DRAFT Proposal for the Hampshire College Space-Auditing Process

Dear interested members of the Hampshire community,

We, the authors think that the current space auditing process provides a good opportunity for us to share ideas that we’ve been developing concerning outdoor campus spaces.

As current and former students concerned with the wellbeing of the Hampshire community and its legacy, we hold a vision of a future campus that we want to share with others.

This proposal focuses on areas of campus currently maintained as lawn (except athletic fields) as well as other locations with potential for added biodiversity, human food production, wildlife habitat resources and general human utility.

**Conceptual Framework**

Humans are ecosystem engineers. Our land use choices have far-reaching consequences for the local ecology. Our management matters to the life around us.

In the context of the Hampshire College community, we have the ability to consciously shape niches by creating a variety of habitats. These intentionally designed and managed ecosystems are capable of yielding a wealth of useful products, including food. In addition, they can cut our college’s carbon emissions drastically while providing useful, healthy resources that are specifically chosen to meet the needs of our community. We can achieve this via a collaborative process that gathers information from all stakeholders in the community.

Hampshire’s founding principles are relevant to our pursuit of an interdisciplinary land use that reflects this community.

**Hampshire’s Founding Principles**

The founders of Hampshire College expressed their vision with clarity.

In “The Making of a College” by Franklin Patterson, the first president of Hampshire states:

“Hampshire College will seek to be an agent of change, both an undergraduate institution of excellence and a laboratory for experimenting with ways the private liberal arts college can be a more effective intellectual and moral force in a changing culture.” (preface, p xiii).

“the task of the college is to help its students learn to live their adult lives fully and well in a society of intense change, immense opportunity, and great hazards”.(preface, p. xiii)

For decades these principles have been thoughtfully enacted within the Hampshire College curriculum- but what about these values finding expression on the land of the campus itself? Can we manage this land resource in ways that reflect the founder’s vision for Hampshire? Perhaps more importantly, can we steward the land in ways that align with our own contemporary context and global issues? Is it possible to reflect the character of this community in the way we relate to this land? Surely these are questions that deserve the attention of campus planners and the college community at large.

It’s an important time to think in new and different ways about land, since our decisions now can still mitigate the negative impacts of future climate change. As a respected and innovative institution of higher learning, the College’s current decisions can inspire others to make similar crucial shifts.

Franklin Patterson, First President of Hampshire College:

”The total college program through which Hampshire will pursue these ends emphasizes intellectual inquiry, artistic experience, engagement with the non-academic world, and a college culture that will support these things”

“curriculum development at Hampshire must be a continuous process in order to avoid academic obsolescence as much as possible; that this means continuing institutional self-study and the provision of ways an innovative climate can be maintained; that the “academic” program must be actively connected with student experiences in the “real” world; that cooperation with other Valley institutions is essential: that the Hampshire academic program should have a highly flexible organization; and that students should have preparation and experience in teaching both themselves and others.”

(preface, xiv-xv)

Allies, Potential Regional Partners & Advisors:

Conway School of Landscape Design, Conway

Permaculture Institute of the Northeast (P.I.N.E.)

Institute for Social Ecology (ISE)

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**The Current Situation**

Let’s look at one of the ways that land is used here at present. Lawn represents

350 acres, which is 41% of Hampshire’s campus area.

To maintain this acreage we employ a fleet of 4 Toro riding mowers and operators. These 4 mowers run concurrently for 40 hours a week during peak growing season. On average, the rate of fuel used for this equipment is approximately 1.16 gallons per acre. That’s according to an article on the fuel efficiency of golf course maintenance equipment that uses similar Toro brand riding mowers. <http://archive.lib.msu.edu/tic/holen/article/2010apr7.pdf>

This means that every time the Hampshire campus is mown, it requires the burning of an estimated 406 gallons of fuel. There are about 18.95 pounds of CO2 produced when one gallon of gasoline is combusted.

US Energy Information Administration

<http://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.cfm?id=307&t=11>

So, every time our campus is mown, which happens on approximate weekly basis from May to September, an estimated 7,693 pounds, or 3.8 tons of CO2 is released into the earth’s atmosphere. To make this a more relatable figure, we’ve used an online carbon footprint calculator. **We found that mowing the campus just once produces carbon emissions equivalent to driving a small/medium sized car from Hampshire College to Anchorage, Alaska, which then detours to Mexico City, Mexico, a journey of 8,273 Miles, producing 3.86 Tons of carbon emissions.** So in other words, the carbon pollution resulting from seasonal maintenance of Hampshire’s 350 lawn acres could be thought of as equivalent to an entire summer spent touring back and forth across North American continent in a medium sized car.

http://www.nativeenergy.com/travel.html

The present practice of mowing large areas of lawn emits not just carbon pollution, but also ground-level ozone, sulphurous compounds, and health-impacting fine particulates. Our tendency toward mowing as a default land management for central campus also prevents the establishment of pollinator habitat resources in these areas.

**Suggestions**

Without delving further into the details or discussing other types of pollution, such as noise or fine particulates, it quickly becomes clear that upkeep of this much lawn is a costly endeavor, and ought to be a primary concern of any initiative to reduce the college’s carbon footprint.

We’ve noted significant excitement from current students and alumni about the ideas in this proposal. We’d like to invite the Hampshire administration to join us in this conversation. Essentially, we’re recommending that the college consider using its land in ways that reflect the founding principles of this unique school. Further, we’re suggesting it’s important to bring the campus into alignment with our values as global citizens in the climate change era.

Hampshire has already begun to do some of this. Among many other recent important sustainability efforts, the college made great strides in provision of wildlife habitat with the recent creation of the wildflower meadow. Using ecological design as a lens, we hope to broaden and embolden these types of efforts going forward.

**Vision**

A vision statement is a means of picturing a future condition so that we can more clearly see and feel inspired about the potential effects of our actions. Some appreciate using present tense because it can create a sense of vividness.

Here is an example (DRAFT) of our vision:

Our beautiful, innovative campus is rich with wildlife habitat, perennial food systems, gardens, orchards and functional uses that improve quality life for those who live and work here. Hampshire college is recognized and lauded for its pioneering approach to land use. As part of a community response to unsustainable use of fossil fuel energy, which drives climate change, we chose to set forth on a graceful, ethical trajectory to transition to land uses that do not require fossil fuels.

Due to our many future wildflower meadows and perennial plantings, on warm days the campus shimmers with wildlife- with bees, flies, butterflies and hummingbirds. While our campus may look a bit different from other institutions, this will serve as a proud mark of distinction for the school, which is choosing to place it’s land use practices in accordance with the present global context of climate change.

Imagine a time 30 years from now. We have the opportunity to stand in the future and look back and feel deeply proud of this moment in time and the choices we made.

**Possible Pathways Forward**

Founding of something akin to a Center of Ecological Design & Inquiry

Hiring of an Ecological Design Educator and/or Projects Manager/Coordinator

 Creating a Summer Ecological Design Internship Program

Perpetual design sessions (perhaps annual?) open to the whole community, enabling joint authorship and democratic approach to land management, attaining a new level of community engagement

Conferences with other institutions

Local involvement with farms and food banks

Collaborative initiatives with urban agriculture initiatives, such as Springfield’s Gardening the Community

**There are so many different creative ways we could work at this together!**

Due to the dollar savings on the gas, mowers, mower maintenance and wages for the 4-person mowing crew, some of the excess in the budget can go toward hired ecological design educators. The people in these roles can help our campus operate with a whole-systems awareness and approach, directing waste streams into food systems, increasing curricular connections with land, and helping the campus function optimally. Above all these people will use their position to teach the discipline of ecological design via a transparent, collaborative approach that provides students with a genuine sense of ownership around land use planning and management.

**Endowment of Campus**

It is common and appropriate for new buildings to become the targets of significant fundraising efforts on college campuses. It is less common to think of the land between buildings as similarly worthy of investment, stewardship, and endowment. We’re suggesting that our community consider bucking the prevailing norms in this regard, lest they go unintentionally unquestioned. We urge Hampshire College, as a leader in interdisciplinary, innovative forays, to balance its investment in built structures with bold investments in community resources, biological diversity, agroforestry, post-carbon systems and ecosystem health.

At your earliest convenience we would like to meet to discuss these ideas. The following email addresses can be used as contacts: mew12@hampshire.edu, bartloan@gmail.com, nedphillipsjones@gmail.com, jmm15@hampshire.edu

Sincerely,

Current and former students

Please print name clearly Signature