February, 2014

Since its establishment in 1996, the Environmental Leadership Center (ELC) has spearheaded many of the College's initiatives in the areas of sustainability and resilience, including the ELC Internship Program, Wellness Program, EcoTeam, INSULATE!, Green Walkabout, and Sustainability Speakers Fund. Many of those initiatives have now been integrated into core programs within the Academic, Work and Service components of the Triad.

Over the past 18 years hundreds of WWC students have engaged directly in ELC programs as members of the ELC work crews, as summer interns and project leaders, and thousands more have participated in ELC programs and events. Dozens of regional and national partners have helped make this engagement possible ranging from CooperRiis Healing Farm Community to the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, from the Buncombe County School system to the Jane Goodall Institute, and from The Nature Conservancy to the National Climatic Data Center.

In response to complex twenty-first century environmental and social challenges, and because of the necessity to prepare WWC students to meet the challenges with interdisciplinary problem solving skills and creativity, the time has come for the ELC to refocus our efforts to develop new and relevant sustainability and resilience initiatives. The following is from WWC President Steve Solnick:

As we seek to create new energy around curricular, Triad and operational innovation to further our commitment to environmental responsibility, I have asked the ELC staff to align itself more explicitly and strategically with our advancement efforts. This follows on the effort led last year by consultant David Maddox to identify new approaches to reasserting our national sustainability leadership, advancing Triad, student life and strategic campus priorities, and connecting us to important regional and global sustainability initiatives. Progress in these areas requires us to research opportunities, convene stakeholders, and determine what new sustainability and resilience program options are viable and strategically aligned; and to determine which foundation, individual, and institutional donors are poised to provide significant financial support.

Consequently, at the start of this semester, I asked the ELC to operate as a subdivision with the Advancement Office, under the supervision of VP for Advancement. In this new role, the ELC can continue to document and report on our innovative approaches to campus-wide sustainability, while integrating with our broader advancement and fundraising efforts to position the College for new initiatives in this area.

This is not the end of the ELC, but rather an exciting metamorphosis. As we enter the chrysalis, we look forward to engaging our devoted partners, supporters and community stakeholders to help shape and form our next incarnation. The journey continues.

Sincerely,

Stan Cross
Interim Director
WWC Environmental Leadership Center