direct effect on fundamental natural processes upon which people depend and processes that are vital to maintaining quality of life. Fortunately, the Earth Charter recognizes the need to respect Earth and life in all its diversity in its first principle. It goes on to specifically state that people must "recognize that all being are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings."¹

Why would a cognitive, advanced, and creative population of humans with access to information that points directly toward the inevitable demise of their own species continue to act with reckless abandon? Aldo Leopold, an American ecologist 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."² This idea leads one to believe that a change in heart can lead to a change in the course of the future. If man can truly come to recognize his place in the environment, a place where he is companion and

not ruler, then healing can begin. Humans can begin to live in harmony with their surroundings.

The real question is how can the people that recognize the problem change the hearts of millions? At the University of Georgia, Speak Out for Species' mission is to use smart and substantive activism as well as education to impact lives. Their philosophy, which perfectly mirrors the first principle of the Earth Charter, states: "We believe that the lives of all creatures, great and small, have value and are worthy of respect. We encourage others to extend the circle of compassion to include all living beings – human and nonhuman alike."³ Co-Presidents Michelle Hunsicker and Tabitha Phillips lead the organization along with three other officers and two faculty advisers. Participation ranges from the hundreds who support them on Facebook and join their Listserv, to 10-15 people who attend the monthly meetings.

Speak Out for Species was established six years ago and has remained the only animal rights group on UGA's campus. In order to raise awareness of the issues that impact animals and other creatures that cannot speak for themselves, the group hosts film festivals, distributes free literature, and celebrates the Great American Meatout in Tate Plaza every year. The most recent film festival took place throughout the month of February and featured films such as "Call of Life," a documentary that explores the rapid decline of biodiversity across the planet and the implications for mankind. Other film topics included the scary truth behind factory farms, animals used in the entertainment industry, and the illegal hunting of endangered marine species. Next on the club's agenda is to orchestrate a "meatout" to celebrate the benefits of vegetarian living. This event will also allow curious non-vegetarians to sample vegan foods and learn that by choosing these vegan alternatives, one can take a stand against the meat industries' abuse of the environment, animals, and workers.

The most beautiful thing about this group, however, is their non-violent, non-sensational tactics. Speak Out for Species uses positive and respectful behavior to draw support from the public rather than belligerent protests that only breed more anger. Compassion and respect are the foundations of the organization; therefore, they are crucial to its success. By respecting the ideas of others and presenting their own opinions in a considerate manner, Speak Out for Species can make a legitimate plea to the community

to make humane choices on a daily basis. The group believes that many people taking small steps will lead to profound change. Whether it's supporting eco-friendly companies through the products one purchases or writing to representatives in Congress, everyone can do their part to reduce their impact on the Earth.

In addition to maintaining their credibility and earning the respect of society, the group often joins forces with other organizations. Other campus organizations such as Students for Environmental Action and the UGA Law Student Animal Legal Defense Fund Chapter have similar goals and values. By combining efforts, the groups can achieve more than would be possible if working alone. Speak Out for Species also relies on the funds of larger organizations to implement its goals. VegFund, a global non-profit that supports vegan activists, often gives money to this student based group that would otherwise be limited by available resources. This support system has built a web of interconnectedness between large and small groups, and local and global groups. The Preamble of the Earth Charter states, "To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny."⁴ Whereas each organization might create its own niche and focus on a particular topic, together they comprise an ecosystem with a common goal—to make this world a better place.

Upon first examining the Earth Charter and its principles, one can become overwhelmed with its magnitude and breadth. However, when we begin to explore the world around us, we discover that there are people right here within our own community already working to make a difference. Speak Out for Species recognizes that humans are but one species in a world of millions. Yet so many of these species are exploited because they are defenseless and can not speak for themselves. From big to small, cute and cuddly, to wild and prickly, each has an important role to play in nature. Each contributes to the equilibrium of energy flow within the biosphere.

Writer Homero Aridjis, who tells the story of the disappearing monarch butterfly, makes the following point:

"In a world where tigers and orangutans may become extinct, where rhinoceri are slaughtered for their horns and elephants for

their tusks, where crocodiles are crushed by bulldozers, where thousands of birds and monkeys are captured and sold illegally every year, where nameless organisms disappear en masse, perhaps a hill and a butterfly are not that important. But if we can save the monarch butterfly and Altamirano Hill, the landscape of our childhood and the backdrop for our dreams, from the depredation of our fellow men, perhaps other human beings can save their hill and their butterfly; and all of us together can protect Earth from the biological holocaust which threatens it. Because, after all, is not the long journey of this butterfly through earthly time and space as fragile and fantastic as the journey of the Earth itself through the firmament?"⁵

Just as each person has a story, a tale that explains what shaped his or her life, every organism has a spectacular and complex reason for existence on Earth. However, whereas humans have the ability to verbally share their personal stories and experiences, not all organisms can. The monarch butterfly cannot retell what it saw as if fluttered above the eucalyptus trees of California or the oyamel fir trees of Mexico. A live oak adorned by Spanish moss cannot attest to the birds that have perched on its limbs or the people who've sought shade under its protective branches. Each account is priceless and each journey is as fantastic as the creation of the Earth itself. Speak Out for Species carries out the first principle of the Earth Charter, recognizing that all being are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings, by giving a voice to species who can't speak for themselves and educating those who can. By making Athens the starting point for a global initiative, University of Georgia students can make a difference—we can begin to live in harmony with our fellow inhabitants.

(Endnotes)

1 *The Earth Charter: Vision, Ethics and Action for a Just, Sustainable, and Peaceful World*

2 Aldo Leopold, *Speak Out for Species*, <http://www.uga.edu/sos/wild.html>, (accessed March 30th, 2011).

3 "Our Philosophy," *Speak Out for Species*, <http://www.uga.edu/sos/about.html> (accessed March 30th, 2011).

4 *The Earth Charter*

5 Homero Aridjis, "Saving the Landscape of our Childhood and Backdrop for our Dreams," *The Earth Charter in Action*, ed. Peter Blaze Corcoran (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2005).



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Principle 2: The Georgia Museum of Art and the Earth Charter

Each principle within the Earth Charter holds a certain amount of weight in the capacity that it has for being perceived as an instructional guide to lead one's life. However, these principles can go further than just on a personal basis, as was made clear with the potential of the Earth Charter that was outlined by the writers of the preambles in *The Earth Charter in Action*.¹ If businesses and organizations of all kinds were to take the principles in the Earth Charter to heart, the daily functions of these franchises would improve the quality of life on earth, no matter the focus of the organization. There are ways to implement practices that lead to a better overall quality of life in every kind of organization.

When considering Earth Charter Principle Two—care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love—and its role in the groups and life I lead at the University of Georgia, I recognized a number of organizations that exemplify this principle. Both Relay for Life—a fundraising organization for cancer research—and the 4-H program—a statewide outreach program sponsored by UGA for fifth graders and beyond that promotes a way of living through educational programs that focus on one's Head, Heart, Hands, and Health—stand out. Both organizations have strongly influenced the way I view the world around me, as well as my role in the world. However, this essay will focus on the avenue in which I wish to continue my career path. The Georgia Museum of Art embodies Earth Charter Principle Two, care for the community of life, both with the content and programming found within its walls, as well as with the very walls themselves.

Part B of Principle Two states that we must "affirm that with increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good." Considering that the Georgia Museum of Art is the official art museum for the state of Georgia, as well as the fact that it is located on UGA's campus, there is a large responsibility that lies with the museum. It has an obligation to be not only a cultural landmark, but an educational one as well. When Alfred Heber Holbrook was looking for a site to donate his art collection and thus found a museum in memory of his wife, Eva, he wanted to place his collection in the hands of a university that had a progressive art school, but no art gallery to its name. He was directed towards Athens, and made contact with Lamar Dodd, who was president of the art school at the time. Since its inception, the Georgia Museum of Art has had an academic focus.

One of the best ways to ensure a brighter future and promote the common good is through education, especially education in the arts. During my time interning and volunteering at the Georgia Museum of Art, I have observed the great amount of effort that the entire Museum staff commits to outreach to the public and the university. Evening for Educators events and Faculty Lunches advertise the many ways the museum plays an integral part in lesson plans for grades K-12, and facilitate projects and visits at the university level for a wide diversity of academic disciplines. Monthly Family Days focus on a certain art concept and feature a gallery guide pamphlet through the galleries based on this theme for families, followed by a hands-on activity in the education classroom.

There are also suitcase tours that are available to elementary schools state-wide. Two suitcases filled with educational materials and examples arrive and an instructor can frame the lesson for the day around the objects within the suitcase. In this way the museum also provides the chance to experience art and interact with the museum without requiring a trip to the museum, which some schools may not have the funds for, or they may be too far away from Athens. All Athens-Clarke County fifth grade classes are brought into the museum for a field trip every year by way of a museum donor who provides the funds for reserving the school buses. In this way it is ensured that local students are aware of the resource that the nearby museum can provide. The Georgia Museum strives to have an active role in connecting with the public and providing for a more

learned, cultured future. The Georgia Museum of Art has a certain status that comes with being one of the premier art museums in the southeast and the Museum uses this visibility to create opportunities for arts education outreach to the local Athens community and beyond.

In addition to their educational programming, the Georgia Museum also ensures a certain level of care and respect for the community of life through the stewardship of its facility and collections. The Museum just went through a significant renovation that added an entire new wing for galleries, and modernized much of the preexisting museum. The way they went about this rebuilding embodies Earth Charter Principle Two part A: “accept that with the right to own, manage, and use natural resources comes the duty to prevent environmental harm and to protect the rights of people.” Added to the list of specifications for the reconstruction was the desire to have the entire project LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified.

LEED certification was developed by the United States Green Building Council.² It is an internationally recognized green building certification system that is evaluated and verified by third-party analysis. Having this certification shows that the construction was done in a way that focused on the environmental impact of the project and provided for the sustainability of the materials used in the structure.

The Georgia Museum of Art achieved a silver level LEED certification. This level of certification was awarded on the evaluation of a number of different criteria. The sustainability of the site is judged, with points given to those sites that have a minimal amount of construction on previously undeveloped land and allows for regionally appropriate landscaping and smart transportation options. Water efficiency is determined by use of efficient appliances, fixtures, and outside landscaping, and the same sort of evaluation is done for energy efficient appliances and fixtures. LEED also recognizes the amount of waste that is produced during the construction process and thus encourages the use of not only recyclable materials, but also locally grown, produced, or manufactured materials as well. This reduces the negative impact on the atmosphere and environment from the transportation of these materials over long distances, and supports local businesses. There are a number of other categories

such as innovation in design and awareness and education, among others, which are measured in the process of LEED certification and were taken into account when the Museum renovation took place.

Scott Simpson with the Office of University Architects for Facilities Planning was kind enough to take time out to highlight some specific steps the Museum looked at. The Museum will be tracking the building’s energy usage for one year to evaluate its performance; the project received Recycling credit for recycling 91.5% of the total construction and demolition debris, as well as a Recycled Products credit for utilizing spray insulation that incorporated 33.5% recycled newsprint; two 25,000 gallon cisterns were installed to collect roof water and building condensation water to use for irrigation on the site, and thus a Storm Water credit was gained; there are now fifteen bike racks within a 200 yard radius of the museum, totaling 105 bike parking spaces; an Air Quality credit was awarded as the Museum adopted a no smoking policy within 25 feet of the building’s access points; carbon monitors throughout the building signal the mechanical system to bring in fresh outside air when maximum levels of carbon dioxide are reached, allowing for a CO2 Monitoring credit; and there are more, but a Daylighting credit will bring an end to this brief list, which reflects the Museum’s use of skylights, glass curtain wall, and the creation of new windows into spaces that were previously without natural light.

Although this is a cursory introduction to the Georgia Museum of Art, and a selection of its programs, the Museum’s dedication to providing for the community of life is reflected in its programs as well as its physical structure. The Georgia Museum of Art is one example at the University of Georgia of how the principles of the Earth Charter are being put into action. Together, the actions of the Georgia Museum of Art, Relay for Life, 4-H, and many other UGA initiatives contribute to moving our society toward a more just and sustainable world.

(Endnotes)

1 Jane Goodall, *The Earth Charter in Action*, ed. Peter Blaze Corcoran (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2005), 50-51.

2 “What LEED is,” U.S. Green Building website, <<http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=1988>>, accessed March 4, 2011.



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Principle 3: The Earth Charter and 4-H

In The Earth Charter, a section of Principle 1 focuses on building a democratic and fair society around sustainable ideals and practices. While there are many Athens organizations that are involved both in the construction of a fair society as well as environmental concerns such as sustainability, none fit these categories better than 4-H. 4-H is a national organization with local branches in Athens. Its focus on teaching our youth how to live sustainably and responsibly is one of the most effective strategies in making a widespread change.

4-H is a youth development organization with branches all over the country that implements the desire to enact community-wide change at an early age.¹ Youth are eligible to join 4-H at any age from 9-19, which covers a wide range of important developmental years for children and teens. This program teaches children the effects that they can have on their community and the environment at large, thus ingraining the importance of sustaining our ecosystem within them. This ensures that the youth of today will grow into responsible and compassionate adults in the future who actively care about their communities. This practice is essential to achieving the goals set forth in the Earth Charter, because the more children that are educated in this manner, the more people a community will have that are looking out for its best interests.

The 4-H program began more than 100 years ago as a means of convincing farmers to try new and more effective agricultural practices. These farmers were initially skeptical of the new discoveries being made by universities while young people were often more open to new thinking and willing to attempt new

ideas and experiments. These young people would then share their successes with the farmers, thus introducing the new agricultural techniques to the community at large. This tactic not only improved farming techniques, but also educated the youth about the concerns and developments with their local industries. This practice is still effective today; by teaching our youth how to preserve our world, we have a more receptive and open audience than adults may be. When these strategies are put into practice, the skeptics will witness their successes and follow suit. In this way, 4-H is helping to build a better society from the youth up.

Today, there are three facets to the 4-H program that seek to give children a well-rounded and globally conscious education. The program is split into Science, Citizenship, and Healthy Living. Under the Science heading, children will be learning first-hand about utilizing alternative energy, conserving energy, and how to limit humanity’s impact on the environment. As early as middle school, students in 4-H are taught that water is a finite resource, and they learn ways that they and their families can limit their water use. They are also informed about alternative energy sources, such as wind power, and as a project are required to make a small scale wind turbine of their own to demonstrate how it can work.

Within the Citizenship category, 4-H kids learn how to become leaders as well as how to give back to the community at large. 4-H members alone contribute hundreds of thousands of hours to community service every year. Not only do they participate in community activities, but they are encouraged to plan and design their own community endeavors to give back to their towns in their own ways. This promotes a sense of leadership and a support for creativity that also benefits the community’s overall wellbeing. In a similar vein, they run a program called Youth in Governance, which “engages young people in programs, organizations, and communities where they share a voice, influence, and decision-making authority.” This gives children a taste of what it’s like to interact with the people who have the power to enact change, and gives them more confidence in their own ability to generate change as well.

Finally, 4-H focuses on teaching kids how to live a healthy lifestyle. Again, they take a very multi-tiered approach, focusing on every area important to living a happy and healthy life. They focus on physical

activity, injury prevention, social and emotional development, healthy eating, and substance abuse prevention to allow the children involved with the program to grow into confident, assertive, and well-adjusted adults that are capable of making a difference in our world.

Because of this multifaceted approach, the children involved with 4-H become well-rounded problem-solvers. As the 4-H website states: “Youth currently in 4-H are tackling the nation’s top issues, from global food security, climate change and sustainable energy to childhood obesity and food safety.” The sheer breadth of topics covered by 4-H ensures that the youth involved will be well-versed in the details of our 21st century problems, and thus be better equipped to help solve them. All of these issues play a large part in improving our society as a whole, and having a more educated populace enables a fairer, more democratic decision-making process that is based on fact instead of hearsay.

The Athens branch of 4-H has more than 1,500 members dedicated to allowing youth and adults alike to work together for a positive change. The Athens 4-H club focuses on teaching topics such as agricultural and environmental issues, leadership and communication skills, foods, nutrition, health, and energy conservation. This organization helps local youth to develop the life-skills necessary to succeed in the world and make a living for themselves while remaining environmentally conscious. Having youth who are well-equipped for the challenges of our world will allow them to grow into adults with a better quality of life.

Probably one of the most notable facets about 4-H is its widespread nature. There are over 6.5 million members in the United States in approximately 90,000 clubs. There are also about 80 organizations that have been more recently set up in other countries. This speaks to a successful worldwide initiative to enact positive change on our environment. The program is so widespread, in fact, that its emblem (a four-leaf clover emblazoned with four H’s) has federal protection under federal code 18 U.S.C. 707. This means that it is a mark unto itself that has protections that supersede that of your typical copyright or trademark. This places the symbol in a very unique category, also occupied by such symbols as the U.S. Presidential Seal, the Red Cross, and the Olympic Rings.

An organization with this type of influence and power definitely has the pull necessary to enact change at our local level. The 4-H pledge reveals their mission in simple terms, and supports the Earth Charter in creating a fair and sustainable society:

I pledge my head to clearer thinking,
my heart to greater loyalty,
my hands to larger service
and my health to better living,
for my club, my community, my country, and
my world.

(Endnotes)

- 1 4-H website, accessed March 3, 2011, www.4-h.org.



Matthew Atkinson

**Freshman,
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Principle 4

What is the one thing that people say they want the most for their children? I doubt that it is to keep the planet in its current condition. We regularly trash our home as if we have no responsibility to help with the upkeep or care what it will be like in the future. We cover it in garbage, pump toxic waste into its waters, and spew disgusting gasses into the air. However, I don’t want to solely focus on the things we are doing wrong as so many others do. I would much rather think about the things that we can do in order to give our descendants a beautiful place to live for decades to come. If we could all just sit down and work together we could get so many things done that would better our planet for the future.

Until recently, I had never heard of the Earth Charter. I had no idea that a document existed that could provide a clear way to help the current stewards of this planet create a better place to live. I was amazed at how all of these people from different places came together just to create this document. Of all of the Earth Charter’s principles, Principle 4 really struck me. Principle 4 states “Secure Earth’s bounty and beauty for present and future generations.” The statement is simply written, yet it eloquently speaks to me of ways we can help where we live. This point in general shows the connection that we need to make from one generation to another. We need to put our efforts toward what we can do for the future of our planet and its inhabitants.

Unfortunately the biggest opposition to this principle is the pessimism of society. People become so enthralled in how big the problem appears that they give up before they even start. If they would just take their time and really think through the problem

while getting others involved, so much more could be accomplished in finding acceptable solutions. I find this so frustrating, especially when I see that there are people who have the knowledge that could give this cause so much help, and yet they do nothing. When I came to the University of Georgia I was amazed at how many people and organizations there are involved in helping protect the Earth so that we can pass it on to the next generations better than we found it.

One of the groups that has been the most noticeable to me is the UGA Ecology Club. On football game days, members of this organization collect a large amount of recyclables. They give up their Saturdays to walk around the campus picking up materials left over from tailgate parties. Not only does this help keep the campus much cleaner, it also keeps all of this material out of the overflowing landfills all over the county. The University of Georgia has followed the example set by the Ecology Club and has begun placing large portable recycling bins throughout campus. The Ecology Club is making an effort to keep our campus clean, while also keeping tons of garbage that can be recycled and reused out of the landfills.

The School of Ecology has recently taken another small step towards a better planet. They added two drinking water refill stations in their building. This not only promotes using reusable water bottles, it keeps plastic water bottles that would have been thrown away out of the landfills. With the installation of these two machines, the number of these bottles ending up in the trash is slowly declining. The School of Ecology students are also pushing to have more of these machines installed throughout the campus, particularly in areas of heavy pedestrian traffic. While this may seem like a small step, we must remember the ancient Chinese proverb “the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.” Even though this little addition may not seem like much, it shows a definite move towards a better, greener future and a cleaner planet, while also reflecting an increasing consciousness of the importance of living more sustainably.

One of the biggest steps that UGA and the City of Athens have taken in their march towards preserving this planet for future generations occurred just recently. This momentous step comes with the formation of a Climate Action Coalition. The forming

of this Coalition shows that the community is ready to do everything in its power to continue to preserve and conserve this planet, allowing future generations the ability to enjoy what we enjoy today. The Coalition met for the first time on February 22nd, 2011 to discuss some of the issues that we face with climate change as well as how to talk to our representatives in the government about what we can do to help resolve these issues. They stressed that even a college student who speaks out against something can make a difference. In general, the coalition is demonstrating how we as a university and a community need to work together to address the topic of climate change to preserve our planet's future.

The University of Georgia has been doing an admirable job promoting and practicing the principles of the Earth Charter. Even though I have only focused on a small number of recent actions the University has been involved in, it is doing so much more every day to give the next generation something to enjoy. I think that the example set by our school and its students can easily be reproduced on other university campuses and in other cities around the world in order to "secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations" as Principle 4 compels us to do. Over time with the help of humanity, if we follow the principles of the Earth Charter we will have a positive effect on the entire world by cleaning it up and leaving something to be proud of.



Emily Hunt
Sophomore,
Public Relations
From Alpharetta, Georgia

Principle 4: UGA Beyond Coal



The Earth Charter was created to promote environmental sustainability and to protect the world through a declaration of fundamental ethical principles. Although many of the aspects of the Earth Charter were written to help change our environmental ways today, principles for the future were also included in hopes that these values would continue for future generations. As it says in the Preamble of the Earth Charter, "Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world."

The fourth section of the Respect and Care for the Community of Life principle is the first time the effects of environmental sustainability on future generations are addressed. The fourth section states, "Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations." This section relates to the idea that while we are working to help the current state of the environment, we should also be concerned with educating future generations and protecting them through the work that we do to promote sustainability. If we protect the environment that we have today, it will still be there for future generations to appreciate too.

At the University of Georgia, students are taking the initiative to preserve the living world and ensure the well-being of future generations through the Sierra Club's UGA Beyond Coal Campaign. The goal of the UGA Beyond Coal organization is to transition

UGA away from the use of coal and make the school more sustainable by 2013. Through this program, UGA students are putting the principles of the Earth Charter into action and using them to help solve climate change.

UGA Beyond Coal is part of an even larger organization called Campuses Beyond Coal that is run by the Sierra Student Coalition of the national Sierra Club.¹ The Sierra Club was founded by John Muir in 1892 and is the most influential grassroots environmental organization in the United States. Since its creation, Sierra Club members have been working to preserve the environment and planet.² Among its many goals, the club is trying to move America beyond using dirty coal. The Sierra Student Coalition has established the Campuses Beyond Coal organization, which works to eliminate coal use on college campuses. So far the Campuses Beyond Coal program has been able to get rid of coal use at many university campuses including Clemson and most recently Penn State.

According to UGA Beyond Coal's website, UGA's coal plant provides 42 percent of the heat that the entire campus uses.³ However, in addition to providing heat, the coal plant releases mercury, lead, and other toxic materials into the air. In 2008, the coal plant spewed out 266 tons of sulfur dioxide, which is known to cause acid rain. This is a major issue because not only does it contribute to air and water pollution, but also increases the asthma and autism rate in Athens. According to UGA Beyond Coal, coal is the single most destructive industrial process that we use in the country.

The work that UGA Beyond Coal is doing relates to the Earth Charter's idea of securing Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations. By stopping coal use we will contribute to the future health of generations to come. In a statement made by UGA Beyond Coal, they explicitly say, "By moving our school beyond coal, we will take a lead, starting right here, in building a clean, renewable and secure energy future."

This initiative is special because by eliminating the use of coal on UGA's campus it will not only benefit the environment, but also the health of current and future students, as well as Athens community members. By working to better the health of these

students, this organization is recognizing that the freedom of action of each generation is qualified by the needs of future generations. The people working on this campaign are students from UGA who want a change. They care about what happens on their campus and they want to make sure that the university is helping the environment. This program also gives students a say in how their schools are run and allows them to learn how to effectively change something like the use of coal.

One of the issues addressed by UGA's Climate Change Panel was how college students could become involved and actually affect the decisions made by officials and politicians. UGA Beyond Coal is a great example of a way to get involved, and this program is teaching students how to gain public support in addition to the best ways to approach politicians to use legislation to protect the environment. Moving beyond coal as an energy source sets an example for future generations because when they look back at what we have done today, they will see that they do have the power to accomplish big and positive changes for the world.

In an essay about the Earth Charter readings, Maurice F. Strong says, "Implementation depends on motivation, and the motivation of people is the source of the political will of their governments."⁴ This statement is embodied in the work of Campuses Beyond Coal. Because of their motivation to change to cleaner energy sources, college administrations are beginning to implement changes that will benefit the environment.

Although UGA Beyond Coal has not yet succeeded in changing UGA's energy sources, they have increased awareness significantly on the UGA campus and are increasing the involvement of the Athens community. Currently, Athens community members can sign a petition that says they support the effort to end coal use on the UGA campus, and instead invest in solutions that will help solve the climate change issue and help make UGA more sustainable. UGA Beyond Coal has also held many meetings, post card sessions, and even a flash mob dance to promote a more environmentally friendly campus. Recently, they showed the film *Dirty Business: Clean Coal and the Fight for Our Energy Future* and received a great response that increased the awareness of climate change among UGA students.

For this program, ultimate success would be to have UGA stop using coal, which unfortunately has not occurred yet. But, according to a group representative and former Franklin Residential College member, Heather Hatzenbuehler, the group has already had much success with the collection of over 1000 petitions from students, faculty, and alumni calling for President Adams to move UGA beyond coal.⁵ Hopefully, in the near future UGA will follow in the steps of other university campuses and will realize that it needs to help create a healthier environment by stopping the use of coal as an energy source.

Mary Tucker has noted that the 21st century should be remembered as when humans began to lay foundations for the well-being of the planet.⁶ With the work that is being done at UGA with the Campuses Beyond Coal program, we are definitely heading in the right direction. UGA's Beyond Coal organization has already helped future generations by fighting to stop coal use by UGA, and hopefully they will go on to do even more, and thus inspire future generations to protect the environment by working towards environmental sustainability.

(Endnotes)

- 1 "Campuses Beyond Coal," Sierra Club Home Page: Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet, accessed March 5th, 2011, <http://www.sierraclub.org/coal/campus/default.aspx>.
- 2 "Beyond Coal," Sierra Club Home Page: Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet, accessed March 5th, 2011, <http://www.sierraclub.org/coal/>.
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- 4 Maurice F. Strong, "Preface: A People's Earth Charter," *The Earth Charter in Action*, ed. Peter Blaze Corcoran (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2005).
- 5 Michael Prochaska, "WHO-MANITARIAN?" *The Red and Black* (Athens, GA), September 18th, 2010, <http://www.redandblack.com/2010/09/08/who-manitarian/> (accessed April 2nd, 2011).
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Principle 5: The Land Use Clinic at the University of Georgia

The Earth Charter concisely and eloquently asserts the importance of preserving the natural resources of the world out of concern for the wellbeing of present and future generations. A predominant area of emphasis within the Charter is that of ecological integrity, which is the focus of the entire second section. A major point within this heading is a concern for maintaining biological diversity. Principle 2 succinctly advocates that all people should "[p]rotect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life." Willingness to consider and defend the diverse components and systems of the natural world is essential to enacting change, and should not be underestimated.

A program at the University of Georgia that embodies the concerns elucidated in the second section of the Earth Charter is the Land Use Clinic, which provides legal strategies to help preserve land, water, and scenic beauty. Furthermore, the clinic promotes the establishment and development of communities that are responsive to human and environmental needs. The program provides research findings to assist local governments, state agencies, and non-profit organizations develop growth management policies and practices as well as quality land use. The members of the Land Use Clinic program draft legislation in order to control storm water and other water pollution, protect green space, preserve farmland and open space, cluster development away from sensitive resources, and promote affordable housing.¹

In addition to advocating the efficient use of

resources, the clinic provides opportunities for law students at the University of Georgia to develop practical skills and supplies them with a knowledge base of land use law and policy. The program facilitates clinical work in transactional and administrative law, focusing primarily on public policy and legal issues. The experience is designed for law students who are interested in land use, real estate, local government, commercial or environmental law, or in community leadership on land use issues. Participating students work in the clinic office approximately 10 to 15 hours per week during a given semester, and are directly supervised by the managing attorney, Jamie Baker Roskie. Each student is required to submit a formal research project, usually a policy paper, written analysis, educational materials, or an operative legal document.

Not only does the Land Use Clinic promote the preservation of precious resources, but it also trains aspiring lawyers who have a marked interest in environmental law. Such students are to be the future lawyers and policy advocates of the nation, meaning that the potential impact of the Land Use Clinic extends far beyond the immediate results of cleaning Georgia rivers. The focus on local, regional, and national issues gives the program a more encompassing scope that certainly speaks to the sentiments of the Earth Charter in promoting a more unified network of concerned individuals rather than working in isolation.

The Land Use Clinic endeavors to preserve natural resources out of concern for the present and future condition of the environment. The ambitious, yet mediated legal courses of action are grounded in the belief that land and water resources are worthy of our attention, respect, and protection. The motivation for the project aligns with the sense of urgency that the Earth Charter generates. Daniel Maguire's concise statement, as quoted in Mary Evelyn Tucker's *Reflections on the Earth Charter*, illuminates the repercussions of the self-destructive behavior of humanity: "If current trends continue, we will not."² Advocates of the Earth Charter implore that present behaviors and attitudes are unacceptable and ultimately detrimental. In order to successfully make an impact, supporters of the Earth Charter should utilize legal methods of reinforcing their hopes and intentions for a more sustainable society.

The Land Use Clinic incorporates both practical and legal approaches to implementing change in current practices, rendering it a successful organization that can serve as an example for similar programs in areas outside of Athens.

(Endnotes)

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2 Tucker, Mary Evelyn, "Reflections on the Earth Charter" (Online Conference on Global Ethics, Sustainable Development and the Earth Charter, Bucknell University, PA, February 1999).



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Principle 7

What differentiates the Earth Charter from my expectations of any other document giving similar environmental policy recommendations is the positive imagery and sense of personal responsibility that it encourages with every word. The need for immediate action becomes undeniable when so many aspects of a very complex problem are woven together so concisely. The Earth Charter movement has garnered followers, not by expressing all that is wrong with our world and the way we humans treat it, but instead by inspiring a shared vision for the future of humankind. I imagine that many supporters appreciate the fact that the implementation of Earth Charter principles is not limited to only the powerful decision makers in government or the rich tycoons of large corporations. Before the Earth Charter, many members of the human population might have found themselves thinking that they didn't have the power to effect real change. While it is true that one individual's actions may not make or break a movement such as this, the success of the Earth Charter movement does depend on maintaining a degree of personal responsibility among supporters.

Earth Charter Principle 7 in particular can be applied to many levels of organization within the human population. The principle asks that individuals, families, public institutions, corporations, government agencies, and even entire nations "adopt patterns of production,

consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being."¹ One such public institution that shows recognition of personal responsibility to protect our world is the University of Georgia. Athens, Georgia may be a town situated within arguably one of the world's most notoriously over-consuming and wasteful nations in the world. Regardless, the University of Georgia is employing real action for environmental stewardship that will set a good example for others in the United States to follow. The Green Cup Challenge is a competition between residence halls in UGA's Hill Community to see which residents can most dramatically reduce their impacts on Earth. This competition addresses the following Earth Charter Sub-principles:

7.a – Reduce, reuse, and recycle the materials used in production and consumption systems...

7.b – Act with restraint and efficiency when using energy...

7.d – ... enable consumers to identify products that meet the highest social and environmental standards.

7.f – Adopt lifestyles that emphasize the quality of life and material sufficiency in a finite world.²

These sub-principles apply mostly to individual action, so they can be used to inspire those individuals who live in the Hill Community. The annual Green Cup Challenge was started in the Fall of 2009 by a cooperation of local organizations including the River Basin Center, Odum School of Ecology, and UGA Physical Plant, all hoping to inspire some freshmen residents of University Housing to take environmental action into their own hands.³ Tyra Byers of the Office of Sustainability and her passionate student interns organized educational events (encouraging sub-principles 7.d and 7.f), compiled energy and water use data (encouraging 7.b), assessed the utilization of recycling (encouraging 7.a), and declared one building the winner of the Green Cup based on these facets of sustainable living.

The Hill Community is made up of the halls Hill, Lipscomb, Mell, Church, and Boggs. The competition was designed to use friendly competition as a motivator for students to do as sub-principle 7.f advocates: "Adopt lifestyles that emphasize the quality of life and material sufficiency in a finite world."⁴ Sub-principle 7.f serves as a reminder that by choosing to live sustainably, residents are increasing the quality of life for the human race in the long term.

In addition to long term benefits like cleaner air and healthier local ecosystems, the Green Cup Challenge is also encouraging more immediate benefits including monetary savings for the Department of University Housing and lessons learned when students attend the educational events associated with the competition.

Environmental film screenings, panel discussions with field experts in sustainability, quiz games related to environmental issues, and other events are a very special part of the competition. These educational events reinforce the larger context of the decisions residents make within their halls. Odds are, some of these freshmen residents have never lived on their own, so they may have never before had to take out the trash/recycling. They may have never needed to decide whether to wash their clothes in hot or cold water. By making recommendations at this stage in residents' lives, these young adults in the Hill Community may forever remember the connection between their actions and "Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being."⁵

The Green Cup Challenge, designed based on a similar program at Duke University, was and is the first of its kind on the UGA campus.⁶ Similarly, the Recyclemania competition between universities in the Southeast has been promoting waste reduction, friendly competition, and overall environmental education since 2001.⁷ challengedThe Green Cup Challenge, however, was the first to bring that same type of competition to a more intimate scale, where competitors could jokingly intimidate their friends in other buildings, some even proclaiming themselves trash police, light police,

or water police.

The program's success is certainly evidenced in this enthusiastic response from students, but success is measured more directly with the evaluation of water bills and electric bills for the individual buildings. The competition is only two years old, and is still gaining momentum. The money saved, along with the watts, pounds, and gallons saved should only grow in the future as more and more students embrace the ideals of environmental stewardship that are encouraged in the Earth Charter. More students will turn off their lights, unplug their electronic, and take "navy showers" as the Green Cup Challenge gathers more competitors. Hopefully, the support in the Hill Community and the experience gained after two years of successful implementation will allow efforts to expand to other freshman residence halls here at UGA, including Creswell, Russell and Brumby.

One small corner of Athens is building leaders toward sustainable lifestyles for all, setting the example for other areas to do the same. If the Earth is to be protected and preserved for future generations, it is imperative that we, "join together to bring forth a sustainable global society," as requested in the Earth Charter Preamble.⁸ More programs like the Green Cup Competition will foster support for the ideals of the Earth Charter. Many small-scale campaigns will help individuals to realize their part in securing a sustainable future on Earth. It is with individual action that Earth Charter supporters have the power to change the planet forever.

(Endnotes)

1 "Read The Charter," *The Earth Charter Initiative*, Earth Charter Associates, Ltd., <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Read-the-Charter.html> (accessed February 27th, 2011).

2 Ibid.

3 Stephen Feinberg, Personal conversation, March 7th, 2011.

4 "Read The Charter," *The Earth Charter Initiative*, Earth Charter Associates, Ltd., <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Read-the-Charter.html> (accessed February 27th, 2011).

5 Ibid.

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Principle 8: Public Relations, Spring 2009 Go Green Campaign

The Spring 2009 Go Green Campaign provides an excellent example of the Earth Charter's eighth principle, advancing sustainability education and knowledge. Research and efforts for sustainability do not need to be confined to the realms of science education. Interdisciplinary cooperation is a valuable tool in disseminating an overarching message and instituting major changes in behavior and attitudes.

I first learned about the Office of Sustainability in a journalism course. I am currently in a public relations campaigns class taught by Dr. Lynne Sallot.¹ Dr. Sallot is a professor of public relations in the University of Georgia's Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. This campaigns class is a requirement of all graduating public relations seniors, and acts as a culmination of the skills and knowledge learned from classes taken throughout the major. For five consecutive semesters, Dr. Sallot's campaigns students focused on sustainability efforts at the University of Georgia. For a specific example, I will refer to the spring semester of 2009.

Dr. Sallot instructed a group of students who spearheaded the research that was used to persuade University of Georgia's President, Michael Adams, that an Office of Sustainability was needed at UGA. The Spring 2009 Go Green Campaign conducted in-depth research through meetings with focus groups and Web analyses of the efforts (or lack thereof) of twenty-five peer institutions. With their findings, they were able to provide evidence that the UGA community was interested and passionate about sustainability. The class' efforts were directed toward constructing a campaign that would educate UGA's community about sustainability issues and initiatives

specific to UGA, and would motivate students, faculty and staff to adopt sustainable practices as individuals. This is an important step in becoming more sustainable for a number of reasons. First, major changes must start at the smallest level (personal, community) before they can be expected to become state, national or even universal policies. Second, focusing on college students means that efforts are focused on changing the habits and conceptions of the generation that is at a prime stage in life to initiate and follow-through with long-term global initiatives for sustainability. Dr. Sallot's students were able to use their unique skill sets to bring awareness about the concerns of sustainability and to promote the efforts of student environmental initiatives on campus.

In addition to their research, the class achieved a number of different goals. They held a "It's So Easy Being Green" forum that was a town-hall type meeting that was used to educate the community and promote awareness of sustainability issues on campus. They strongly supported "The Green Initiative Fund," which established a three dollar fee per student, per semester to be used for sustainability efforts. They supported sustainability events such as Sustainapalooza and even included an incentive to attend by making them blue card events.² The class also promoted RecycleMania by organizing recycling drives in the residence halls.

The campaign's main event was a "Kermit the Frog: It's So Easy Being Green" themed Earth Day at the Tate Plaza. It was a campus-wide event that brought together the Go Green Alliance member organizations as well as several other campus organizations.

Along with the various events, the campaign raised awareness of sustainability through promotional materials. A multi-platform social media campaign was used to support the activities of the Go Green Alliance as well as the campaigns class' efforts. They established a Twitter Page, a blog, Facebook groups and events, in addition to other media outlets.

At the end of their campaign, the class evaluated the success of the campaign and provided recommendations for future efforts. In addition to suggestions for maintaining the Go Green Alliance and other initiatives, the class encouraged future campaigns to fight for the creation of an Office of Sustainability by conducting more in-depth research

and monitoring the uses of the "Green Initiative Fund" resources. The class also suggested that the logo they created be used universally and consistently in order to establish credibility. Initiatives should target students in residence halls as well as incoming freshman.

These recommendations show incredible foresight. The journey toward sustainability is ongoing and individuals must constantly reevaluate their behavior in order to adapt to changes in the environment. These public relations students recognized that in order for them to maintain a rate of change, they must always be looking to and preparing for the future. Their widespread efforts allowed for these issues to be heard and made leaders and administrators acknowledge that sustainability is a legitimate concern for all students. President Adams established University of Georgia's Office of Sustainability in 2010 largely in response to student-led initiatives such as 2009 Report of the Working Group on Sustainability at the University of Georgia and The Green Initiative Fund (TGIF) student-led campaign.

The Go Green Campaign provides an excellent example of Principle 8 of the Earth Charter in action at the University of Georgia. The efforts of Dr. Sallot's class were used to support current initiatives on campus as well as provide research to promote the overall goal of sustainability. The importance of Principle 8 cannot be overstated, and this is because education is one of the most fundamental tools for change. Without educating the population and future generations, the efforts of researchers, policy writers, and environmentalists would be misused or, worse, not used at all. The Go Green Campaign served a valuable function in the drive for sustainability by raising awareness for the cause.

(Endnotes)

1 Information in this report about the Go Green Campaign comes from both Dr. Lynne Sallot and from the class' campaign report, which was submitted for a grade at the end of the semester.

2 The Blue Card Program provides students the opportunity for early class registration if they attend 10 events and complete an assignment.



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Principle 8: The Campus Community UGArden

The second category of the Earth Charter deals with ecological integrity. Specifically, the eighth principle states that we should “Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.” Within this, the Earth Charter lists three sub points; a) Support scientific and technical cooperation on sustainability; b) Recognize and preserve the traditional knowledge and spiritual wisdom in all cultures that contribute to environmental protection and human well being; and c) Ensure that information of vital importance to human health and environmental protection, including genetic information, remains available in the public domain. One such organization at UGA that demonstrates these principles is the campus community UGArden.

In a world of fast food restaurants and industrial, monoculture agriculture, sustainable food has become more and more of an issue. For students and locals who are impassioned by these issues, the UGArden offers a unique way to become involved. The UGArden has two coexisting facets, a student group and an actual garden. The student group is an advocacy group for “real food,” meaning food that is sustainable, fairly managed, and gives workers rights.¹ The student group is in the process of working with the dining halls on campus to address such issues as mass consumption at the UGA campus. The garden is volunteer run, sustainable, and organic, using natural mulch and compost and no pesticides. It provides food to local projects, donating to Athens’s food banks and Campus Kitchens, a program that provides food for grandparents raising children. This mix between advocacy and actually going out and getting hands dirty is perfect for impassioned

students and locals alike, as each tailor their work to the aspect that inspires them most.

The program started roughly a year ago through David Berle, a horticulture professor at UGA. His influence and help from the Office of Sustainability at UGA were pivotal for creating this organization. Berle works on numerous other community gardens around the area and used his knowledge, connections at the horticulture department, and the surplus from other gardens to get this project running. Currently student leaders include Mary Carlson, a founder, Rachel Spencer and Kate Klein, advocacy heads, and Jenny Brickman, garden head. Another notable person is Andrew Douglas, a graduate student who manages the farm and recently won a grant to build a cistern for more sustainable water collection. Volunteers and workers change and grow constantly. The garden is located on Milledge Avenue in Athens, sharing space with the UGA greenhouses and horticulture group land. It is on a fourth of an acre with three plots of about 60x80 feet each.

While there are many community gardens, including many at other campuses around the country, the UGAgarden did not model itself off of one specifically. This year has been a tester for figuring out what works and what does not, building off the needs and interests of the community and the workers. UGArden is its community partnerships. To get it started, mulch was donated from the local physical plant. Waste from dining halls on campus, as well as from volunteers provides excellent bio compost. The land was donated, and the plumbing, tool sheds, and all materials were provided by the horticulture department. UGArden is funded mostly by donations, a partnership with the physical plant, fundraisers, grants won through the Office of Sustainability, and by David Berle. Last summer the garden harvested and donated 700 pounds of food. UGArden embodies the principles and points of the Earth Charter by promoting and educating students and other local volunteers about organic gardening and food justice. The garden is completely sustainable. It utilizes crop rotation by having three separate plots. The first plot grows summer and fall production, the second winter and spring, and the third is used for summer and fall plants again. While not in season, the two plots lay fallow and are covered in enriching mulch and cover plants like clover in order to regain their balance in nutrients. Unknown to many consumers, today’s agriculture has stopped such pivotal and wise practices. Industrial agriculture

is typically grown in monoculture with extensive pesticides and fertilizers being used. The crops are lower quality and covered in harmful chemicals, but produce higher yields. The land is stripped with horrible consequences, including desertification, erosion, and chemical leakage into the ecosystems. UGArden recognizes these concerns and therefore uses age-old techniques and traditional knowledge to contributing to the education of its workers, the environmental protection of its surrounding area, and the well-being of all that eat its yield. The UGArden also uses drip-water techniques. Industrial farms water their plants by spraying them with a huge quantity of water. This wastes millions of gallons of water, as the spray mostly hits the leaves and evaporates before getting to the roots. The UGArden uses drip-water which is pumped directly to the roots, saving water and energy.

The advocacy group associated with UGArden works most closely on the topic of food justice, which is a critical, though little understood issue, that America faces. Food justice acknowledges the fact that only a certain type of person can afford to eat locally grown organic food – food that is the most healthy and most environmentally friendly. The food industry creates classism and racism. Only the upper middle class can afford such luxury in their food. Those that cannot are forced into consuming high hormone meat and genetically changed and chemically potent produce. The advocacy group works to alert communities about these issues and tries to address these problems at the local level. The UGArden cosponsors panels and recently sponsored the southeast Youth Food Activist Senate. The UGArden advocacy group also works with programs that help educate people about what to do with the healthier food once they are given it. Raw food means nothing if the knowledge of how to prepare it into tasty, satisfying meals is lost. There is a major generational loss of basic cooking knowledge.

Through the knowledge acquired by organically gardening, being involved with the community through donating food they grow, and working in advocacy, the UGArden is a perfect example of the Earth Charter in action. The UGArden promotes ecological sustainability while also fighting for the human justice aspect of food production.

(Endnotes)

1 Emily Karol in discussion with the author, March 7th, 2011.



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Principle 8

Promoting ecological sustainability through education involves more than the immediate impact on the particular students being taught. One must take into consideration the fact that the students learning about ecological sustainability today may actually, and hopefully, put what they have learned into action tomorrow. Dr. Hans van Ginkel accurately stated, "Education serves as a powerful tool for moving nations, communities, and households towards a more sustainable future," meaning with the power of education today, a real difference can truly be made for upcoming generations.¹ All too often people are quoted as saying that the future is "the future's problem" or "they can figure it out when the time comes." The precautionary principle reminds us that one does not have to see flames to know there is a fire, the smoke and smell is enough. Presently the world is up in smoke, yet luckily it is full of youth capable of taking charge and making it a better place. Without sustainable education and plans to engage these ideas, little will take place. As Dr. van Ginkel so eloquently proposes, "Education for sustainable development builds the capacity of nations to create, broaden, and implement sustainability plans."² Actions must be taken today to secure tomorrow, and the University of Georgia's Global Programs in Sustainability reflect one such action step being taken to implement sustainability plans.

UGA's Global Programs in Sustainability are a series of study abroad programs geared towards teaching students the importance of practicing sustainable planning in everyday life, environmental factors, and local/national legislations. The programs are based in the South Pacific, and study abroad options include six different destinations: Antarctica, Australia, Fiji, Hawaii, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

Most of the programs are available during the summer semester, with variants to allow students the ability to customize programs to meet their needs and interests. For example, during the fall semester a student can go to Antarctica or spend a couple weeks in Australia. Additionally, options exist to go to both Australia and New Zealand for the entire spring semester. The most popular options, however, occur in the Maymester programs, when students can spend almost a month in Australia, New Zealand, or United Kingdom with the option to add a week in Fiji, Hawaii, or Sydney. In just under a month's time, students receive six-credit hours, with the option of three more credits if a week-long program is added. This of course is diminutive compared to the fantastic experience they will remember and cherish for the rest of their lives.

UGA's Global Programs in Sustainability study abroad programs offer course work with sustainability issues as the main focus, and they deliver this in an interesting manner. Throughout each of the programs, students interact with people and groups involved with sustainability issues. For example, the Fiji program visits an island specializing in eco-tourism and students are able to more fully understand what this means, not only to the visitors, but also to the local people and the place. Tourism around the world is thirty-two times greater now than in 1950, making sustainable eco-tourism all the more important if negative impacts are to be minimized. Sustainable eco-tourism is often advertised as 'natural' in a way that does not degrade its surroundings, or as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."³ Students are made quite aware of this while in Fiji, where many measures are taken by locals to recover depleted fishing waters due to commercial fishing and to minimize coral reef extraction.

Participants in the New Zealand study abroad program have countless encounters with the Maori, New Zealand's original inhabitants. Through interactions with the Maori they learn not only about the importance of preserving their culture, but also the natural beauty that New Zealand has to offer. Movements and campaigns from all over New Zealand are made known and presented personally to students regarding deforestation, preserving

endemic species, and eliminating invasive species. For example, many of New Zealand's endemic bird populations have been devastated by the introduction of weasels. To address this problem, small bird populations have been moved to offshore islands away from predators to ensure population growth. Students speak with representatives helping with the program and see the island from a safe distance on the mainland to avoid disrupting the birds' new habitat.

UGA's Global Sustainability Programs not only provide adventure to their participants, but also knowledge on how to make the world a better place. Director Michael Tarrant and Associate Director Uttiyo Raychaudhuri, both with the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at UGA, make this message clear when they advertise their programs as "Nurturing tomorrow's global citizens." These programs reflect Earth Charter's eighth principle by teaching ecological sustainability to students and showing a wide application of how this knowledge can be used.

(Endnotes)

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- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Carrier, J. & D. Macleod, "Bursting the bubble: The socio-cultural context of ecotourism," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 11 (2005).



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Principle 9



The world we live in is vast, and the groups of people that live in it are culturally diverse. Each country has unique cultures and traditions that should be cherished and upheld with respect, therefore a single solution cannot be universally applied to improving all societies' well-being. Since countries place different values on what is considered important, it is imperative to examine each country individually, even down to a local level, when determining ways to eradicate poverty. It is not just a matter of providing financial assistance to impoverished people. According to the Human Development Index, an independent index created by the United Nations Development Programme, improving well-being "is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value."¹ Principle nine of the Earth Charter states that in order to achieve a more sustainable society, we must "[e]radicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative." Earth Charter Principle nine notes specific ways in which this can be implemented, including:

- a) Guarantee the right to potable

water, clean air, food security, uncontaminated soil, shelter, and safe sanitation, allocating the national and international resources required;

- b) Empower every human being with the education and resources to secure a sustainable livelihood, and provide social security and safety nets for those who are unable to support themselves; and
- c) Recognize the ignored, protect the vulnerable, serve those who suffer, and enable them to develop their capacities and to pursue their aspirations."²

It is important for individual communities to extend aid on the local level to citizens in order to help them obtain a level of independence in which each individual can live a stable and productive life. In Athens, Georgia, there are many programs that strive to help the less fortunate. In 2003, a comprehensive analysis of persistent poverty in seven rural southern states was completed by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia. The Study on Persistent Poverty in the South concluded that there is an area of persistent poverty in the rural South; in fact, this region is judged to be the poorest in the nation, with 242 counties experiencing persistent poverty among the worst in the country for at least the last three decades. Georgia is at the heart of the region, as 91 of the 242 counties are located within the state.³ In response to that study, the Office of the Vice President of Public Service and Outreach at UGA decided to officially undertake the University of Georgia's Initiative on Poverty and the Economy. The purpose is to keep the important issue of poverty alive instead of waiting for federal funding. "The Initiative's mission is to create sustainable activities across multiple disciplines that are designed to address issues of persistent poverty specific to the working and nonworking poor."⁴

"Dismantling Persistent Poverty in Georgia: Breaking the Cycle", a paper published by

the Office of Public Service and Outreach, recommended steps for the community to take in eradicating poverty.⁵ The authors of this paper emphasize that local leadership must come forward (evolve), and that it is crucial for local committed participants to get involved in the development process. Furthermore, they highlight the importance of providing education to create a more competitive workforce in order to discourage businesses from bringing in workers from out of state.

In 2006, the University of Georgia, along with the Athens-Clarke County (ACC) Government, the ACC School District, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Family Connection partnered up to create a private, anti-poverty group called Partners for a Prosperous Athens (PPA). PPA's main goals are to develop strategies that deal with and overcome poverty in the Athens community. Ten initiatives have been identified that will have a long-term, high impact on reducing poverty:

1. **Regional Economy:** *The focus of this initiative is to develop a regional economic development organization to proactively market the region to prospects interested in bringing new industry to the region as well as to encourage the retention and expansion of existing businesses.*
2. **Early Learning:** *The focus of this initiative is to provide every child ages 0-5 years with access to a quality school-readiness program.*
3. **Education and Workforce:** *The focus of this initiative is to create new public education models in Athens that reflect extensive community involvement, shared governance, and new partnerships to meet the diverse needs of our children and communities.*
4. **Family Engagement:** *The focus of this initiative is to provide a single place where families can access education, healthcare, social services, and job training resources.*
5. **Public Transportation:** *The focus of this initiative is to increase coverage and accessibility of public transportation in Athens and the surrounding region.*
6. **Affordable Housing:** *The focus of this initiative is to develop a comprehensive housing strategy to address the housing needs of the entire Athens*

community.

7. **Health:** *The focus of this initiative is to create a health foundation to support comprehensive delivery of primary and specialty health services for those in poverty and near poverty.*
8. **Teen Pregnancy:** *The focus of this initiative is to reduce the teen pregnancy rate 25% by December 2010, providing comprehensive teen pregnancy prevention programs at schools, in places of worship, and in neighborhoods.*
9. **Human and Economic Development:** *The focus of this initiative is to encourage and help the Athens Clarke County Department of Human and Economic Development (HED) design and implement a comprehensive program that will secure the resources needed to enhance the services provided to disadvantaged communities.*
10. **OneAthens:** *will provide leadership from the community to ensure the implementation of these initiatives that are to help reduce poverty because it will provide an organization to oversee the accountability and implementation of the PPA recommendations.⁶*

Partners for a Prosperous Athens understand the importance of education when fighting poverty. They realize that when an individual is educated, not only does he or she have a higher competitive advantage in attaining a form of employment, but also that education allows that individual to be able to think more critically. Thus, this enables the individual to evaluate and make more informed decisions that affect his or her life. Yolanda Kakabadse, an Earth Charter Commissioner, also shares this understanding and writes about it in her article, "Using Earth Charter Principles to Assess Social and Economic Justice in Latin America," "the weak social investment in education, health, and other needs in almost all the countries of our continent and the perception of this as an expense, not an investment, needs to be the first objective of change."⁷

Partners for a Prosperous Athens is funded by the donations of an array of local and national businesses. PPA believes that the surest way to end poverty is to increase participation in the

economy. PPA provides a means for individuals to participate in submitting recommendations for the organization to implement. There are currently 155 recommendations addressing a variety of issues, including Education, Early Learning, Dependent Care, the Economy, Housing, Health, Workforce, Mentoring, Service Providers, Transportation, and Adult Education.⁸ Partners for a Prosperous Athens has been quite successful in accomplishing their set goals. Just a few of the many accomplishments that coincide with the goals in Earth Charter Principle Nine are:

- Between 2002- 2008, the University of Georgia increased its minimum hiring salary for benefit-eligible positions from \$12,790 to \$20,000. UGA is striving to continue to increase its minimum hiring rate.
- In 2007, UGA Human Resources developed and implemented the UGA Community Partnership in employing people with disabilities (UG/Ability). The goal of this partnership is to work collaboratively in the pursuit of securing employment at UGA for persons with mental and physical disabilities, and to be a role model for other employers in the region.
- Implementation of Jobs for Life (JFL), a faith-based partnership between local ministers, employers, and champions to provide soft skills to participants to help them to obtain and maintain jobs. A champion is a volunteer who is willing to enter into a relationship with one of the JFL students in which the champion helps the student reach his/her God-given potential. The champion will encourage the student during the class and maintain that support once the student is employed.
- In collaboration with PPA, Piedmont College has offered up to \$500,000 in need-based scholarships for students coming from poverty.
- The Stable Foundation has been developed to support affordable housing for the homeless.
- PPA supports the Food Policy Council's continued efforts to increase the affordability and accessibility of real food and increase entrepreneurship opportunities in local agriculture.⁹

Athens, Georgia has a long way to go before poverty is no longer a major issue. However, the University of Georgia's Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach and Partners for a Prosperous Athens, along with countless other organizations and volunteers, are making important strides in the fight against poverty. Private, local organizations like Partners for a Prosperous Athens are an outstanding example of how communities can come together to lend a helping hand to a neighbor and to see the direct results of their actions. When communities all over the world come together to fight poverty on the local level, the level of poverty in the world today will be dramatically decreased.

(Endnotes)

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- 2 "III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE: Principle 9," *The Earth Charter in Action*, http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/invent/images/uploads/earthcharter_english.pdf (accessed March 28th, 2011).
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- 8 Steve Jones, "155 Recommendations," Partners For A Prosperous Athens, <http://www.prosperousathens.org/about-ppa/155-recommendations> (accessed March 10th, 2011).
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Principle 10

Principle 10 of the Earth Charter states that we must "ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner." The Athens Land Trust (ALT) is an example of a successful local effort to decrease social inequality and "promote the equitable distribution of wealth within nations and among nations." ALT is a local nonprofit that serves a number of progressive functions within the Athens community and surrounding area; included are the home ownership facilitation endeavor, the environmental ecosystem preservation endeavor, and the community garden project. Part of the mission of Athens Land Trust involves providing qualifying low-income residents, who might otherwise be confined to a lifetime of renting, the opportunity to buy a home with consolidated monthly payments of approximately \$500- \$650 per month. They enter into a contract of a "99-year renewable ground lease."¹ This allows the resident(s) full use of the land as well as the ability to pass it on as an inheritance, but if they decide to sell it then the ALT will buy it back from them or arrange for another qualifying family or individual to purchase it from them. Retaining ownership of the land is one way that ALT is able to provide houses that are more affordable in comparison with the surrounding area. This practice also ensures sustainability to the endeavor as it enables them to guarantee that the house remains

affordable in the long term. A qualifying family or individual is one that does not bring in more than 80% of the median area income. This rate is adjusted for each additional family member. For example, a person living alone with no dependents who made at or below \$32,350 per year would be qualified to participate. On the other end of the spectrum, a family of six that brings in at or below \$53,550 per year would qualify by this standard as well. Additional supplemental help is provided to individuals who may need to work on their credit in order to qualify for a mortgage. In this instance, the ALT may provide a lease-purchase option, as well as individual counseling to improve credit scores, in order to provide long term, sustainable, solution-based aid to the recipient. The benefits of home ownership in the at-risk neighborhoods targeted by ALT are multifold. ALT renovates houses in various states of decay which increases the exhibited level of order in the neighborhood; a better neighborhood 'face' has been correlated in many sociological studies with lower crime rates. Residents who own their houses are also more likely to make an effort to actively preserve their investment rather than succumbing to the apathy that can breed in the grips of absentee landlords and rising rents, which can also eventually serve to drive residents from the neighborhood completely. ALT is a sustainable model of neighborhood preservation and a socioeconomic equalizer, to the point of deterring further decline in endangered neighborhoods and empowering the population by increasing the number of homeowners. The sustainable socioeconomic benefits of the housing endeavor are compounded by their alignment with and efforts towards environmental conservation. ALT currently holds a conservation easement that protects "766 acres of working family farmland and 437 acres of forest, wetlands, neighborhood open space, and scenic vistas." A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement between a land trust and a property owner that limits the type of development, as well as the amount of development, that can take place on the specified

land. The easements eventually become a part of the deed to the property and the restrictions are then transferred to any subsequent owners of the land. The protection of such local natural habitats is crucial to ecosystem preservation in the area and has long term environmental and economic repercussions. A total of 1, 024 acres of land is currently protected by ALT through these conservative easements.

Athens Land Trust was recently one of 27 organizations throughout the country to receive a three year, \$287,690 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute for Food and Agriculture. This grant is being employed to empower low-income families in the area by providing them the opportunity to grow their own food. To this end, ALT is establishing a community network of gardens designated for use by the targeted income stratum, which includes children, the elderly, and minority populations in the scope of its demographics. A number of other local groups are teaming up with ALT on this cooperative endeavor, including the University of Georgia Horticulture Department, Athens-Clarke County Extension Office, Athens Community Council on Aging, Casa de Amistad, Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful, People of Hope Cooperative, Inc., and Promoting Local Agriculture and Cultural Experiences (PLACE). Also supported by the Athens Area Community Foundation, the Athens Land Trust is spearheading a collaborative project which will create two major gardens, designed to serve as models and instruction sites, with the intent of increasing visibility within the community and thereby ensuring sustainability through continuing support and innovation. Noted benefits aligned with community garden projects have been outlined by the American Community Gardening Association as follows:

- improves the quality of life for people in the garden
- provides a catalyst for neighborhood and community development
- stimulates social interaction; encourages self-

reliance; beautifies neighborhoods

- produces nutritious food
- reduces family food budgets
- conserves resources
- creates opportunity for recreation, exercise, therapy, and education
- reduces crime
- preserves greenspace
- creates income opportunities and economic development
- reduces city heat from streets and parking lots
- provides opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural connections.

With community support, the community garden project will grow and evolve to its potential within Athens-Clarke County. Perhaps one day enough land can be appropriated to lend a scale to the endeavor that would enable participants to actually obtain a source of income through participation in local farmers markets in selling the food that they grow.

Athens Land Trust is a model of sustainable action that addresses socioeconomic inequality as well as environmental preservation. By approaching both of these issues in tandem, ALT serves the common interest of public welfare and is an example of how a local institution is acting to “promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner” in accordance with Earth Charter Principle 10.

(Endnotes)

1 Athens Land Trust, accessed March 2011, <http://www.athenslandtrust.org>.



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Principle 11: The University of Georgia's International Justice Mission

“To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms, we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny.” Even though this is only one sentence from the Preamble to the Earth Charter, this one sentence says many different things. This statement in some way addresses every principle of the Earth Charter, but it has a strong connection with Principle 11. Principle 11 calls for us to “affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunity.” Like the quote from the Preamble states, we have to view everyone equally, like one family, in order to even have a chance at accomplishing any of the Earth Charter principles. As the sub-points under this particular principle state, there is an urgent and immediate need to end violence against people, especially women and children. It also mentions the need for all people, including women, to be welcomed to fully participate in every aspect of society and the need to protect and strengthen families around the globe. We must first become aware of issues of gender inequality in our world, and then we must find a way to correct our mistakes.

It is important to focus on these issues on a national and global level, but progress will likely begin from a very small and local level. What I love to see in a diverse town like Athens is a group of very different people who come

together for a common goal. This is what I see in UGA’s organization called International Justice Mission, or IJM. IJM is a national organization, but like many colleges UGA recently began their own chapter. IJM is a human rights agency, and they address serious issues like sexual exploitation, human slavery, and other types of violence and oppression. According to the people who started the chapter at UGA, it is easy to get a chapter of IJM going. The national organization has clear principles and goals for a local club to follow. “IJM’s staff stand against violent oppression in response to the Bible’s call to justice in Isaiah 1:17: *Seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.*” IJM has a few other principles by which they work, which include, “IJM seeks to restore to victims of oppression the things that God intends for them: their lives, their liberty, their dignity, and the fruits of their labor. By defending and protecting individual human rights, IJM seeks to engender hope and transformation for those it serves and restore a witness of courage in places of oppressive violence. IJM helps victims of oppression regardless of their religion, ethnicity, or gender.”¹ Along with these principles, all that is needed for IJM is a group of people who have an interest or a passion for the victims of oppression and inequality and that are committed to work together to address this problem. The international IJM has its headquarters in Washington, D.C. with 14 field offices around the world. They have ongoing operations in Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, India, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru. The international organization works at securing the rights of oppressed individuals through the legal system by intervening in court cases. They also give support to the victimized individuals. Since the foundation of the international level of IJM in 1997, over 140 student IJM organizations have been founded at colleges and universities around the world. Like the other student organizations of IJM, the UGA chapter works for the same international principles, but in more of a promotional way. They show movies at some

meetings in order to educate their members as well as any other interested individuals. For example, they have recently shown: *Stop the Candy Shop*, a documentary about the sexual exploitation of children; *Holly*, a movie about the sex trafficking of women; and *The Dark Side of Chocolate*, a documentary on child labor. IJM brings speakers and special guests to further educate people about the issues of violence and inequality in local and distant areas. They also hold events and accept donations to raise money to help the victims and those helping victims, such as lawyers, social workers, and investigators. All those who serve on the international and local levels of IJM are working very hard to bring peace and equality to the oppressed. According to Irene Dankelman, these working for IJM can be inspired by Principle 11 in the Earth Charter. "As the Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental values and principles, it also offers a holistic ethical framework to inspire the effort of those working to achieve sustainable development that embraces the gender component and women's roles in sustainable development."²

IJM at UGA is bold and explicit in its campaign to educate people in Athens about the harsh truth of human rights violations in Athens and around the world. There is a group of passionate people behind IJM's bold intentions; the international organization was founded by a group of lawyers, human rights professionals, and public officials. About a decade later, a few UGA students became very interested in founding a chapter of IJM in order for the city of Athens to become involved in these issues. IJM in Athens has had about 300 student members each year. There is a core of very involved students working to increase student participation. The IJM president, Caitlin Pitts, is dedicated to raising awareness for underprivileged women and children in less fortunate countries. Many women in other countries are still fighting for basic rights as Yolanda Kakabadse described in an essay about social and economic justice in Latin America. She stated, "Access to education for girls and women

of meager economic means is still limited."³ While a lack of access to education is more pronounced in Latin America than in the United States, quality of education is definitely still an issue for those who are of lower economic status in the United States.

IJM at UGA recognizes the problems and needs of many people, works very hard to raise money for these needs, and raises awareness of these issues simultaneously. Funding a club in college is a very challenging task. Like many college clubs, IJM funds their events by holding bake sales downtown late at night, utilizing percentage days at salons and percentage nights at restaurants, and accepting donations from whomever wishes to give. Although the organization cannot legally and financially do what their international branch does, the work done by the IJM at UGA is vital to the principle of ensuring human rights and equality. In order for action to take place, people must be aware of the problems at hand, and IJM at UGA is doing a great job of increasing student awareness and opportunities to engage in promoting equal rights. Because of this hard work being done by the members at local levels and the national level of IJM, there are many poor and oppressed individuals benefiting from the good deeds being done through IJM. Fundamental needs of the poor and widowed are being met, justice is being served to those who are oppressing and imprisoning others, and people around the world are realizing the needs of those around them. These actions take place only because someone or something made another person aware of these circumstances who subsequently took action to help. The victims also benefit from the money that IJM raises. A continuing goal of IJM at UGA is to raise enough money to buy people out of slavery and oppression.

IJM at UGA is one way in which Principle 11 of the Earth Charter is being put into action at the University of Georgia. For those who are considering a career in law or any kind of human rights, IJM at UGA offers the opportunity to gain experience in working to advance these principles. However, IJM is not only for law

students or people interested in futures in human rights. In the words of former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, "Above all, I would urge the entire community to remember that promoting gender equality is not only women's responsibility; it is the responsibility of us all..." As one community and one family, we must all recognize and fulfill our responsibility to mankind to ensure the equality and equity of all people, provide them with opportunities, and end violence against them.

(Endnotes)

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Photograph by Leasa Weimer



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Principle 12: The University of Georgia Lambda Alliance

The Earth Charter is an all-encompassing guide for human society to follow in order to create a sustainable future. This essay explores the Earth Charter, specifically Principle 12, which emphasizes that the people of the world must have their cultures and religions respected. It states that all minorities, whether racial, ethnic, religious or otherwise, must be protected from discrimination and persecution. It goes on to assert that safe places must be created to prevent the destruction of places with cultural or religious significance. To keep the world at peace, and to build a world that benefits everyone in it, this kind of protection and assurance is necessary. One group and initiative at the University of Georgia that is actively working to achieve the ideas of this principle, particularly the first section, is the Lambda Alliance.

Earth Charter Principle 12 begins with a statement of intent to end discrimination against all minority groups. It is a large and difficult task. One of the groups discriminated against regularly in the United States and elsewhere is the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. The Lambda Alliance is a student group that represents the interests of these students and creates a safe place for them to form a community. The only way that individuals can try to improve their situation is to organize in such a way that helps them to stand strong against the people who want to attack them. From that base of power, these individuals can attempt to build an understanding in the outside world. This is the goal and work that Lambda has undertaken. There are weekly meetings that provide a normally stifled portion of the population the opportunity to be exactly who they truly are, and express issues and

frustrations that they would not be able to share otherwise. Above and beyond that service, which helps to create a society where minorities of all kinds need not fear for their safety, Lambda works toward a wider acceptance and visibility for LGBT individual.

The Lambda Alliance provides a chance for powerful group advocacy on the part of the LGBT community on campus. A variety of events take place throughout the year that demonstrates Lambda's level of commitment. During the spring semester, a drag show provides a platform for a variety of students from all backgrounds to be welcomed into an event that showcases transgendered, transsexual, and intersex students. With the setting of an entertainment event, people who would not normally have attended a trans-themed event were exposed to the issues and lives of these students, increasing understanding among the broader university population. This is important work, considering how understanding and tolerance are necessary components for a move away from discrimination. In addition, this event sent some of its proceeds in ticket sales and other donations for the surgery of one transman member.

Other events and happenings around campus that are sponsored by the club help to promote an understanding of LGBT students and their issues. The Lambda Alliance sponsors a group of students from within the Alliance to go around campus talking to various groups. The goal of these talks is to explain a wide range of LGBT issues, and to allow students to ask questions without the fear of offending the person they are asking. This provides a greater level of understanding and allows for a level of advocacy that might otherwise be impossible. The Lambda Alliance is helping to reduce discriminatory behavior and views, thus moving towards the goal of the Earth Charter. The fact that Lambda Alliance members will go to any group, and not just ones that may already agree with the message, makes it far more likely that the group is generating a larger conversation across campus, and not simply talking within the LGBT community.

In a similar vein, activities in the fall semester include a panel discussion for people who are completely unfamiliar with LGBT issues. A panel of LGBT students provides the opportunity for other students to ask about any issue that they do not understand or would like to know more about. Questions that might

seem insensitive or ignorant in normal conversation are not only allowed but encouraged, since the goal is to bring in people who are entirely unversed or hostile to LGBT issues. This is a powerful step toward growing a coalition of people who understand and accept LGBT students, a powerful move toward eliminating discrimination.

The Lambda Alliance is an organization making great strides progressing towards one of the most important and far reaching of the Earth Charter goals. They work to end the discrimination against a group that is one of the many that are not allowed their full rights as citizens and people in this and other nations. This is a major piece of important progress if the Earth Charter's goal of a peaceful, accepting and sustainable world is to be achieved.

Photograph by Leasa Weimer



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Principle 13: Student Government Association at the University of Georgia

Principle 13 of the Earth Charter deals with the strengthening of democratic institutions. One sub-principle is point B, which states that countries will “Support local, regional and global civil society, and promote the meaningful participation of all interested individuals and organizations in decision making.” While the University of Georgia has made strides in many of the other points, point B has been lacking. While this might not be entirely due to the actions of the university, it is up to them to get more students involved in the democratic process at UGA.

Universities were, for a period of time, notorious for creating seeds of governmental discontent. No matter the location of the school, the stereotype stood—students were radical and would protest at the drop of a hat, or take action against any issue. In the 1960s and 70s, it was Vietnam. Moving into the 1980s, it switched to the environment. Students were *involved*; they cared about the world around them and were attempting to fix it. Whether that meant protesting, voting, or getting involved in their community, it did not matter. Something was being done.

However, recently there has been a downturn in university students’ participation in these areas. Students have become extremely self-centered. They tend to focus on what directly affects them, and particularly what affects their pockets. There is a severe lack of concern for the environment. What is even more striking is the lack of participation in measures to *get* people concerned for the environment. University students, one could say, are lacking in concern for our environment. This is due to many things, but the focus of this essay is on the

“public relations” side of the issue. The democratic system at the University of Georgia is, to say the least, lacking. The reasons for this are many.

For one thing, our student body simply does not participate in democratic activities. Last semester, the Student Government Association (SGA) held a survey. The purpose of this was to find the overarching opinion on a campus-wide smoking ban. The survey generated votes from only seven percent of the student body. Of about 35,000 students, about 2,500 of them voted. Another recent SGA vote brought in only four percent of the student body. The problem with this statistic is obvious with so many opportunities to participate in the democratic process. As the Earth Charter preamble says, “The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world.”

There are a few possibilities for why there is a severe lack of participation in the democratic process at the University of Georgia. The largest is the nonexistent advertising campaign on the part of SGA. There are a multitude of flyers and posters announcing concerts, stand-up comedians, and sneak previews of movies. You can find them everywhere from in the residence halls, to posted on telephone poles, as well as laid out in a pattern on the steps in front of Park Hall. Trash cans overflow with them following the event in question.

What there are *not*, however, are advertisements for SGA meetings. These meetings, which are entirely open to the public, are not broadcast to the extent that other events at the university are. Voting for SGA proposals takes place on OASIS, a website visited by students probably two or three times in the course of a semester. Even then those visits are for registering for classes, not voting on smoking bans.

This brings up another reason Principle 13 of the Earth Charter needs to be reintroduced into UGA. Point A specifies “environmental issues” as a key factor of the principle and democratic action. One problem with SGA is that environmental issues are not sufficiently brought into conversation in our student government. There are many environmental organizations on campus, such as Students for Environmental Action, but they are not well-mentioned in SGA meetings. It also does not help SGA that its executive body is made up of just one

party. While this is partially due to lack of student involvement to begin with, if there was going to be a dissenting view on something SGA does, it would not be mentioned.

This is not to say that SGA is a terrible organization, or that it should be eliminated entirely. It is necessary, and for the most part, what SGA has done has greatly benefited students at the University of Georgia. The problems the organization has all stems from what was mentioned at the beginning of this paper—students simply do not get involved enough. Solving problems within a democratic system, environmental or otherwise, is a two-sided process. As Alexander Likhotal says in his essay “The Earth Charter as a Vehicle of Transformation,” “Modern world politics is not to be based on the conventional principle of balance of powers, but rather on the balance of interests, and that dialogue between cultures and civilizations must become its primary tool.”¹ If students want change, or want to present a new initiative, they should. By beginning more conversations with student government, it will increase the possibility that the student government will do something.

The University of Georgia has done a good job at upholding Principle 13 of the Earth Charter. The problem lies in that there is little of Principle 13 to uphold. Students need to take part in the democratic process at all levels. Join the SGA. Petition for new initiatives. Get involved. What democracy provides us with is an opportunity to have everybody’s voices heard. You cannot criticize something that has been done in this process if you did nothing to prevent or change it. Students need to harken back to the days of the 1970s; get angry about something, and then initiate change.

(Endnotes)

1 Earth Charter in Action, Alexander Likhotal, The Earth Charter as a Vehicle of Transformation



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Principle 14: Education and Sustainability at UGA

The Earth Charter Preamble states that “the future at once holds great peril and great promise.” This is at once foreboding, but also full of hope. The outcome, however, depends on our actions today. As the Earth Charter notes the importance of thinking about the future, I believe nothing reflects our impact on the future more than having an educational system centered on sustainability. In Principle 14 of the Earth Charter, providing knowledge, value, and skills for sustainable living in our education is emphasized. This principle applies to the University of Georgia, as we are a major educational institution. In addition, since today’s college students will soon become leaders in shaping the future of our society, it is imperative to ingrain the basic principle of sustainable living in our future leaders.

Upon reflecting on the University of Georgia’s educational system, the establishment of the Office of Sustainability is a prime example of how our education is incorporating the values of the Earth Charter. The Office of Sustainability’s goal is to establish a sustainable university where sustainability is merged with the five areas of the university: 1) education, 2) research, 3) public service and outreach, 4) student activities, and 5) internal campus operations.

With over 60 sustainability-related degree programs and 10 interdisciplinary certificate programs offered at the University of Georgia, the Office of Sustainability works with academic departments, faculty, staff and students to integrate principles of sustainability into academic programs.¹ In research, the Office of Sustainability collaborates with student and

faculty in areas such as water resources, bioenergy, sustainable agriculture, climate change, ecosystem dynamics, and sustainable forest management to promote sustainability-related research. Outside of the classroom, the Office of Sustainability is partners with the Go Green Alliance, which encompasses over 25 environmentally focused student groups and provides students with opportunities to learn about sustainability and participate in outreach and education.

The director of the Office of Sustainability, Kevin Kirsche, is a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) accredited registered Landscape Architect and also has a Certificate in Conservation Ecology and Sustainable Development. Prior to working for the Office of Sustainability in 2010, he helped to plan and design campus green space at UGA. Working alongside Mr. Kirsche are three program coordinators: Tyra Byers, Andrew Lentini, and Jennifer Perissi. Ms. Byers has been involved in campus sustainability education and outreach at UGA’s Odum School of Ecology, as well as at the University of New Hampshire. Mr. Lentini has worked in recycling and waste-reduction education with various age groups. Ms. Perissi, a landscape designer, has designed rain harvesting systems for irrigation and was involved in the Athens Town Spring wetland regeneration. Additionally, students also participate in this program as interns. There are a number of interns working in Communications and Outreach, Waste Reduction, Climate Action Planning, Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Reporting System (STARS) evaluation of the University of Georgia’s sustainability efforts, Sustainability Initiatives Research, and LEED registered projects.²

The Office of Sustainability was established in 2010 in response to student initiatives like The Green Initiative Fund (TGIF) campaign and recommendations such as the 2009 Report of the Working Group on Sustainability at the University of Georgia. The main purpose of the office is to oversee sustainability efforts and promote campus awareness. The office is funded primarily by a student “green fee.” This green fee is a result of the efforts of The Green Initiative Fund and was modeled after a similar campaign at the University of California Berkley, where students campaigned for a self-imposed three dollar fee to be used towards sustainability efforts. After petitioning and securing student government

votes, the proposal was approved and implemented by the UGA Mandatory Fees Committee and the University System of Georgia Board of Regents. The green fee provides about \$190,000 per year which goes toward funding the office’s programs, student internships, and the Campus Sustainability Grant Program. Additional funding comes from the UGA Physical Plant Division, the Odum School of Ecology, and grant funds.

In the area of education, the Office of Sustainability provides certification programs in office, laboratories, and event planning. Furthermore, the office promotes student learning through these student internships and the UGA Campus Sustainability Grant Program which provides funds for student-proposed projects designed to advance campus sustainability. In conjunction to other campus offices, the Office of Sustainability is collaborating on projects such as waste composting, Gameday Recycling, UGA Greencup competition, UGArden, waste auditing, and bike safety training. The waste composting consists of a pilot program that composts vegetable wastes from the East Village Commons Dining Hall. Gameday Recycling is a student campaign by the Ecology Club and the Go Green Alliance to reduce tailgating waste on campus. UGA Greencup is an energy, water, and waste reduction competition within the Hill Community Residence Halls. UGArden is a campus community garden that is cultivated by UGA students, faculty, and the Athens Area Master Gardeners. These various efforts by the Office of Sustainability reflect the Earth Charter in action at UGA and truly demonstrate Principle 14 where we are called to “integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.”

The Office of Sustainability is still in its early stages of development. However, its positive impact in bringing together the various sustainability efforts of the UGA campus is clear. Before the establishment of the office, all of the projects were individually arranged and there was a lack of publicity. Now, there is a centralized core for all of the initiatives. While establishing an office such as this may not be possible in all universities due to the issues of funding and support, the basic principles and most of the projects under the Office of Sustainability can be adopted and implemented elsewhere. Hopefully with the success of the UGA Office of Sustainability, other schools will

evaluate their current initiatives for sustainability and find ways to meet the need in educating about sustainability.

(Endnotes)

1 “The Office of Sustainability Strategic Plan 2010-2015,” The Office of Sustainability, August 2010, http://www.sustainability.uga.edu/pdf/office_of_sustainability_strategic_plan_2015_august2010.pdf, (accessed February 22nd, 2011).

2 The Office of Sustainability. <http://www.sustainability.uga.edu/> (accessed February 22nd, 2011).



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Ecology
From Nashville, Tennessee

Principle 14

A sustainable way forward is the path we will follow toward a long-term goal of social and ecological resilience. This includes sustainability integrated into schools, heightened awareness, increased funding for sustainable projects and ideas, and making a sustainable future an obligation more than something to simply hope for. The Bioenergy Systems Research Institute at the University of Georgia has implemented those ideals through their education outreach by training the next generation of scientists and supporting certain plans and initiatives around campus. They are a prime example of the Earth Charter in action. The Institute's goals include facilitating and recognizing the full impact of recycling, using biofuels, and starting conversions of Bioenergy topics. We must integrate the ideal of sustainability in to classes and programs from high school all the way to and beyond university in order to plant the idea of being sustainable already at a young age.

Programs and classes like the Tropical Watershed Management program in Costa Rica and Macroecology are fine examples of how the Institute could create educational outreach opportunities through other sectors of UGA, like the Odum School of Ecology. This will lead to people growing up with the values of being active in striving for a sustainable future that will benefit the next generation. Any idea can turn into a plan, and plans always need backing—financially, physically, politically. Funding is most

likely one of the largest forms of backing for an idea that would last for decades, as well as last through the many ups and downs of the financial world. The Institute is involved with funding biotechnologies of the next generation. Funding with political backing is critical to accomplish a goal or idea in a relatively short amount of time. Dr. Joy Peterson and the Bioenergy Systems Research Institute are not directly involved with the Earth Charter, but they both share the objectives of lifelong sustainability and educating the next generation.

Long-term goals are inherently difficult to achieve because the goal will not be achieved tomorrow or the next day, but years down the road. These types of goals that involve ways to live sustainably in the future will be implemented over a span of years and require resolve to keep moving forward toward that goal. One has to work with the next generation in a similar vein to how the Bioenergy Systems Research Institute has begun developing technologies and investing in research ideas for the next generation.

The University of Georgia, alongside the Institute, has many initiatives that will be in effect for multiple years to come. Gameday Recycling takes place during every home football game in the fall semester. This program is another prime example of the Earth Charter in action because Gameday Recycling incorporates sustainability in a long term goal of eliminating all waste from home football games at the University of Georgia. By spreading the word through social media outlets and throughout campus, the likelihood of success in ridding the home games of all non-recyclable waste has increased. Funding must be committed to continue to make progress toward a sustainable way forward. A sustainable future will take years of focus and drive in order to reach it, but that future can be obtained with political willpower in governments in addition to brilliant new ideas from within the walls of universities.

The idea of a sustainable way forward needs

to be implemented throughout an individual's formal education. If you teach children that living sustainably is possible, easy, and will benefit their generation, as well as future ones, then you and your generation will have a better chance at a sustainable future. This all starts with education. Classes offered at the University of Georgia include topics in living sustainably, and those classes have had an impact on the student body with increased conversation on how we can make the future more sustainable for the next generation. The Bioenergy Systems Research Institute has focused on increasing sustainability issues in high school education and beginning the conversation on a sustainable future and living green around these students. If that plan is put into play when those students are in college, they will be working and learning to live in a "greener" and more sustainable culture than students currently are around the country.

Gameday Recycling has incorporated education into their plan for eliminating waste. Volunteers will go around before the game and pass out recyclables-only bags. They also take the time to talk with tailgaters about what is recyclable and what is not. The University of Georgia also created the Office of Sustainability in 2010 from the funds created by the green fee, which is part of student fees. The office works with the entire University and the student body to work as a living laboratory on what is most successful for increasing sustainability on campus.

Widespread awareness of sustainability efforts needs to be increased as we move toward a more sustainable way forward. Two effective methods for spreading the issue of increasing sustainability are by having seminars and webinars to raise awareness. The Institute uses webinars as their main form of conversation and advertising due to the ease of access to these resources as they are on the internet. A bonus feature is that these internet options do not create the waste a panel would create. The Office of Sustainability uses all recyclable materials and reusable water bottles when they do host

seminars or panels, and that reduces the waste plastics and papers that often are a byproduct of panels.

The Institute is involved with bioenergy, and this could be a major part of mass media with all of the focus that goes into mass media like commercials, billboards, and transportation of the advertisers. Biofuels will be a key piece in creating a more sustainable way forward and culture. Bringing information to the masses of the University of Georgia is a huge task within itself due to the estimated 34,000 students on campus. Gameday Recycling uses bags made from recycled plastic, which reduces the vast use of non-recyclable bags that are used by tailgaters. This in turn gets the tailgaters to begin thinking of ways to be more sustainable through these reminders of how much can actually be recycled.

The Earth Charter is in action on the University of Georgia's campus between the Bioenergy Systems Research Institute, Office of Sustainability, and Gameday Recycling. They all are educating the next generation via webinars by the Institute, or the sustainable seminar series put on by the Office of Sustainability, or just by simply talking to tailgaters and visitors about what is recyclable and what is not. Long term goals are being met and established. Awareness of a more sustainable way forward is being increased by the Institute having seminars during each semester, and the Office of Sustainability's logo and mission statement can be seen all around the Athens campus. Gameday Recycling has increased awareness as well by having shirts that are neon green in order to attract attention to their message. A sustainable way forward is attainable and is being worked toward at the University of Georgia with the Earth Charter being put into action through these three groups and departments.



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From Johns Creek,
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Principle 15: UGA Law School Student Animal Legal Defense Fund

The Earth Charter is the first important international document that makes the humane treatment of individual animals a necessary condition for sustainable development. With Principle 4 singling out human rights, the Earth Charter puts into perspective the importance of treating ALL living beings with respect and consideration. The Earth Charter’s principles provide a guide for how to integrate these principles into everyday life by calling for three main courses of action: Prevent, Protect and Avoid. Prevent cruelty to animals kept in human societies, and protect them from suffering. Protect wild animals from methods of hunting, trapping, and fishing that causes extreme, prolonged, and avoidable suffering. Avoid or eliminate, to the fullest extent possible, the taking or destruction of non-targeted species.

Principle 4 also calls out for people to, “[r]ecognize that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings.” Animal rights are not only about the human situations. We must take into consideration all individuals and “acknowledge our mutual interdependence with all living beings and ecological systems.”¹

The Earth Charter calls for action that some communities actually implement on a daily basis.

In the Athens, Clarke County area, Earth Charter Principle 4 is being addressed by The University of Georgia Law School Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF). SALDF is a group of law students at the University of Georgia who are committed to raising awareness about animal welfare and taking

action to change the legal status of animals in this nation. They strive to be the change they wish to see in this world by providing education and support aimed at protecting the lives of animals by way of the legal system. Their president, Sherwin Figueroa, and Vice President, Eric Garber, work on increasing the interest in animal rights awareness and raising the profile of the field of animal law.

Along with hosting various events to promote animal rights throughout the school year, SALDF created a website where people all over Athens, Clarke County can post current issues related to animal rights and animal law that may be ignored normally, or that are at least not receiving enough public attention. Throughout the forum, people get ideas together and plan specific activities, events, and sometimes even petitions, to try to help out the specific cause. Their focus on the legal aspect of animal rights really makes this organization unique. They stand out above other animal right organizations because their chances of actually changing or protecting animal rights go up exponentially when they have legal credentials backing them up. This is a direct way that SALDF acts on the Earth Charter Principles on a daily basis. Fortunately, SALDF is not the only organization in this state that advocates for animal rights through the legal system.

Throughout the state of Georgia, and even in the larger United States, organizations like SALDF have tried for years to raise awareness on the legal status of animal rights and prevent animal abuse from getting worse. However, the power to make any significant change depends on community interest and the level of involvement centered on the animal rights movement. If the community does not show interest, then organizations like SALDF cannot succeed.

The Earth Charter states in its Preamble, “[t]o move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny.” If we can all agree that there is more than enough room for improvement, we all can start implementing the Earth Charter’s principles in our daily lives. There are plenty of organizations to choose from that work to promote “the transition to sustainable ways of living and a global society founded on a shared ethical framework that includes respect and care for the community of life, ecological

integrity, universal human rights, respect for diversity, economic justice, democracy, and a culture of peace.”

(Endnotes)

- 1 S.C. Rockefeller, “Earth Charter ethics and animals,” *Earth Ethics*, Spring 2004, 5.



Kerem Kiliç
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**Principle 16: Strides to a
(metaphorically) warmer future:
Democracy, Nonviolence and Peace
in the post-Cold War Era**

The Earth Charter emphasizes the importance and utmost necessity of respect and care for the community of life, ecological integrity/responsibility, social and economic justice, democracy, nonviolence, and peace. These elements must be addressed and embraced by humanity in order to catalyze a radical shift in human behavior. At such a critical moment in history where derailed social, economic, political, and personal values pose such a threat to the integrity and survival of our species we must choose to either sink or swim among the interconnected and independent challenges we face. Robert M. Lilienfeld and William L. Rathje unravel our anthropomorphic sense of importance and unveil the objective by simply stating the obvious:

Myth: we have to save the earth. Frankly, the earth doesn't need to be saved. Nature doesn't give a hoot if human beings are here or not. The planet has survived cataclysmic and catastrophic changes for millions upon millions of years. Over that time, it is widely believed, 99 percent of all species have come and gone while the planet has remained. Saving the environment is really about saving our environment - making it safe for our children, the world, and ourselves, as we know it. If more people saw the issue as one of saving themselves, we would probably see increased motivation and commitment to actually do so.¹

The only means by which we can ensure the survival of millions of years of speciation, thousands of years of cultural accumulation, and the present moment is by making immediate strides to better ourselves. By

promoting a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace we make such strides. In order to effectively accomplish this certain criteria must be met. As Earth Charter Principle 16 states, we must:

- a) Encourage and support mutual understanding, solidarity, and cooperation among all peoples and within and among nations.
- b) Implement comprehensive strategies to prevent violent conflict and use collaborative problem solving to manage and resolve environmental conflicts and other disputes.
- c) Demilitarize national security systems to the level of a non-provocative defense posture, and convert military resources to peaceful purposes, including ecological restoration.
- d) Eliminate nuclear, biological, and toxic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.
- e) Ensure that the use of orbital and outer space supports environmental protection and peace.
- f) Recognize that peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part.

Weapons of mass destruction are among the most detrimental and potentially harmful to human civilizations and the ecosphere. Reflecting the spirit of Earth Charter Principle 16, the Center for International Trade and Security (CITS) of the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia researches the security of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) technologies. The center also trains and promotes outreach for nuclear security culture and encourages legislative exchange between the United States and Russia concerning WMDs. Research is conducted concerning the use and dispersal of chemical and biological weapons. Furthermore, CITS promotes public awareness of WMDs and technological advances that impact the security of citizens. As self-stated by CITS, "The Center for International Trade and Security promotes peace and prosperity through research, training and outreach to mitigate threats posed by trade in technologies and materials that underlie weapons of mass destruction and other military-related transfers."²

CITS was founded in 1987 as the Center for East-West

Trade Policy. Inspired by the political climate of the Cold War and a desire to promote safe and secure trade of technologies between the US and Eastern European nations, CITS is now a key component in uniting up to 65 nations in dialogue concerning terrorism, nuclear proliferation and/or security, WMDs, and implementing strategies to ensure preparedness for these threats.

CITS' success can be measured by the amount of influence and awareness it successfully spreads to students, as well as international and domestic legislators and policy makers. This program has proven beneficial to the many enrolled undergraduate and graduate students. Graduates of this program are well informed of international and homeland security; these successful students play an important role in United States Department of State, the United Nations, and the International Atomic Energy Agency. In addition, CITS has reached an international level of importance and influence with regard to addressing the security of WMDs and related technologies. Since 1999, CITS has jointly worked with the Moscow Institute for Profession Training – a branch of the Russian Federal Agency for Atomic Energy – in instituting training programs. This in turn heightens the awareness of nonproliferation and WMD security culture. In addressing poorly stockpiled weapons and terrorists CITS has become more involved with its influence and training programs with legislators in the Russian Federal Embassy. CITS intends to ensure that staff at nuclear facilities are aware of the risks associated with possessing and securing nuclear weapons. Additionally, CITS plays a key role in halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons through its informative practices. The year 2005 marked the last time CITS convened with Russian legislators. However, since then CITS has published several informative documents. In 2009, CITS published documents that reported the current climate of nuclear proliferation. Additionally, CITS researcher, Anne-Charlotte Merrell Wetterwik, provided suggestions to the United Nations concerning disarmament research and halting the trafficking of armament materials.

CITS is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union, Ford Foundation, Japan Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Nuclear Threat

Initiative, Reynolds Plantation, Oxfam International, Smith Richardson Foundation, South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, South Korea's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Swedish Radiation Safety Authority, University of Georgia School of Law, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Energy, and the U.S. Department of State.

As does the Earth Charter, CITS promotes peace and prosperity through the use of research, training, and outreach focused on mitigating threats posed by the trade of weapons of mass destruction materials and technologies and other military-related transfers. Spreading awareness to current undergraduate students concerning the presence of CITS will be invaluable in dispensing relevant information and dispelling misconceptions concerning nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Without fully understanding the climate surrounding the security of these weapons global citizens lack the necessary ammunition to dismantle and dissolve current WMD programs and stockpiles.

(Endnotes)

1 Robert Lilienfeld and William Rathje, *Use Less Stuff: Environmental Solutions for Who We Really Are* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1998).

2 "Our Mission," Center for International Trade and Security, accessed March 14th, 2011, <http://www.uga.edu/cits/About/history.html>.