Green Conversations around Campus

The followings are excerpts of conversations among members of our campus community. They show what are on our minds regarding environmental sustainability:

I am so proud of being a student at UST. “ wrote a student on her Facebook after this year’s carbon neutral commencement ceremony.

“Actually UST has many significant contributions towards environmental protection. You have raised awareness on sustainability topics which are not common knowledge in HK. You also support many of the student environmental initiatives. Therefore, as a UST student and one who had an opportunity to contribute to one of your programs, I feel so very proud!” commented another student.

“Hey don’t leave the charger plugged in when not charging. It wastes electricity as the charger still draws current.” said one student to another.

Mom: You are out growing your school uniform, go buy some new ones.
Teenage son: Nah, I will just go to the school office to see what I can pick up for free from the lost and found area.

“Some UST students are wasteful and not environmentally conscious, look at this brand new pair of shoes I am wearing. I found them in the trash disposed by hall residents when they moved out at the end of spring semester.” said one student to another.
Colleague A: Did you notice that students have posted many environmentally related messages on the big character post wall? Some accuse the university for not being green enough, others challenge students for their environmentally unfriendly activities and behaviors.

Colleague B: This is actually very good. It shows that students are very environmentally conscious and that they would like to take an active role in challenging the university administration to adopt greener practices and in confronting fellow students for not caring about the environment. Seems like the university’s environmental awareness promotional effort yields good return!

“Our caterers are good green partners. Besides, being compliant with air emission, waste water discharge and pest control requirements, they put in many extra efforts in support of HKUST’s sustainability vision. Examples include offering discount for those of us who bring own cups or food containers, incorporating low carbon emission items in menu, setting A/C to higher temperature in support of community goals, contributing to the acquisition of a waste food composter to recycle food waste, reducing the use of disposable utensils, sponsoring green events, etc.” said a CSO colleague.
“Our FMO colleagues have done a lot on campus sustainability. They operate a very sophisticated computerized building management system which enables them to assess real time data and promptly adjust to achieve optimal operational conditions to minimize energy usage. They even spearheaded Hong Kong’s first energy performance contracting which helped save many tons of carbon emission!” said one HSEO colleague.

Colleague A: I hold my breath every time I walk pass the smoking area across from the bus stop since there are usually quite a few smokers in the area polluting the air together.

Colleague B: Actually, these smokers are law abiding citizens as HK law prohibits anyone to smoke on campus. The area you mentioned is just right outside the campus boundary! Of course we hope some of them will quit smoking all together!!

2010 Graduate: I’m excited to contribute to Asia’s first carbon neutral congregation and help our university be a leader in sustainability issues. We need leaders to promote this issue, and I’m glad I can make a small contribution.

Student after watching Bella Gaia: It was a breathtaking performance. The combination of music, video and venue was perfect, and gave me another perspective of the fragility of our Earth.
“There is actually so much marine life along the HKUST coastline!” said a student participating in HKUST’s Discovery Scuba Diving Event.

“How come Live Green students have recycling bins and we don’t?” asked a member of Hall VII, “we want to recycle as well.”

“We are in the process of ordering more bins to place in all halls.” responded a Live Green Student.

“Carbon trading is just like the stock market! I didn’t know it was so easy! This is fun and exciting.” exclaimed a student that participated in the Carbon Trading workshop!
“My carbon footprint is THAT much?? I better do something to start to reduce it at least to the average level!” stated a student after calculating and realizing her personal carbon footprint.

“We need more green in the Hall. Can we do some planting on the balcony in Hall 7?” asked a Live Green student.
“Using my old notes to make recycled paper cards is a great way to get rid of my unwanted paper!” exclaimed a Live Green student that participated in the Make Your Own Paper Workshop.

“I actually learned a lot from visiting the Tuen Mun eco-park. Who knew you could turn waste food oil into biodiesel?” commented one student.

“All this plastic trash came from Hong Kong’s coastline?? I didn’t know… but you have to admit the exhibit looks great.” commented a student viewing the Project Kaiser exhibit.

“Hall 7 has too many trash cans and not enough recycling bins!” cried one student.
“Let’s ask for more recycling bins then!” responded another student.

“Wow it’s bright down here! Kind of takes the fun out of walking along the seafront.” commented a student walking along the LED lit seafront path.

“I agree, but the lights use 60% less energy.” informed another student.

“Oh, I guess that’s good then.

“Hong Kong STILL has farms??” exclaimed one student that participated in Live Green’s organic farm visit.
Health, Safety and Environment Office (HSEO) recently called a meeting with laboratory supervisory staff of science and engineering departments and units, who also have departmental safety responsibilities. The purpose is to gather frontline experience and feedback on energy saving practices in laboratories. Many energy saving measures in laboratories are closely related to safety, therefore safety representatives of units with extensive laboratory activities are key to the success of such a program.

The first meeting was held in November with representatives from more than 10 academic units, plus colleagues from HSEO and Facilities Management Office, Laboratory Services Section (FMO-LS). There were lively discussions on ways to save energy in laboratories, including turning off or reducing unnecessary lighting, and reminder for proper usage of fume hood. It was also shared in the meeting that, other than the obvious energy saving opportunities in terms of lighting and fume hood usage, management of research activities such as reviewing sample storage in -80°C deep freezer and usage of high energy demand laboratory equipment can be other means for saving a substantial amount of energy.

After the meeting, some representatives went to a CHEM teaching laboratory where a couple new low-flow fume hoods with auto-lowering sash have been installed and used for several months. The energy saving features of the new hoods were demonstrated by CHEM and FMO-LS colleagues.
The user group will meet for a few more times to assemble a proposal of laboratory energy saving measures, which will be presented to the Environmental Health and Safety Committee, chaired by the VP-AB, for endorsement. Most important, we will need all laboratory users working together to implement the adopted energy saving measures so that we can incorporate sustainability practices into one of the core activities of a research university like HKUST, which is laboratory research.

You may want to read a related article about laboratory energy saving that was published in the last issue of Safetywise http://www.ab.ust.hk/hseo/sftywise/201006/Page2.htm
The Government has allotted a plot of land, on temporary tenancy terms, for HKUST to build and operate an Eco Park. The site is located in Tseung Kwan O adjacent to LOHAS Park, and is readily accessible via MTR and public roads. With a size approximately equivalent to that of a standard football field, there is plenty of room to host a variety of educational activities related to the environment. HKUST formally took possession of the site in September, 2010 and a working group has been commissioned to steer the planning and construction for this facility. Members of this working group include representatives from the School of Science, Division of Life Science, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Division of Environment, FMO and HSEO. Projects anticipated include Chinese Herbal Garden, Renewable Energy,
and Organic farming. We envisage that this facility will provide opportunities for members of our campus community to have hands-on experience with various components within these themes. Furthermore, students can conduct applied studies in this facility and engage in co-curricular activities related to the environment. Staff and students alike can experience organic farming and grow their own pesticide-free crops! In addition, we plan to showcase this facility to the community and use it as a platform to promote sustainable life styles and practices among students of local secondary schools and members of the general public by holding tours and public lectures on site.

The University has provided funding for the initial ground preparation work. Applications for grants to support the aforementioned theme-based activities are underway. We anticipate the site will take shape by early to mid 2011. Please stay tuned for news on further development.
From the health survey we did among our student population, the following are some of the more common chronic health problems we encounter within our University:

**Asthma**
A chronic inflammatory disorder of the airway that is not contagious. The disorder is usually reversible but not curable. It can be managed with medications and a reduction of environmental triggers. In our University population, asthma is usually well managed by medications and the condition can be monitored using a peak flow meter.

**Abdominal Discomfort**
Abdominal discomfort or pain can be caused by many different causes, from indigestion, peptic ulceration to gastroenteritis, as well as irritable bowel syndrome often caused by nervousness and stress. If it is not managed properly, it can cause a lot of problems and affect our work and study performance. Medical consultation is advised if pain persists or worsens as the causes can be so varied.

**Dermatitis / Eczema**
Eczema is a chronic, inflammatory skin disorder. It can appear as blisters that crust over to become scaly, itchy rashes, or as dry, thick patches of skin with scales. The main symptom is itching, and symptoms can come and go. There is no cure. Recurrence and symptoms can be reduced by medications.

**Health Seminars and Programs**
Preventive measures can help some of the above problems as well as other medical problems including common infectious problems like influenza, hepatitis or cervical cancer.

To provide a better understanding to the University community about the causes, the preventive methods and treatments for some of these diseases and other medical problems, a series of health seminars as well as health awareness programs are being organized by the campus clinic in this academic year. Vaccination programs are also provided where vaccines are offered at discounted rates.
The following health programs or seminars have been scheduled from September 2010 to March 2011:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 2010</td>
<td>Hepatitis and Flu Awareness Campaign (with discounted vaccinations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 2010</td>
<td>Prevention of Cervical Cancer Campaign (with discounted vaccinations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 Nov 2010</td>
<td>Common Respiratory Diseases (Health Seminar)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 2011*</td>
<td>Common Skin Problems* (Health Seminar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 2011*</td>
<td>Common Gastro-intestinal Problems* (Health Seminar)</td>
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*Details and times for the seminars and programs will be announced once the venues are secured

University students are encouraged to make use of our campus clinic if you encounter any medical problems. You may also click into the following website for some commonly asked questions about the campus clinic and common health issues:

http://www.ab.ust.hk/hseo/Clinic/faq.htm

You are also invited to visit the following website to check out ways of staying healthy in the university.

http://www.ab.ust.hk/hseo/sftywise/201006/Page4.htm

(This article is written by Health Concepts Ltd., the HKUST's medical clinic operator.)
Safety Training

The Importance of Safety Training
Safety training is important and necessary for equipping people with the necessary knowledge and competency in doing their jobs safely so as not to cause injuries to themselves and to others. It should cover a wide range of aspects from simple safety instructions to specific safety knowledge for performing operations with higher risk. Safety training is especially needed for new staff and students although it is also needed anytime when the job demands it.

Safety Orientation/Induction
This refers to the provision of important safety training/information/instructions specially needed by new students and staff of the University and it should be conducted as early as practicable. This should include important “Do’s” and “Don’t’s”, emergency procedures, locations of fire/emergency exit routes, emergency showers/eyewash and how they are used, etc. Safety orientation/induction should best be conducted by the supervisors or dedicated persons in the responsible department/unit in a timely manner.

Typical content to be covered for safety orientation/induction are available in the following web page:
http://www.ab.ust.hk/hseo/training/orientation/

Risk Specific Safety Training
Other risk specific safety training, e.g. chemical safety, laser safety, biological safety, etc. should also be provided to the staff/students who need to work with specific risks. Supervisors need to identify these safety training needs of their staff and students and make arrangement for delivering such training for them. To help address such needs, HSEO conducts regular training classes on common risk topics. Online safety training modules have also been developed to provide a more flexible and convenient means for staff and students to acquire the necessary safety training. The list of safety training courses available at HSEO can be found in the below web page:
http://www.ab.ust.hk/hseo/training.htm
It is important to note that the safety training courses provided by HSEO only cover the basic safety principles for working with specific risks. They must be supplemented by job-specific hands-on safety training provided by the supervisors as necessary.

Training Records and Documentation
Safety training cannot be regarded as properly done without proper records and documentation. Accurate records should be maintained for all safety training activities. One important purpose of maintaining such records is to keep track of who has been trained in what. Another purpose of such documentation is for the management of the departments/units concerned or the University as a whole to be able to stand up to any inquiries in the events of accidents. The training records should cover all sorts of safety training, including instructions given as safety orientation, safety training courses conducted by HSEO as well as the job-specific hands-on training to be provided by the supervisors of the departments/units.