

Report on AYA Assembly LXVII, November 15 – 17, 2007

Submitted by William H. H. Rees, Class Representative from Class of 1956

This convocation had two sessions:

I. Yale in a Green World: Meeting the Challenge of Sustainability

II. Ambassadors for Yale: The AYA Strategic Plan

Yale in a Green World: Meeting the Challenge of Sustainability

Thursday, November 15, 2007, was devoted to Yale in the green world. The Assembly Chair, Stephen Scher, a member of the Class of 1956, introduced the session with the comment that he originally thought the topic would not be stimulating enough for the audience but was happy he was over ruled, as the sustainability of energy is crucial to Yale and to the planet. The projection of every expert was that the reduction of greenhouse gases was of fundamental importance and that, if there was no substantial reduction, our life and that of our ancestors would be grim.

The first speaker, Gus Speth, the Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, described current environmental trends as leading to an uninhabitable world at the end of this century, even if there were no increase in population growth. It would be devastating if the population continued to grow and if present economic activities continued in the modern and advanced societies, as expected. He reported one half of the tropical forests are already gone, along with 90% of the predatory fish and 20% of the coral reef, and concluded that more species have recently disappeared than at any time since the extinction of the dinosaurs. While encouraged that attitudes in the United States were beginning to recognize the problem, he was disappointed there was still little international awareness that in its struggle to subdue nature it was at the verge of losing everything.

The next speaker was Julie Newman, the first Director of the Yale Office of Sustainability, an office recently established and staffed. She suggested Yale was leading the way by combining various fields of study, such as economic vitality, human health, and ecosystem management, and presented an optimistic report on the improvements at Yale that had made in transportation, in the design and construction of buildings, in waste management, in the serving of more organic and locally grown food, in the wise use of water, and by getting students and faculty to work together to meet these common goals, all of which had resulted in the lowering of greenhouse gases. She further cited as accomplishments the creation of a committee on climate control of representatives from the northeastern colleges and the international leadership of President Levin and of several distinguished faculty members.

Ms. Newman was followed by student panelists, who characterized the efforts of two successful activities of Yale students as deserving. Of one a member is assigned to each college dining hall to weigh the food discarded after meals and to announce the results. The average waste by 2700 students in one day is 400 pounds. Students are continually reminded to take less food and to return to the kitchen for more if needed. The second was established two years ago to provide bins and methods to students leaving Yale in the spring, with particular attention to graduating seniors, for discarding unneeded material, especially furniture, which is then collected, possibly refurbished, and stored to be given away to local charities or to be sold to incoming freshman the following fall. Successfully collected were 18 tons in 2005, 38 tons in 2006 and 54 tons in 2007.

Another panelist reported that the energy consumption had been decreased by 10% in the past 12 months, mainly by shutting off unused lights and equipment.

After lunch, we were separated into breakout sessions. I attended the one on transportation and learned that a concentrated effort is being made to encourage the 25,000 students, employees and faculty members who drive autos each month to use other modes of travel. Auto drivers who pool with one passenger are given a 60% parking fee reduction and those with 2 or more receive a 75% discount. Furthermore, the riding of bicycles is supported by installing more bike racks near buildings and on buses and showers in offices. Negotiations are under way with officials of the City of New Haven for bike lanes on city streets. Yale shuttle buses use 20% diesel fuel and 80% gas of ultra low sulfur content, are equipped with better exhaust filters and have an up to date computer program that gives positions on line every moment to anyone needing a bus ride. All new autos purchased will be hybrids: President Levin currently drives a Prius. Finally, the popular Zipcar program was illustrated as being another attempt to provide transportation in an environmentally obliging way. This is a service of a private firm that allows Yale community customers, including students, to rent a car for a short period of time, for an hour or two. Each member receives a card, which opens the door of one of the six cars on campus, reserved at one of the four convenient locations, to which it is returned for a fee processed electronically. Reservations for a car can be made days or even months in advance.

Everyone reassembled in mid afternoon for a sustainability discussion by five experts on current thought and research. Paul Anatas, a Yale professor of the Practice of Green Chemistry, summarized new findings in chemistry and work being done by scientists with industry to develop new green- friendly products; the means by which such knowledge is being disseminated; and the benefits of the periodic conferences of scientists to discuss these issues.

Jerome Ringo, a visiting fellow at the Forestry School and Chairman of the National Wildlife Federation, spoke about another organization he chairs with thousands of members, Apollo Alliance, a coalition of labor unions, The Sierra Club, Green Peace, and several churches, whose mission is to reduce the use of fuel oil. His advice has been eagerly sought by several of the candidates currently campaigning for President.

James Axley, a Professor at the School of Architecture, a consultant and advisor to the U. S. Department of Energy, and a member of the committee of experts that advises President Levin's environmental task force, explained that Yale is in the forefront in issuing joint degrees, such as one in public health and environmental studies and another in architecture and environment studies. He believes that in addition to building green buildings, we should think of building green communities and is currently consulting with a few interested Asian countries, one of which is planning a new city for 500,000 people.

Michelle Bell, an Assistant Professor of Environment Health at Yale, outlined the serious ozone problem that becomes greater when the temperature increases. She said that emissions affect the ozone layer even when there are no increases in emissions and endorsed as hopeful the attraction of Chinese students to the Yale School of Public Health.

Daniel Esty, a Professor of Environment Law and the author of "Green to Gold", was encouraged by the increased attention being given to making products that stem the danger by the leadership of several large American companies, such as General Electric, leadership which considers the current state of affairs as a great opportunity. He listed as the cause of this change to be the high price of oil and the enormous risk of entrusting America's economic future to an unstable Middle East. He also included Al Gore, the recent

U.N. report on global warming and Hurricane Katrina as responsible for the aroused consciousness not only of business men and women but also of the American population in general. He reviewed several new regulations and reported that 27 Governors, like Arnold Schwarzenegger of California, either were supporting or had successively passed green-friendly measures in their respective states. He was felt assured that private industry, with the help of scientists and governmental incentives, would develop materials and products to alleviate much of the problem. But he did recognize that if China gets it wrong, then nothing else matters. The good news is that the political and business leaders in Hong Kong seem to have recognized the problem and appear ready to act positively for its containment.

At dinner in Commons Yale Medals were awarded to Victor E. Cheers '71, Samuel D. Kushlan '32S, '35MD, John E. Pepper, Jr. '60, Jon E. Steffensen '68, and Vera F. Wells '71.

Ambassadors for Yale: The AYA Strategic Plan

The Friday session, November 16, 2007, dealt with the strategic planning. Susanna Krentz '80, the Chair of AYA Board of Governors, said the answer to the question "Where does the AYA want to be in 5 years?" was the comprehensive plan: *Ambassadors for Yale: The AYA Strategic Plan* that was distributed to all representatives to the assembly. The expansion of the staff by nine full-time positions will help AYA to provide better services not only to the graduates of Yale College, but to graduates of all professional schools and graduate programs as well. Attention will be given not only to Yale College reunions and Yale clubs but to reunions for all other Yale graduates. She reported that Yale was the first to organize group tours, which now have become quite expensive. There are plans to have less expensive tours and to organize some around special interests, the model for which will be the popular Yale Chorus tours. There have been Yale alumni meetings of women groups and of Afro-Americans and in New York a Yale alumni real estate association meets semi annually. More associations of Yale graduates will be organized around a single interest, such as athletics or drama. No longer will there be a "One size fits all". Yale clubs will be grouped into 3 categories with the largest 6 clubs in the first group, the second group of 54 clubs with service areas of 500 to 2500 alumni, and the third group for all the rest. A full time staff member will now be assigned to the 6 large clubs. Attempts will be made to recruit able leaders for the Yale Clubs and special interest groups and to provide them with leadership training courses. Reference was made to the difficulty of keeping high young graduates' enthusiasm for Yale. AYA is considering to a plan to arrange a reunion for every graduating class in each of the five years following graduation. Also, all classes will be encouraged to have off year, mini reunions in various places of interest. Lastly, AYA is studying a plan to offer several full undergraduate classes by DVD or podcast to alumni, free of charge.

Linda Lorimer, '77JD, the University Vice President and Secretary, offered complete university support to AYA for the implementation of the strategic plan. She emphasized the enormous reservoir of human capital of the 110,000 living Yale graduates and the need to strengthen their relationship with the university. To that end, the Alumni Magazine has been redesigned and is being sent to all graduates and not just to those of Yale College, as was hitherto the case.

Mark Dollhopf, '77, the new Executive Director of AYA, reviewed his visits to 57 other schools and alumni groups to discover what was being done successively elsewhere. He considers the AYA to be a consultant to various Yale alumni groups, helping them organize and function, to communicate with alumni in their respective areas or interests and to develop a mission statement. He announced that a group of Yale alumni associated with Dwight Hall would soon be flying to the Dominican Republic for a week to help with the construction of a hospital and the organization of a medical clinic. The cost to each participant is \$1900.00. He was excited about this trip and looked forward to organizing many similar trips. On AYA drawing boards is an alumni exchange program with Oxford, similar to a recent, successful exchange program with a college in Australia.

Mark then introduced representatives from the IT Department, who announced that a user-friendly template for a website had been designed for Yale Clubs and special interest groups, which could be tailored specifically to the organization and linked to the university computers, so that news of activities and issues at Yale could be communicated to their membership. The template would provide for the creation and operation of a website that could be easily edited by those having only word processing skills. Furthermore, there was provision to easily add images and photos. Under study was a plan to link each specific club or association with the data base of Alumni Records so that messages could be broadcast instantly over the web to every member of a particular group.

The audience was then divided into one of several groups. I attended the one on the Alumni Village, an attempt to encourage retired Yale alumni to live in a vibrant community in a revitalized New Haven. Herbert Newman, a New Haven architect who has designed several buildings for Yale, and Edward Cantor, a New Haven attorney, discussed plans for a complex similar to Saybrook College, of 125 to 130 units of 2000 to 3000 square feet, with three bedrooms, priced between \$400,000 and \$500,000. The attached units would be on one floor, would open to a common interior courtyard and would be within walking distance to the campus. Included might be a few towers of about three stories and serviced by an elevator. It would not be an assisted living facility, as there are several in the area. Each unit would be owned by the occupants, although consideration is being given to making some rental units available. The plan for this village, which has been approved by the Yale Corporation, is well advanced, with negotiations currently underway with a developer for the acquisition of a site.

I felt it was a privilege to be present when such a major shift in orientation at the AYA was being announced and when so many exciting programs were about to happen.

The final event was an update address by President Rick Levin on the state of the University which concentrated on Yale's response to global warming. He announced that it was quite clear that the globe was warming, the result of human activity, and that nothing would be done about it without active participation by the U.S. He added that the participation of China and India was also critical. He restated his commitment to reduce level of greenhouse gases generated at Yale in 2005 by 45% by 2020, which would be equivalent to 58% if it included the growth of building construction. He announced that these gases had been reduced by 17% and measures were already in place for another 17% reduction this year. These dramatic results were accomplished by installing new windows throughout the campus; by turning lights and equipment off when unused; by more efficient power production; by construction of more efficient buildings, including a completely green building is now under construction; by adding green roofs where possible; by better controls of heating; by use of alternative fuel mixed with regular gas and oil; by drilling wells for cooling; by replacing university owned automobiles with hybrids; and by establishing competition between the undergraduate colleges to reduce electricity. He said these programs cost ½ of 1% of the annual budget, but that they have already paid for themselves by lower energy costs. Not only is this activity inherently good, but it demonstrates that sustainability is reasonably inexpensive.

The other part of the Yale contribution is in education. Yale has the expertise both in science and in technology to educate the public at large to an impending catastrophe and can offer means of combating it. The raising of the public consciousness will hopefully lead to proper governmental measures and cooperation by citizens. Yale is demonstrating leadership by reaching out to other colleges in the greater New Haven area and to the other members of the Ivy League with MIT and Stanford to organize coordinating committees to develop standards and to share ideas. Also important, Yale is training students who will be the future business and political leaders and someday be in a position to effect meaningful change.

He concluded optimistically, sensing wide scale recognition of the problem and a wealth of good will to begin to solve it, which he compared to the civil rights movement in the 1960s that was so successful in correcting an evil.

In the question and answer period, he was asked about the proposed two new colleges. He said that everyone was in favor of them: the Corporation, the faculty, and the employees. There was some hesitation by the students, who worried about restricted use of facilities and services, such as lab space and athletic programs. He thought those difficulties could be dealt with but the reduced availability of popular professors, several of whom limit class size to 300 students, could not easily be solved. The site is planned to be on Prospect Street to the north of the cemetery. He recognized the potential problem of its being somewhat removed from the rest of the campus and confided that studies are underway to alleviate any possible isolation. He was asked about the 150 acres of West Campus, formerly owned by the Dome Chemical Company in West Haven. He said that there were no plans to develop it. At present an inventory of the buildings was being undertaken to determine what is available. He thought that some of the buildings could be used for storage and others possibly for scientific experiments. If transportation could be conveniently arranged, consideration could be given to housing units for graduate students.

My reaction to being invited as the Class Representative to AYA to attend a symposium on the greening of Yale was the same as that of Steve Scher. By the end of the assembly, however, I found myself agreeing with Steve's conclusion. It was made very clear that life would be unbearable for our grand children and our great grandchildren if major reductions in greenhouse gases did not occur. I was made to wonder what kind of guardians we would be if we endowed posterity with grime. So it was comforting to learn there was much at Yale being done to avert such a major disaster. And there was reason to hope those efforts would be successful.

November 28, 2007