

University urged to improve its sustainability measures

Three speakers discussed the importance of sustainability programs on campuses nationwide

BY JON ITKIN
FREELANCE REPORTER

Three influential figures in the world of environmental issues spoke at the University on Thursday night as part of "campus sustainability month."

Will Toor, the mayor of Boulder, Colo., director of the University of Colorado Environmental Center and a doctor of physics, spoke about successes other colleges have had in reducing their environmental impact. He said there is a myth on some campuses that the sustainability movement is a "special interest" and not an interdisciplinary problem.

Toor said the vast majority of sustainability programs are generated at the local and state levels, and within communities themselves.

"Right now there is a leadership vacuum in the federal government. They are not paying attention to sustainability issues," he said.

Toor cited global climate change, the approaching end of the "oil age" and the decline of natural ecosystems as the main reasons why sustainability is a necessary concept.

Implementing these programs not only improves quality of life, it also makes a campus more attractive, more successful as a place of learning and more

financially sound, he said.

He used examples of schools that have constructed buildings to optimize energy use and save money on heating and electricity costs. Some schools have added small student fees to generate money for wind and solar power. Others have increased parking fees while rewarding faculty members who don't buy parking passes, Toor said.

The University of Colorado at Boulder, the California university system, the New Jersey university system, Lewis and Clark College and Oberlin College have all made major changes to make their operating systems more sustainable, Toor said.

Associate Professor Bob Doppelt spoke about using a "systems approach" to sustainable thinking.

Using colorful illustrations and graphs, Doppelt said too often people employ a "quick fix" mentality on sustainability issues, thinking that scattered, small efforts are solving the problem.

Doppelt said the best way to deal with these issues is to consider the connections between issues across time and space.

"Martin Luther King said, 'I have a dream.' He didn't say 'I have a strategic plan,'" he said.

Doppelt said incorporating sustainability into the curriculum,

research and public service is the best way the way to address the issue at the University. He is teaching a course on systems thinking next semester.

Joshua Skov, the third and final speaker, is the research director at Good Company, a local firm that consults large institutions on sustainability issues.

He said society needs to shift away from antiquated "big ideas" and toward a new way of thinking.

He said citizens need to reclaim shared areas in the world, such as natural resources, the broadcast spectrum and scientific research — that they need to address problems when there is a clear, if unproven, threat to humanity, and that they need to recognize the benefits of healthy ecosystems.

Skov cited a study that valued ecosystem-related services at \$33 trillion in 1997.

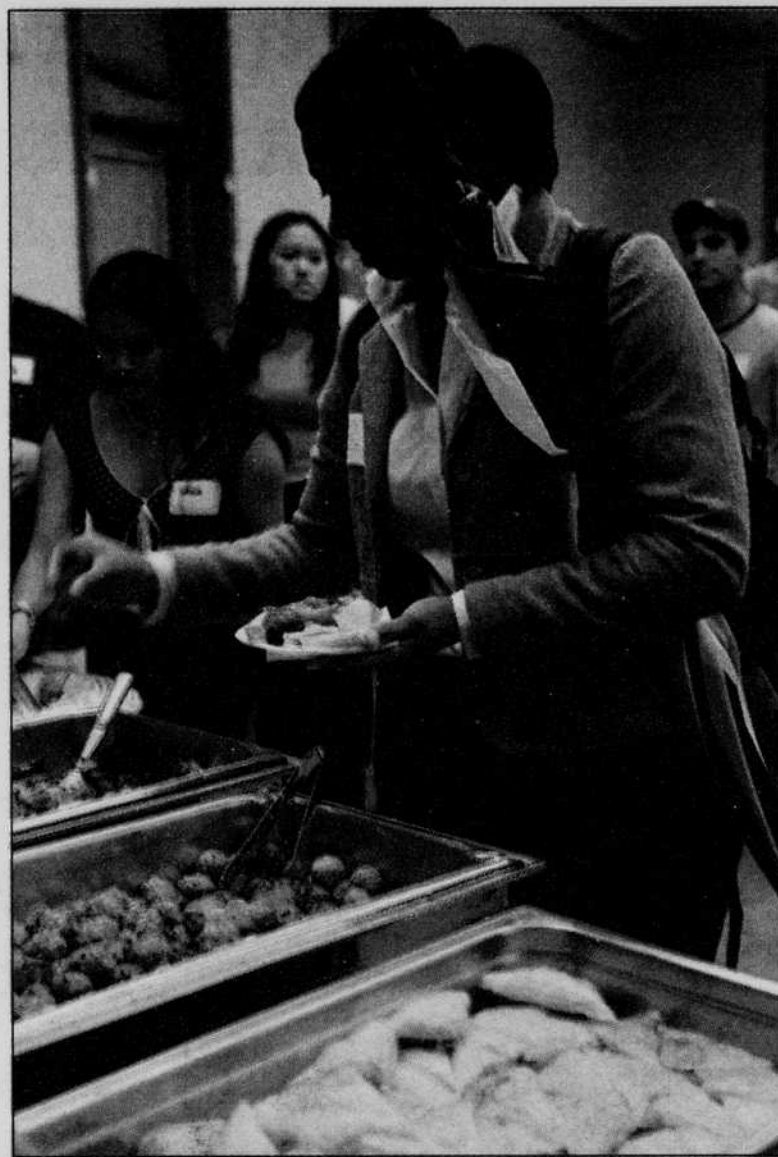
"If something is irreplaceable, maybe (a dollar amount) doesn't have much meaning," he said.

The three speakers took questions.

Heidi Richterich, an environmental studies major, said she was interested in the simple methods the speakers suggested to fund sustainability programs.

"It's remarkable how you can do little things, how Lewis and Clark raised fees a little bit to create programs that help in the long term," she said.

Jon Itkin is a freelance reporter for the Daily Emerald



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Tia Dumas, academic adviser of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, helps herself to a plate of food at the Weaving New Beginnings event on Thursday evening in the EMU Ballroom, which celebrated multicultural diversity.

Education: Expert argues desegregation not complete

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and open their doors to children of all races.

Though the decision is most often associated with schoolchildren, it had direct legal implications for public institutions of higher education as well.

Brown v. Board of Education expert Raymond T. Diamond, who is the keynote speaker at the convocation, said there were at least 17 states that mandated racial segregation in institutions of higher education before the Brown case. They too were required to allow people of all colors to apply to their institutions.

However, he added that the goal of desegregating public education has not been reached.

"Education in this country is not by and large desegregated at the elementary and secondary level," said Diamond, who is also a research professor of law at Tulane University.

Hallock said much of this segregation occurs because "living patterns have become segregated."

Some have similar criticisms of institutions of higher education. Freshman Jontae Grace said he didn't feel the goals of Brown had been reached at the University.

"I feel that we're progressing but that we have a long way to go," he said. "We need more students of color."

"The legal equality is intact, but the social equality hasn't progressed as much as people would have thought," said University philosophy professor Naomi Zack, who will participate in the panel discussion today. "One remedy for that is affirmative action."

Affirmative action has been an issue of controversy, especially with the recent Supreme Court

cases involving the University of Michigan.

"(Affirmative action) tries to address institutional equality, which is the fact that people are not equally prepared (for college)," Zack said.

Freshman Josue Pena said the issue of affirmative action is a difficult one.

"It has a lot of good points, but some people think it's unfair," he said.

Zack said the fairness of standardized tests used in college admissions has also come under fire, with many claiming the tests are biased against students outside the mainstream, white, middle-class culture.

"We've heard for years that the tests are biased," she said.

She added that one study found that students of color actually did better than white students on difficult SAT questions because they did not contain words from the white mainstream lexicon.

"(Students of color) do worse on the easy questions because the prevailing words on the easy questions are going to come out of the mainstream white society," she said.

While part of the event will examine the shortfalls of the Brown decision, it will also celebrate the great strides that were made in public education because of the decision.

Diamond said the landmark decision ultimately, "disestablished a system of racial caste in the country."

Pena said he feels the decision opened up huge opportunities for himself and other students of color.

"I think it's definitely the reason I'm in college now as a student of color," he said.

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