

December 2015 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

The Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) working group members write to share an update on our activities and our goals, and to encourage your participation as we urge the Phillips Exeter Academy (PEA) community—administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni/ae—to assume a leadership role in addressing the serious challenges of climate disruption.

This idea of a group of alumni/ae opening a dialogue with the Academy to persuade it that its graduates are a rich source of wisdom and experience—people who can contribute in more ways than financial support—is a revolutionary idea. One we are proud to bring forth.

We assert that our efforts are working.

We were actively involved in the advocacy for PEA's inaugural Climate Action Day this year and actively involved in working with faculty, students, alums and the administration to make it a success. The Administration considers it to have been a winner and ESI was thanked publicly for its efforts.

Update: The Academy is planning a second Climate Action Day for April 2016. We intend to again be involved in its planning and implementation.



ESI members wrote a letter collectively and some individually to the Principal Search Committee asking it to prioritize candidates' approach to environmental sustainability in selecting our next Principal. We also attended regional meetings with the committee.

Update: We understand that the committee did strongly consider the philosophy and approach to sustainability in its interview process. Our new principal, Lisa MacFarlane, Ph.D is recognized for her leadership in elevating these issues at the University of New Hampshire.

We wrote a letter this summer to our **new principal**, introducing ourselves, describing our efforts, and offering our support in moving Exeter toward a leadership position on climate sustainability, both on campus and in the wider world.

Update: Dr. MacFarlane read the letter and is aware of ESI. Two of our members are working to establish us as trusted partners in her plans to elevate sustainability at the school.

ESI members were strong advocates of expanding the position of Sustainability Coordinator to full-time from its quarter-time status. The coordinator has recently been a faculty member who splits her/his time and focuses efforts on student clubs and dorm life.

Update: The position was restored to half-time. The new Sustainability Education Coordinator, English teacher Jason BreMiller, is energetic and strategic in his approach. He is a co-chair of the Sustainability Advisory Committee, which is the key strategic and organizational group on campus. His counterpart is Jill Robinson, Senior Manager for Sustainability and Natural Resources. There is encouraging action on campus. Two members are developing relationships with these two leaders; ESI has asked a number of times to have an alumni/ae representative on the committee.



ESI members are working actively to connect and establish us collectively and individually as trusted partners and strong advocates for deeper, broader and faster integration of climate issues into the curriculum, student life and the school's carbon footprint. Susan Kaplan '79 and Eben James '80 have met with key members of the administration (Ron Kim, former Dean of Faculty and current Assistant Principal; Tom Hassan, when he was principal; Roger Wakeman, Chief of Planning and Facilities; and Harold Brown, Acting Director of Institutional Advancement and Director of Alumni and Parent Relations). ESI also has relationships with faculty and staff who are as eager as we to elevate climate sustainability.



We are working the inside game, as well as the outside game with alumni/ae, to increase our effectiveness and standing with the administration. As you can see, we have a great deal to show from ESI's efforts last year, and we thank you for your support.

Here is a preview of our goals for this year and ways in which you can participate to help us achieve them.

THE BIG IDEA:

In anticipation of Exeter's 250th Anniversary in 2031, the Academy is thinking of ways to commemorate this important milestone with equally important actions. We think there can be no more impactful action than Exeter becoming the premier school leader in climate sustainability education and action. Our vision is that by 2031 the school's campus will be totally transformed and carbon neutral, environmental stewardship is an essential element of the entire curriculum and student life, and graduates are active advocates and participants in shaping their communities and workplaces to sustain life on earth. An ESI team is working to develop a proposal to share with Dr. MacFarlane and her team as it envisions actions for now and the future.



Exeter must lead, and, in working with the administration and faculty, if we can help show it how it can lead, we will have accomplished something of major significance for ourselves and posterity.

EXETER'S VISION OF ITSELF:

While there are several mentions on the website, at reunions, in student life and communications that Exeter is actively living up to its 2004 Environmental Mission, it is not obvious that this is a core principle from the public face presented on the website. Compare the hunting one has to do to find sustainability on www.exeter.edu to [Choate's website](#). In Choate's *About Us* drop-down window, you will find the word "Sustainability." Visit Exeter's website and you see no such prominent description. At a basic level, we want our school to transform itself so that sustainability is a major principle. Changing the website may sound like a simple idea, yet it can be a transformative one.

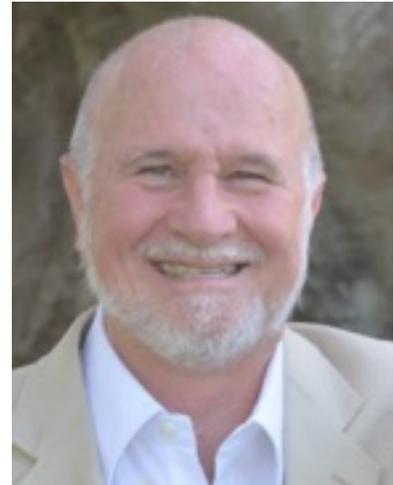
CURRICULUM:

It is our belief that teaching throughout the curriculum must include education about climate disruption, students' role in it, and action individuals can take. One vision is that Exeter build an Environmental Center, a building dedicated to classrooms, labs, and courses about and action

around climate disruption. In this and all things we don't think Exeter should play second fiddle to any other educational institution. Exeter's role is to lead.

INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS:

As part of everything we do, ongoing engagement with the administration, the sustainability coordinators, and the faculty in face-to-face dialogue will make it possible to contribute our expertise to the ongoing discussion about how to transform Exeter. These days, the school has concerns about adults who aren't part of the campus community engaging independently with students. We are working our way through this and hope to get to know the students leading in environmental activities.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Numbers count. Please visit our [website](#) and endorse our letter to Principal McFarlane. If we have a significant number of people supporting it, we can demonstrate a broad base of support.
- Let us know if you could offer a) internships in energy, climate or environmental sustainability and/or b) identify potential speakers on these topics.
- Help us identify others in the Exeter community who can join our cause. This is perhaps our most critical need at this time. We need others to pitch in to engage other alums, write letters and perhaps join our board. Eventually, we will need financial support to grow ESI. For now, we need people. Please help us find them.
- Attend regional association gatherings, reunions, and any other Exeter events and promote sustainability. Write about it in your class notes. Care!
- We have partnered with an umbrella 501(c)(3) organization, [Island Stewards](#), in order to accept financial contributions that would be directly used to further our goals. Contributions exceeding \$50 qualify for a tax deduction letter. Please consider a donation, which you can make online at the Island Stewards web site, and designate "ESIExeter" in the comment field, along with identifying information so we can thank you and get you the tax letter.

This update has been extensive because we don't have staff or resources to reach out to you more often. It is remarkable what a small and dedicated group of six or seven people have been able to accomplish despite having busy lives. Just think what we will accomplish as our numbers grow.

To wrap this up, Exeter has taken many important steps to “green” the campus and increase the visibility of climate action on its campus. These efforts seem to be ramping up. We applaud these efforts and the leaders behind them. Our goal is to encourage the community to accelerate its many actions in direct proportion to the disastrous effects of climate disruption on civilization and life on earth. Time is of the essence.

Phillips Exeter Academy needs to transform itself to be part of solving the environmental and societal challenges of the twenty-first century. Come, be part of that change. You’ll feel proud of yourself and the Academy. Through your activity, our world will benefit.



Thank you.

Photos of the ESI Exeter board, in order from the top:

Susan Kaplan '79 co-chair

Conrad Willeman '64

Eben James '80

Larry Silverman '63

Granville Burgess '65

Joe Symons '63 co-chair

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