

## American Democracy Project

# The Great Conversation

In its third year at WKU, the nationwide Political Engagement Project became a big presence on campus. Following the Provost's instructions of creating a "political engagement campus culture where administrators, students and faculty are self-conscious about their influence," Dr. Sandra Ardrey and others saw the program grow. The Department of Political Science initiated two conversations as part of the Political Engagement project at WKU in Fall 2007. The first was "Your Voice: Does it Matter?" During Constitution Week high school students came on campus to learn how to use their voice in civic

engagement. Constitutional Jeopardy and a panel discussion of WKU students were some of the highlights of the first conversation that engaged over 1200 students, faculty, and community members. The second conversation took place in October during Global Warming Awareness Month. Students participated in a postcard writing campaign to Congress and a video petition filmed at Red Zone. In addition to screenings of An Inconvenient Truth, two main events were the focus of this second conversation. The first was "garbology" in which Sandra Ardrey's Senior Seminar in Political Science students sorted through trash to determine how much waste

could be recycled. The study found that revenue could reach \$60,000 annually through recycling. The second main event was the presentation by Jeff Corwin of the Animal Planet. He met with 60 students for a small discussion about his experiences, solutions, and personal stories. The public event had nearly 800 attendees from across the community. The Global Warming Conversation ended with a Climate Change Teach-In across campus. The year's events focused on teaching political knowledge and motivating students and faculty. Plans for Debate Watch and Get On the Bus: 40 Years of Political Activism are already propelling next year's Political Engagement Project into success.

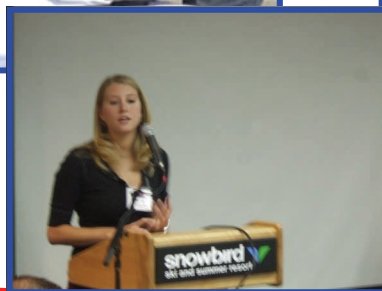


### Civic Engagement in Action

WKU professor Soleiman Kiasatpour and Chris Whitfield co-authored an article entitled "Politics in Action: Wolves, Snowmobiles, and Bison and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem." Along with an overview of the Yellowstone experience, the article contained many examples of pedagogy and useful teaching tools to incorporate conflicts over the use of public lands into courses.



Our goal and the charge from our Provost was "to establish a political engagement campus culture where administrators, students and faculty are self-conscious about their influence."



"When students are involved in the effort, other students are more likely to support it."

-Jenifer Lewis



# WKU GOES GREEN!

Across campus last year, the Hilltopper community joined together to make “going green” a reality for years to come:

- ◆ Engineering students build biodiesel facility at WKU Farm
- ◆ Cardboard Collection at Move-In
- ◆ Power Shift Conference in MD with 32 WKU students
- ◆ Big Red’s Bikes
- ◆ Focus the Nation Teach-In
- ◆ HRL Student Sustainability Committee
- ◆ Alive Center becomes Solar Powered
- ◆ First Annual Earth Day Festival
- ◆ Recycling on Campus
- ◆ Eco-Flix shows Wednesdays at 7:00
- ◆ Reduce Your Use Competition– HRL
- ◆ Move Out Collection Drive
- ◆ Planning for LEED Building
- ◆ WKU Hires Sustainability Coordinator

**Welcome Christian Ryan-Downing!**

As Western looks into a bright future, sustainability is key. A recent graduate is heading up that effort. During her education at WKU, Ryan-Downing was past President of GreenToppers and wrote her master’s thesis on a sustainability assessment of WKU. After student efforts with faculty and staff support, it was evident that WKU needed a professional to co-ordinate all campus sustainability efforts and Christian Ryan-Downing was hired as Sustainability Coordinator.



## Cardboard Collection

Move-in day to a college dormitory requires lots of help and many boxes. With the help of GreenToppers and the gardening crew, residents recycled over 7000 pounds of cardboard!

## 7 Revolutions at Western Kentucky University

Instructors from several different departments used content from the Seven Revolutions Project (an analysis of seven significant trends shaping the future out to the year 2025) during the spring of 2008. In addition, the CSIS model/material served as the core of an Honors colloquium called “Seven global revolutions: exploring trends that may shape our future.” This course was taught by Nathan Phelps, the campus coordinator of the Seven Revolutions Project. This seminar was designed to explicitly tie the 7 revolutions project to the PEP initiative by placing a strong emphasis on both examining current trends and “probable futures” and evaluating the political dimen-

sions of policy-making relevant to these trends. Students in the course conducted independent research on different dimensions of the CSIS model and they presented their research at WKU’s 38th Annual Student Research Conference on April 12, 2008. They also placed information related to the Seven Revolutions in the lobby of DUC and helped to create a bulletin board in Cherry Hall devoted to news and articles related to each of the seven revolutions. Finally, students in this course were actively involved in other campus-wide initiatives that are directly related to the Seven Revolutions content. The most prominent of these initiatives is the ONE Campaign focusing

on global poverty, hunger, and disease. Seven Revolutions students were active in the campus-wide effort to raise awareness of these issues and ultimately helped encourage more than 1,700 students to sign the “ONE Declaration” and more than 300 people to write letters to their legislators. One of the Seven Revolutions students traveled to Washington DC and lobbied legislators directly. Students also participated in a study that evaluates the effects of the Seven Revolutions course on their understanding of significant issues facing the world in the present, their views of the future, and their perceived levels of civic knowledge and

skills (using pre and post surveys). The results of this study were presented at the ADP conference in Utah in June, 2008.

For more information, please contact Nathan Phelps at [nathan.phelps@wku.edu](mailto:nathan.phelps@wku.edu)

