

Summer 2009

Henberg Takes Holistic Approach

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Recommended Citation

Davis, Laura (2009) "Henberg Takes Holistic Approach," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 6 : No. 1 , Article 6.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol6/iss1/6

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Marvin Henberg, right, looks over a report detailing recommendations for lowering the campus' energy use, prepared by students including, from left, Chris Towe '09 and Tasha Haraguchi '09.

Henberg takes holistic approach

Long before the whisper of terms like global warming and carbon footprints, before SIGG bottles and reusable shopping bags, Marvin Henberg was already a committed environmental advocate.

A thoughtful philosopher with a penchant for the outdoors, Henberg found a niche for his interests at Linfield College. As chair of the Philosophy Department, Henberg helped found the environmental studies program in 2002 and has spent the years since teaching students about environmental ethics, with an eye toward balance.

"You have to approach environmental issues with specific expertise, but holistically," said Henberg, who also served as interim president and as vice president of academic affairs/dean of faculty during his 15-year Linfield tenure. He will become president of College of Idaho on July 1. "Human beings think in grids – city blocks and spreadsheets. Animals think in terms of long stretches of river and meandering streams, where the food is. So if you want to preserve other creatures besides us, you have to think ecologically and not chop things up."

Growing up in rural Wyoming, Henberg hunted and fished while tramping around the abandoned tie camps where his father, a timber worker, had once cut railroad ties by hand. This way of life instilled an awareness of the need for balance between humans and nature.

"If trees hadn't been there for my dad to cut and make into ties, he wouldn't have had a job and we wouldn't have had bread on the table," Henberg said. "Yes, we do need to use trees for human good, but we can always do it smarter."

Henberg was in the first generation of his family to attend college, earning a bachelor's degree in English literature and philosophy from Washington and Lee University in Virginia. During graduate school, he worked in a recycling yard and, for a time, considered making it a career. But academia pulled – he earned a Rhodes Scholarship and ultimately a Ph.D.

"The most important environmental issue is to adopt wise social policies that give people incentives to be good stewards of nature," he said.

– Laura Davis

Faculty activities

Environmental studies faculty take personal steps to improve the environment. They are also involved in a variety of projects relating to the ES curriculum. Here they offer recommendations you can take and describe their current projects.

David Sumner

Associate professor of English

Steps you can take now: Plant a garden; buy a few hens. All the food you eat from the garden or eggs from your hens is healthy, and isn't shipped to you using fossil fuels.

Projects: I am currently working on an article on the environmental ethics of Edward Abbey's *Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Heyduke Lives!*.

Tom Love

Professor of anthropology

Steps you can take now: I have installed a solar hot water system on my home, am a 100 percent wind customer of PGE and pay an extra amount to NW Natural to support biogas alternatives.

Projects: Collaborative research on rural electrification with small-scale renewable energy systems in Peru. We will evaluate the success of two earlier solar installations and help prepare for and participate in the installation of 100W wind turbines.

Eric Schuck

Associate professor of economics

Steps you can take: Bottled water can be as much as 100 times as expensive as tap water. Reusing a nalgene bottle and filling it with tap water saves money and eliminates the need to produce and distribute a plastic bottle.

Projects: I've been doing water conservation research for about 15 years, mostly on water pricing and runoff control. Currently, I'm using that research to develop a curriculum for a university in the Middle East.