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CANADIAN COLLEGE and UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

Strategic Plan

2015 to 2017

Prepared for CCUEN-RCCUE by:

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1. Introduction

The Canadian College and University Environmental Network (CCUEN-RCCUE) is an organization established to bring together environmental educators at universities, colleges, CEGEPs, technical institutes, and similar organizations that offer educational programs in any environmental field.

Since the initial meetings of college and university educators in 2002 and 2003 the Canadian College and University Environmental Network (CCUEN) - Réseau Canadien des Collèges et des Universités en Environnement (RCCUE) has aspired to become the primary voice of Canadian college and university environmental educators. One of the core activities is the annual CCUEN[1] conference. This conference brings together researchers, employers and educators, students and related associations together to explore a range of issues and challenges for environmental educators.

CCUEN is completing the second year of its current network. On the university side, the predecessor of the network was the Canadian University Environmental Science Network (CUESN) and the college network was the CCEN (Community College Environmental Network). In 2002, universities and colleges came together for the first time for a joint program. Environmental Careers Organization (ECO) Canada as well as industry representatives attended the event. Discussion centred on the notion of professional certification, self-education, the difference between certification of individuals and accreditation of programs. Accreditation and the annual conference became dual foci of activity.

The networks developed along different paths, as the college network had become incorporated and the university network had not. Attempts to bring the two networks together in 2007 were not successful. In 2011 each association independently received a grant of $15,000 from ECO to support efforts to boost membership and participation. At the 2013 conference co-hosted by Trent University and Fleming College a vote by both organizations resulted in the creation of the CCUEN. Subsequently, the two networks merged under a single incorporation, and the transition was made from relying on volunteers and a single staff person to that of Megram acting as the organization's secretariat. The network is governed by a Board of Directors with a Chair and Vice-chair.

2. CCUEN Retreat 2015

In 2015 the CCUEN held a retreat instead of the annual conference. The goals of the retreat were: i) to identify the roles that the CCUEN should play to support our environmental programs, and the postsecondary environmental sector more generally; ii) to determine how the CCUEN

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[1]   While the official acronym is CCUEN-RCCUE, for purpose of simplicity in this document CCUEN is used.

can best fulfill these roles through its structure and activities including next steps. To help inform the discussion, a membership[2] survey was undertaken.

It was also determined that the next steps for CCUEN should be framed through the lens of a strategic plan, with discussions at the 2015 retreat providing the basis for its development. A facilitator (Linda E. Lee of Proactive Information Services Inc.) was hired to structure and guide the discussions and to create a draft strategic plan for CCUEN.

The following was agreed upon as the Focus and Purposes for the strategic planning session.

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Focus:

⌖   Provide the elements needed to draft a Strategic Plan

Purposes:

⌖   To reflect on the organization to date

⌖   To lay the foundation (core elements) for a Strategic Plan

⌖   To establish strategic priorities and directions

⌖   To provide a venue for participant interaction – and to have some fun!

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3. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) was done as a carousel so each of four groups at the retreat had the opportunity to contribute. Each group was then charged with identifying the common issues/elements that were identified for one of the SWOT areas.

SWOT	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Willingness to meet based on experience of the network's value • National perspective • Networking • Value and alliance of the presence of both colleges and universities from the beginning	• Membership turnover • Organizational attractiveness • Diversity • Lack of identity • Perceived lack of value • Lack of recognition on a national basis
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Networking (international & interdisciplinary) • Unified voice • Linkages with others (e.g., industry, other organizations including NGOs)	• Lack of institutional support/commitment • Lack of clarity of CCUEN mandate • Lack of awareness • Volunteer burnout • Weak communication

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2   Membership is currently free. To become a member a membership form must be completed and accepted by the Board of Directors.

Discussion of Possible Solutions

- Importance of having ways of comparing information quickly and having an active members list was raised. This needs to lead to a critical mass which will help reduce volunteer burnout (i.e., people getting worn out and frustrated).

This group has an opportunity to reach out to both those on an international level as well as being interdisciplinary in nature. The question was, 'how do we do that?" Suggestions included using technology: "Maybe we can't all meet once a year, but why can't we meet via Skype or teleconference and through social media? Can we create a bigger presence for ourselves through social media?"

- The importance of being a unified voice – the network represents educational programs across Canada with committed members who will come out once a year and share ideas. Therefore, an opportunity exists to be the unified voice that can have an impact on joint program accreditation of which ECO has been the mainstay. There is an opportunity to take conversations about articulation agreements back to our programs. Perhaps there is an opportunity through being a national voice to obtain additional funding.

- The unified voice was viewed as interesting because it is a strength, as well as a challenge. Some groups may say, "You're trying to represent me?" Also, there may be communities that are not represented in the network, such as Aboriginal communities.

- The issue also arose regarding branding the organization. There was some concern that even the name CCUEN does not make it clear what the network's focus and activities. A tag line was suggested which might be created from key aspects of the mission. There was much discussion regarding language describing the network. Is the network one of environmental educators? However, there is also industry involvement. Or, is it a network which is the voice for environmental science programs? There is a need to distinguish CCUEN from other similar networks/organizations.

- There was also discussion (at a later point) regarding membership and the value for members. There was no consensus as to whether members should be individuals, institutions, or whether both categories of membership should exist.

4. Characteristics of the CCUEN Network

The discussion addressed ideas regarding what the network should look like;

- Based on collaboration,
- Both national and international in scope,
- Inclusive of colleges, universities, industry, government and other organizations,
- Program development, maintenance and sharing as a focus for activity,
- Sharing information and 'best practices', both through ongoing communication and through the annual conferences, and
- Accountability.

Various visual representations of the network were also articulated
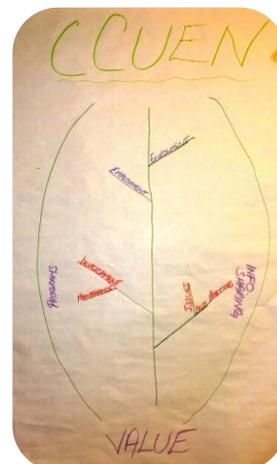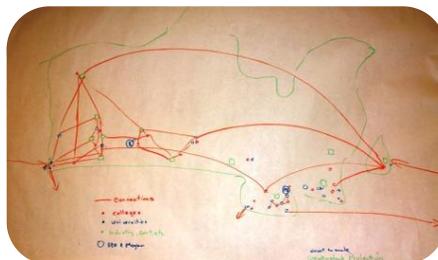
5. Vision and Mission

At a Board meeting held on September 30, 2015 the members voted for and approved the following vision and mission statements:

Vision: CCUEN is a network that effectively promotes, advocates for and enhances quality environmental post-secondary education and programs in Canada.

Mission: To facilitate communication, information sharing and collaborative action among post-secondary environmental educators.

6. Values and Governing Principles

The organization's **values** are reflected in the **governing principles** which reflect the organization's commitment to functioning in particular ways.

- Cooperation — sharing information and engaging in critical reflection and review
- Connectivity — reaching out to others in the network
  fostering relationships with external partners
- Facilitation — enabling network function, including sharing & dissemination of information
- Improvement — continuously seeking to elevate and innovate environmental programs
- Inclusiveness — engaging a broader and more diverse audience
- Innovation — finding creative solutions to emerging issues
- Integrity — acting with honesty
- Leadership — providing direction as a national voice for environmental programs
- Relevance — knowing what is needed and responding
- Resilience — responding positively to difficult situations
- Transparency — fostering an environment of openness and accountability
- Trust — using information in a constructive way that instills confidence in others

7. Strategic Priorities

This section identifies the Strategic Priority areas for CCUEN and the short term priorities (1 to 2 years) with corresponding actions. A detailed Action Plan will be developed by the CCUEN Board in support of the short term priorities and action items.

Strategic Priorities

- A. Network Development and Sustainability (value for membership)
- B. Employer/Industry Linkages
- C. Program Development and Innovation
- D. Program Advocacy

Short Term Priorities and Action Items

Short-term priorities are areas for action over the next one to two years. The short term priorities identified in May 2015 focus on: **A. Network Development and Sustainability**.

1. Strategic Plan
2. Membership
3. Visibility
4. Revenue Generation

A. Network Development and Sustainability	
Short Term Priorities	**Action Items**
1. Strategic Plan	a. Review Strategic Plan drafts b. Approve Final Strategic Plan c. Develop corresponding action plan with responsibilities, timing/completion dates, outputs and outcomes*****
2. Membership	a. Confirm current active members list b. Make decision on definition/categories for membership c. Identify potential members d. 'Brand' CCUEN to differentiate CCUEN from other organizations e. Identify conference theme (as an anchor point) f. Develop strategic targeting (personal recruitment campaign) g. Track membership growth
3. Visibility	a. Create Listserv for members (related to Membership) b. Update web-site c. Create Facebook page d. Create Twitter account
4. Revenue Generation	a. Identify current revenue streams and dollars b. Develop a Business Plan

* An action plan template is appended (following page).

APPENDIX: ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

A. Network Development and Sustainability				
Short Term Priorities	**Action Items**	**Responsibility**	**Projected Completion Date**	**Evidence of Success**
1. Strategic Plan	a. Review Strategic Plan drafts	CCUEN Board	September 30, 2015	Vision and Mission articulated
	b. Approve Final Strategic Plan	CCUEN Board	October 13, 2015	Strategic Plan Finalized
	c. Develop corresponding action plan with responsibilities, timing/completion dates, outputs and outcomes*	CCUEN Board		
2. Membership	a. Confirm current active members list			
	b. Make decision on definition/categories for membership			
	c. Identify potential members			
	d. Brand' CCUEN to differentiate CCUEN from other organizations			
	e. Identify conference theme (as an anchor point)			
	f. Develop strategic targeting (personal recruitment campaign)			
	g. Track membership growth			
3. Visibility	a. Create Listserv for members (related to Membership)			
	b. Update web-site			
	c. Create Facebook page			
	d. Create Twitter account			
4. Revenue Generation	a. Identify current revenue streams and dollars			
	b. Develop a Business Plan			