**Stewarding Our Planet’s Resources Executive Committee**

January 2018 Progress Report

## Current/projected activities:

The Stewarding Our Planet’s Resources (SOPR) Steering Committee is currently focusing on Round 2 of the Strategic Plan Implementation RFP process. The Steering Committee has received several draft proposals and is providing feedback to those who have requested it. Ideas include sustainability and diversity; a student-driven proposal to focus on waste at sporting events; and an energy transformation idea. In addition, there is work underway to revise and resubmit several proposals from Round 1, including combining the resilience proposal, revising the PA 2050 proposal, and better integrating the commonwealth campus sustainability proposal (which has been provided extensive feedback from the Sustainability Institute).

The Steering Committee has also been working to figure out how to add students to the Committee, and has several student volunteers. We are identifying a process to determine which students to choose.

Going forward, we anticipate a forum in February or March to talk with people about the general ideas produced by both the Steering and Executive Committees; we will be working to find a date and set this forum up shortly.

## Results/impact to date:

The ideas generated from the January 2017 draft SOPR plan (available [on box](https://psu.box.com/s/tok09739a8zto3irod5w2ltmy8h92e54)) have helped shape the ideas that came through Round 1 of the RFP, including ideas related to resilience, PA 2050, etc. In Round 1, the Steering Committee provided feedback on 16 proposals, with the Executive Committee ultimately selecting 4 proposals for the Oversight Committee to review. Of these, three were funded and one sent back with feedback and an invitation for resubmission. The funded proposals include the following:

* **Energy University Partnership to Support the Commonwealth’s Oil and Gas Strategy**
* **Ecology + Design**
* **United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): Global Consortium for High Performance Buildings**

In addition, other proposals that support the SoPR theme were also funded, including:

* **Digital Innovation through Immersive Technologies: Establishing New Paradigms for Environmental Decision Support**
* **Growing Food, Leaders and Community: Expanding Sustainable Food Systems Learning Across Commonwealth Campuses**

The creation of the narrative statements for the RFP have also prompted other discussions on potential funding for projects not selected to move forward with the RFP process. For example, both the Steering and Executive Committees identified several projects that should be funded, but not through the RFP process. There have been several conversations with Eric Reinhard on how to find funding for these types of proposals. Going forward, additional focused discussions on philanthropy and outreach are needed.

There are also some ideas originally generated that need more work. For example, the Steering Committee noted that improving “literacy” of food, energy and water would be important. How to accomplish this needs further discussion.

## Overall progress toward goals:

Overall, there has been significant progress made towards meeting the thematic priority of “stewarding our planet’s resources,” which generally focused on food, energy, and water in the face of a changing climate. Steering Committee members have been actively working with a variety of people to generate and develop ideas, and find innovative sources of funding or mechanisms to move ideas forward.

In addition, there has been a lot of work underway at Penn State to move ideas forward in key areas related to the SoPR mission but outside of the Strategic Plan RFP process. Both Steering and Executive Committee members have also been actively participating in these discussions as well.

### Food

* Class of 2018 class gift includes endowment for Student Farm
* Fall events included Student Farm Harvest Festival (~350 people) and President’s Tailgate
* \*Student Farm expanding to two Commonwealth Campuses, currently hiring summer and fall student interns

### Food/water:

* Planning session hosted by the College of Ag Sciences (May 2017; 40+ attendees)

### Energy:

* Energy University: leadership discussions about how to leverage and integrate (on-going)
* Pilot project of new Energy University initiative, Center for Energy Law and Policy, on methane emissions from unconventional oil and gas producing interdisciplinary White Paper and convening leaders from industry, government, and environmental community.
* Distributed energy/microgrid : dean visit to the Navy Yard (Jan. 2018)
* Energy Days 2017 involved 300+ people; planning underway for Energy Days 2018, May 30-31
* \*Penn State now the U.S. lead in partnering with UN Economic Commission for Europe on efficient buildings; hiring for executive director underway; announcement expected in May 2018
* Penn State led University Coalition for Fossil Energy Research’s DOE funding increased again, with over $4M allocated to the current RFP; proposals to be awarded in April 2018
* Penn State was the academic lead supporting the Council on Competitiveness for the Energy and Manufacturing Competiveness Partnership energy sector dialogue and report: “Leverage: Energy”

### Water:

* Cross university-forum on future of water at Penn State (Nov. 2017); follow up action items:
1. Create an organizational entity to connect and galvanize research/education in water
2. Develop an inter-disciplinary degree program in water
3. Run a “Water Day” event to share expertise, build community
4. Focus on building proposals and resources
5. Develop a web-based portal to make it easier to find researchers/educators
6. Develop a mentoring program for junior faculty
* New “Water Insights” speaker series hosted by College of Ag Sciences/Environment & Natural Resources Institute

### Food/energy/water nexus

* IEE/SIRO hosted faculty discussion about INFEWS call, created opportunity for people to meet each other and set up potential research collaborations (Jan. 2017; 60+ attendees)
	+ Two Penn State-led INFEWS proposals totaling $1.2M were funded by the NSF divisions of Chemistry and Materials Research in summer/fall 2017.
* \*Ecology+Design initiative hosted inaugural forum with >100 attendees

### Health and Environment:

* Hosted Linda Birnbaum, Director, Nat’l Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (April 2017)
* Faculty meet/greet: Dec. 2016 (40+ attendees); Jan. 2018 (50+ attendees)
* Inter-institute seed grant process resulted in more than $500k in internal awards; see [PSU News story](http://news.psu.edu/story/473931/2017/07/05/academics/recipients-2017-human-health-and-environment-seed-grants-announced).
* Inter-institute seed grant call on health/environment due on Feb. 15, 2018

### Global

* Hosted Karin Benz, Sustainability Center, Freiburg (April 2017)
* Hosted Paul Hawken, Project Drawdown (Nov. 2017)

\*Initiatives funded by Strategic Plan RFP in round one.