EnviroCon: A Day of Dynamic Innovation and Boldness

BY MEGHAN MCMORRIS
PhD Candidate, Collaborative Program

On March 9th, 2016, the Centre for Environment and Sustainability hosted the first ever EnviroCon. Formerly the Annual Earth Day Colloquium, this new event organized by the students of the Collaborative Program, aims to engage students, academics, and community organizations in meaningful discourse. EnviroCon contributes to a global movement of sustainability by promoting transdisciplinary collaboration, encouraging community engagement, and offering a platform for discussion.

The event included professional and high calibre undergraduate thesis presentations on a variety of environmental topics, in-depth graduate presentations highlighting the exciting and innovative research being done at Western University, and a dynamic panel discussion on how to translate environmental research into policy. The panellist included Sandy Levin, Dr. Fred Longstaffe, Dr. David Pearson and Dr. Sarah Seck who challenged current academic practices and pushed those in attendance to make their research useful for the public.

Exciting conversations carried on into lunch, which was held in the stunning eco-atmosphere of the International and Graduate Affairs Building atrium. Intellectual sparks and riveting discussion filled the room creating a feeling of hope in the face of the realities, such as climate change.

Article continued on pg. 2

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
• Composting Team Wins Western Green Award (pg. 2)
• Impact! Sustainability Champions Training (pg. 3)
• Thames River Clean-Up (pg. 3)

Alumni Spotlight

WHO: EMILY CRATE
WHAT: MES Alumni ’14

MES alumni Emily Crate is one to watch. Since graduating in 2014, she has worked her way up as the North American Energy and Sustainability Strategist at Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions. She launched her career out of the MES Program with a co-op placement at Brookfield in Toronto. She is now working with a small team to oversee utility spending for TD Bank, including the 3,000 buildings in their real estate portfolio. Emily and her team are responsible for helping TD improve all facets of sustainability (people, planet, profit), and this also entails ensuring health and wellness of TD Bank employees.

Article continued on pg. 3
Composting Team Wins Western Green Award

BY DAVID PIPHER
PhD Candidate, Collaborative Program

I was lucky enough to be part of the Environment and Sustainability Society (ESS) Composting Team that recently won a Western Green Awards this year. Up to three awards are given out annually to students, faculty, or staff that promote environmental awareness and sustainable practices on Western campus.

The team worked very hard to produce a proposal to implement composting at both The Spoke and The Wave. The aim is to provide initial funding and volunteer support to raise awareness about composting at the two restaurants. Although they will eventually take on financial responsibility, the goal is to provide them with positive advertising which would help to offset and potentially eliminate any associated costs.

We also initiated composting at various events on Western campus, including EnviroCon. In terms of future goals, the team aims to push Western to implement campus wide composting facilities in line with their promise of zero waste by 2022. Currently only a select few facilities compost, with most being back of house - this leaves very few options for students. To further this cause we have created a petition in hopes of drawing Western’s attention to the ever growing desire from the student body to have accessible composting facilities.

York Region Building Sustainability Case Competition

BY DR IAN COLQUHOUN
Associate Professor, Chair of MES Program

In a new development within the MES Program, I teamed up with MES students Ryan Mallany, Kelsey Taylor, Elizabeth Johnson, and Ailey Roberts to represent Western and the CES in the first “Building Sustainability” Case Competition sponsored by the Regional Municipality of York.

“Team MES”, and the five other teams involved, were charged with developing a critical analysis of York Region’s strategic plan to become a net-zero carbon municipality by 2051. The case file was released to the teams during the afternoon of February 22nd, and we had until noon the following day to seek clarification from York Region administration on the case file. The team then had until 8:00 PM on February 29th to submit a PowerPoint file summarizing their critical analysis of York Region’s strategic plan for energy conservation and demand management.

Teams in the Case Competition assembled in Newmarket, Ontario on the morning of March 1st to present their case analyses to judging panels composed of some of York Region’s senior administrators. Team MES delivered a very polished presentation, dispatching the competition and walking away with the title of Champions of the first York Region Case Competition – it was a very hectic week, but well worth all the hard work in the end!

ENVIROCON (CONTINUED FROM PG.1)

The momentum carried on into the afternoon workshop “Communicating with the Public” featuring Dr. David Pearson from the School of the Environment at Laurentian, and representatives from GradCast and Western News.

Throughout the day, invited speakers Theresa McCloughan (Canadian Environmental Law Association), Chris O’Toole (OrgaWorld), M. Derya Tarhan (Toronto Renewable Energy Cooperative - TREC), and Karen Eatwell (National Farmers Union), engaged the audience on a variety of environmental topics. Each speaker was energized and honest, creating dynamic discussion around the relationship between research and public organizations.

EnviroCon also hosted a screening of the feature film ‘The Messenger’, a story of songbirds and the quiet message they have for humanity. The atmosphere in the room was emotional after the screening as the producer Joanne Jackson spoke about the film and the audience reflected upon human impacts on nature.

It was a successful day filled with creativity, innovation, boldness, and productive dialogue. It would not have been possible without the hard work of the many Collaborative student volunteers and the generous support of our sponsors.

Want more news? Follow us on twitter!

@WesternU_CES

Above: Western Green Award Winners: Nikki Francis, Tori Ervic, Emily Lomax, David Pipher, Jesslyn Louisa, and Megan Moore.

On the same day, MES student Jessie Spasov (not pictured here) and her roommate were recognized as finalists in Western’s Ideas for Sustainability and the Environment (W.I.S.E.) competition.

ENVIROCON

Inspiring Change, Education and Awareness

BY DAVID PIPHER
PhD Candidate, Collaborative Program

I was lucky enough to be part of the Environment and Sustainability Society (ESS) Composting Team that recently won a Western Green Awards this year. Up to three awards are given out annually to students, faculty, or staff that promote environmental awareness and sustainable practices on Western campus.

The team worked very hard to produce a proposal to implement composting at both The Spoke and The Wave. The aim is to provide initial funding and volunteer support to raise awareness about composting at the two restaurants. Although they will eventually take on financial responsibility, the goal is to provide them with positive advertising which would help to offset and potentially eliminate any associated costs.

We also initiated composting at various events on Western campus, including EnviroCon. In terms of future goals, the team aims to push Western to implement campus wide composting facilities in line with their promise of zero waste by 2022. Currently only a select few facilities compost, with most being back of house - this leaves very few options for students. To further this cause we have created a petition in hopes of drawing Western’s attention to the ever growing desire from the student body to have accessible composting facilities.

York Region Building Sustainability Case Competition

BY DR IAN COLQUHOUN
Associate Professor, Chair of MES Program

In a new development within the MES Program, I teamed up with MES students Ryan Mallany, Kelsey Taylor, Elizabeth Johnson, and Ailey Roberts to represent Western and the CES in the first “Building Sustainability” Case Competition sponsored by the Regional Municipality of York.

“Team MES”, and the five other teams involved, were charged with developing a critical analysis of York Region’s strategic plan to become a net-zero carbon municipality by 2051. The case file was released to the teams during the afternoon of February 22nd, and we had until noon the following day to seek clarification from York Region administration on the case file. The team then had until 8:00 PM on February 29th to submit a PowerPoint file summarizing their critical analysis of York Region’s strategic plan for energy conservation and demand management.

Teams in the Case Competition assembled in Newmarket, Ontario on the morning of March 1st to present their case analyses to judging panels composed of some of York Region’s senior administrators. Team MES delivered a very polished presentation, dispatching the competition and walking away with the title of Champions of the first York Region Case Competition – it was a very hectic week, but well worth all the hard work in the end!

ENVIROCON (CONTINUED FROM PG.1)

The momentum carried on into the afternoon workshop “Communicating with the Public” featuring Dr. David Pearson from the School of the Environment at Laurentian, and representatives from GradCast and Western News.

Throughout the day, invited speakers Theresa McCloughan (Canadian Environmental Law Association), Chris O’Toole (OrgaWorld), M. Derya Tarhan (Toronto Renewable Energy Cooperative - TREC), and Karen Eatwell (National Farmers Union), engaged the audience on a variety of environmental topics. Each speaker was energized and honest, creating dynamic discussion around the relationship between research and public organizations.

EnviroCon also hosted a screening of the feature film ‘The Messenger’, a story of songbirds and the quiet message they have for humanity. The atmosphere in the room was emotional after the screening as the producer Joanne Jackson spoke about the film and the audience reflected upon human impacts on nature.

It was a successful day filled with creativity, innovation, boldness, and productive dialogue. It would not have been possible without the hard work of the many Collaborative student volunteers and the generous support of our sponsors.

Want more news? Follow us on twitter!

@WesternU_CES

Above: Western Green Award Winners: Nikki Francis, Tori Ervic, Emily Lomax, David Pipher, Jesslyn Louisa, and Megan Moore.

On the same day, MES student Jessie Spasov (not pictured here) and her roommate were recognized as finalists in Western’s Ideas for Sustainability and the Environment (W.I.S.E.) competition.
Emily Crate and her team’s tasks range from influencing new design standards to improving efficiency by retrofitting existing buildings. At the moment, Emily is working on a pilot project of waste sensors with their New Jersey head office and is assisting with TD’s annual CSR report.

She says the most rewarding part of her job is seeing a project through completion and being able to report on how much water and energy was saved or how much waste was diverted. “...once we start seeing results, it’s across a large portfolio so we truly are influencing and decreasing TD Bank’s footprint enormously”.

And the most challenging part? Well, Emily acknowledges that what makes her love her job is the same thing that makes her work a challenge. Such large projects take time to get approved and need to be discussed with multiple teams (sourcing, legal, transformation, etc.), which can slow things down.

In terms of transitioning from school to work life, Emily says she has been able to apply theory learned in the MES Program to her current role. “The consulting, engineering and businesses courses were probably my favourite for this very reason”, she said, explaining that these courses focused on case studies and the projects allowed students to apply what they had learned in class to real world problems.

Lastly, Emily emphasized the importance of networking for new graduates. “If you are able to get a co-op or get your foot in the door ... go out on a limb and ask colleagues, VPs, and executives to coffee.” After all, the saying goes, ‘luck is where opportunity meets preparation’.

The attendees of the conference came with different experiences, perspectives and goals (much like MES!), yet all with a common vision of sustainability.

A truly unique aspect of IMPACT! was the flexibility it provided to each individual to modify the experience according to what they personally wanted to gain from the weekend. There were several options for workshop sessions that enabled us to choose what training or information we would most greatly benefit from. The weekend was a dynamic experience, each day ending with a feedback session in which we openly discussed positive and negative aspects of the day and how we could move forward.

The entire weekend was framed as a launch pad to the next step in our sustainability path (whatever that may be). The workshops were very practical, especially those relating to funding and venturing into social-entrepreneurship. Upon parting, we were provided with all the resources we could hope for regarding mentorship, funding, and further networking. The facilitators made it clear that they will always be available to us, whether it’s for a simple question, running an idea past them, or looking for funding for a new project. Due to the amount of time, transparency, and exchange of ideas, we all got to know each other really well and made excellent friendships as well as professional contacts.

IMPACT! was the perfect complement to the MES program and I think that everybody, no matter where their personal or professional interests lie, could benefit from this experience. Through IMPACT! and MES, I feel incredibly empowered and inspired to make change - the very reason why I joined the MES program.

For more information visit: www.naturalstep.ca/impact

Thames River Clean-Up led by CES students on Earth Day

On April 22nd, Heather Peacock along with Jeremy Grimstead (pictured here), Holly Stover and Rebecca Doyle from the Collaborative Program organized a river clean-up along the Thames on campus to celebrate Earth Day. With the help of twenty volunteers the team collected 17 bags of garbage, 8 bags of recycling, and over 150 plastic bottles. A couple of treasures were also found, including a fishing rod! “It was a really successful day, great weather, lots of enthusiasm.” said Heather. The team hopes to make it an annual event.

IMPACT! Sustainability Champions Training

BY EMILY LOMAX
MES Candidate

One of the most beneficial experiences I had as a graduate student in the MES program was the IMPACT! Sustainability Champions Training Program, hosted by The Natural Step and The Cooperators. It was three incredibly intense days of personal and professional development, the effects of which are already radiating through my life.

One of the amazing features of the MES program is that, in working and learning with a cohort, we truly get to know one another and become a very cohesive unit. IMPACT! was a perfect parallel to the program, as it provided the opportunity to expand beyond our community to meet a very diverse group of people.

For more information visit: www.naturalstep.ca/impact