

Well-Being & Sustainability at Xavier University of Louisiana: Seminar Grant Final Report

Part 1: Basic information

1. Name of the grantee institution: Xavier University of Louisiana

2. Type of institution: University

3. Seminar title: Well-Being & Sustainability at Xavier

4. Date and address of the location where the seminar was held:

23 January 2016 at Xavier University of Louisiana, 1 Drexel Drive, New Orleans LA 70125

5. Name and title of the person who served as host for the seminar:

Bart Everson, Media Artist

6. Name of person(s) who facilitated the seminar and titles (if different from host):

Dr. Charles W. Richardson, Jr., Dean (School of Business, Claflin University)

7. Name and role of other key people who helped organize or facilitate the seminar:

Dr. Richard Peters, Associate Professor (Division of Business, Xavier University of Louisiana)



Parts 2: Detailed information

8. Describe the representative make-up of seminar participants. For example, what was the composition of the group by gender, race/ethnicity, and role on campus (e.g. faculty, student, student affairs, administration, etc.). Additionally, please note the attendance of any participants who were not affiliated with the university (community members, alumni, local officials, etc.).

We were pleased by turnout for the seminar. Thirty-five people from across campus participated, a number which approached the capacity of our venue. This demonstrates the

strong interest in the topics under discussion (see more below). It was a diverse group. As the seminar was primarily promoted to faculty and administrators, students were present in fewer number. Xavier's Sodexo food service manager was not only a participant, but Sodexo co-sponsored the event, providing a healthful and vegetarian-friendly lunch for all. In addition, we were pleased to have the Sodexo food service manager from Dillard University as a guest.

9. Please summarize the specific topic(s) chosen as a seminar emphasis and the insights that emerged.

Our seminar examined the campus culture of sustainability at Xavier University of Louisiana as a prior condition necessary for faculty and staff well-being. We wondered about the level of interest in this topic. We discovered that interest is high, and that immediate action by the highest levels of campus administration is urgently required in order to make further progress on these crucial issues.

10. Please provide a paragraph or two summarizing the opening discussion and any issues or questions you used to engage participants. Note any perspective(s) which seemed significant or new to the group.

Dr. Richardson opened the discussion by talking about sustainability in myriad contexts, and introduced us to the concept of the "triple bottom line" business model, which includes social and ecological considerations as well as the more familiar economic criteria. He also talked about definitions of well-being from the Centers for Disease Control.



Since Xavier is both Catholic and historically Black, we then aimed to put these broad topics in our specific context. Dr. Jerry Farmer (Theology) drew upon Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si': On the Care for Our Common Home*, to explore the meaning of sustainability and well-being from a Catholic perspective.

Dr. Richardson shared his personal experiences at historically Black colleges and universities, noting that many such institutions lack deep financial resources. Sustainable practices were often a necessity rather than a choice; the downside is that under current conditions there may not be the ready capacity to focus on sustainability intentionally.

The group noted the clear connections between Xavier's mission to create a more just and humane society and the Pope's call for environmental and social justice.

11. What were the major objectives of the seminar? Describe how the seminar accomplished these objectives.

A major objective of the seminar was to set institutional goals and commitments to begin a process toward an increased culture of sustainability and well-being. Of course, it is unrealistic to suppose that we will institute a new office or even a new hire dedicated to campus sustainability and well-being as the result of a single seminar. Nevertheless, we hoped the specific institutional goals would be proposed at the end of the day. This did not occur. However, all present agreed that we had begun an important conversation that needed to continue. Thus, our next steps are critical. We need a formal process of investigation and inquiry, in order to move more deliberately to an increased culture of sustainability and well-being.



12. Did you encounter any barriers during the seminar or realize future obstacles that may affect the pursuit or sustainment of long-term goals related to well-being on campus?

The primary obstacle identified by participants was the lack of explicit institutional priorities regarding sustainability and well-being, which led to some confusion on what exactly should be done next. Participants gave voice to the feeling that Xavier should adopt a clear set of focused definitions for sustainability and well-being and set reasonable goals for institutional progress in this area. This would allow individuals and offices on campus to take specific action steps.

13. Please describe any recommendations and specific suggestions for action steps and/or “products” (e.g. papers, presentations, future meetings) that resulted from the seminar discussion.

Participants recommended that a committee be formed to pursue a capacity-building grant that would allow Xavier to focus on sustainability and well-being on campus.

14. Please identify any materials that were used to guide the seminar discussion or to serve as resources for participants, either prior to or after the seminar (e.g. BTtoP related resources on well-being, BTtoP’s The Civic Series, journal articles, books).

Catholic Church, Pope (2013- : Francis), Catholic Church, & United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (2015). *Laudato si’: on care for our common home : Encyclical letter*.
 Martin-Schramm, J. B. (2015). *Earth ethics: a case method approach*.

