A Blueprint for Advancing Education for Sustainability
Leading National EFS Organizations Map Out Opportunities for Collaboration

BOSTON, MA - On November 29, 2010, representatives from twenty-three leading national organizations that work with the US higher education sector to promote Education for Sustainability (EFS), gathered together to create a “blueprint” to map out the best ways to accelerate their efforts, collaborate effectively and support each other in meeting their common goals. This “EFS Blueprint” meeting took place at the offices of the US Green Building Council in Washington, DC.

In total, forty-one organizations were engaged in the process in some way. Throughout 2010, the participants held conference calls to set the stage for the meeting. All participants were invited to submit brief descriptions of projects they had recently launched or plan to launch in the coming months.

During the meeting Tony Cortese, President of Second Nature, and Jim Elder, Director of the Campaign for Environmental Literacy, set the context for the purpose and goals of this project - to articulate a common vision and co-create a blueprint for advancing sustainability in higher education (academics, operations, research and community engagement) that will synergize efforts, avoid duplication, and accelerate the movement.

Paul Rowland, Executive Director of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) then provided a perspective on where the higher education sector is now with regard to Education for Sustainability, and participants added their views on the current major trends in the field. Highlights included the more than 113 new academic degree programs in sustainability, not counting new certificate programs, that have been established; 905 campus buildings that are LEED-certified; the 547 campuses that have reported their greenhouse gas emissions inventories and 330 that have submitted climate action plans to the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC); and the 240 institutions that are participating in AASHE’s Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS).

The group heard from the EFS organizations that had new or upcoming projects or initiatives and identified opportunities for potential collaboration. Next, major themes that would make up the main components of an EFS Blueprint were explored volunteers agreed to convene further discussions on those topics. These components provided the content for the EFS Blueprint, which can be viewed at www.secondnature.org/efsblueprint.

“The process of developing the EFS Blueprint, was a milestone for the EFS movement,” said Tony Cortese, “there was a clear consensus among participants that the process opened up significant opportunities to collaborate and better leverage synergies among these organizations.”

Jim Elder noted, “the main areas of focus identified in the Blueprint, such as policy, financing, community engagement and diversity, provide our organizations with a clearer vision for the way forward. This process will help us work together in more cost-effective way to support colleges and universities in preparing students for the 21st century clean, green economy.”

The issue of diversity emerged as a major focus in the process. Efforts to promote EFS will only be successful if there is broad participation and leadership from a diverse spectrum of racial, geographic and socio-economic communities. Participants from the United Negro College Fund, the American Indian Higher Education Council and the American Association of Community Colleges helped to ensure that these communities were represented.

“The interrelated social, economic and ecological challenges that the EFS movement addresses are so large and complex that they require all hands on deck,” said Marilyn Marsh-Robinson, Program Associate at Environmental Defense Fund, “but it does not look as though all hands are on deck at the moment — the environmental movement needs more diversity, and we always need to be considering who isn’t at the table.”
The EfS Blueprint is an important step in bringing everyone to the table, and has set a foundation upon which the coalition of organizations involved in EfS work can continue to grow and strengthen. The groups that participated in this process include:

- American Association of Community Colleges
- American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment
- American Indian Higher Education Consortium
- Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
- Association of Governing Boards
- C2C: Campus to Congress, Corporation, City
- Campaign for Environmental Literacy
- Clean Air - Cool Planet
- Clinton Climate Initiative
- Disciplinary Associations Network for Sustainability
- Earthday Network
- Environmental Defense Fund Climate Corps
- Energy Action Coalition
- Focus the Nation
- Higher Education Associations Sustainability Consortium
- Illinois Green Economy Network
- National Association of Environmental Law Societies
- National Council on Science and the Environment
- National Wildlife Federation Campus Ecology
- Second Nature
- Responsible Endowments Coalition
- Sierra Student Coalition
- Society of College & University Planners
- Sustainable Endowments Institute
- United Negro College Fund
- US Green Building Council

About The Campaign for Environmental Literacy

The Campaign for Environmental Literacy was formally established in February 2005 as a response to the environmental education (EE) community’s most vital political need: concerted support from the federal government. The Campaign helps organize and mobilize the collective tools and assets of the EE community in order to secure federal support and encouragement for vibrant, integrated EE programs across the nation. Its goal is to significantly increase the amount of federal funding dedicated to the EE community to close the growing environmental literacy gap. Learn more at: http://fundee.org.

About Second Nature

Second Nature is a Boston-based nonprofit organization that works to accelerate movement towards a sustainable future by helping senior college and university leaders in making healthy, just, and sustainable living the foundation of all learning and practice in higher education. Second Nature is the lead supporting organization of the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment, which has been signed by more than 675 college and university presidents who are committed to eliminating carbon emission on campus and training students to help society address the climate crisis. For more information about Second Nature’s programs, visit www.secondnature.org.