Café Salon Notetakers' Template - Safie Sagna

#1 Remediation of plastics and micro-plastics from the world's oceans - technological, policy & economic impact, community education, experimental approaches for retrieval and processing, analyses of interventions – Facilitators: Susanne Menden-Deuer and Geoffey Bothun– Café A – ground (1st) floor by fireplace

❑ Summary Notes

1. What would it look like for URI to take leadership in this area?

- *We have to be responsible players. We cannot clean up the plastic in the ocean. We cannot continue to contribute to the problem (e.g. stop using plastic cups). Decrease our contribution to the problem, communicate it to others and come up with solutions.*
- *Plastic in the ocean comes from Southeast Asia. a lot of plastic in US sits in bins and gets shipped to other countries.*
- *URI should articulate the problem of plastic debris; we don't have good data regarding clean-up cost; not enough data. We need to conduct research to raise awareness of this issue.*
- *The bay campus is working on plastic research. We could build on that.*
- *Working together to lay the groundwork for alternatives*
- *Identify the types of plastic that are being consumed ? which types of plastic we can trace and the ones we cannot trace? Develop policies globally*
- *There is a conflict between the health need and the consumer needs?*
- *It is not a simple issue? How do we prioritize how to use our expertise at the university to address this issue?*
- *Have a list of things that contain plastic to make people aware because most people do not know that fleece is made out of plastic.*
- *There is a database for cosmetic products where you can send a photo of a product to determine if it contains plastic or not.*
- *The cosmetic industry needs to offer alternatives and people will pay for it.*
- *Actionable research to make it more convincing for companies to explore other solutions.*
- *More FDA regulations.*
- *Is the degradable plastic a problem? If it is then non-degradable plastic might be the solution.*
- *Maybe this issue is broader than microplastic. We might identify where our expertise lies.*
- *We need to have a clear vision of the products are used and what they do with them once they are done using them.*
- *We can modify what we do in Rhode Island. What can we do in RI to help with this issue? Senator Whitehouse relies on us to get information he can use in the political field.*
- *We need to start by asking the following: What is doable? Whatever we come up with will require an attitude change from people.*

- *Redesign product packaging. What products should we focus on redesigning now?*
- *Determine what percentage of the plastic in the ocean is from people dumping it in and what part is the result of government dumping.*
- *Address the recycling system in the US. We ship our recycling material to other countries and it does not get disposed off properly.*
- *Money. Find grant money or talk to senator to get funds for plastic research.*
- *The reason why this problem is big is that plastic is cheap to produce. Maybe as a solution we should develop higher class material that people will pay for.*
- *Look at some type of plastic disposal method called plasma disposal (hydrogen gas--could be used to heat up a building or generate power, ceramic for road construction, etc.; does not create CO2)*
- *Have conversations with students to educate them about the issue.*
- *Practice what you preach. Stop using plastic at URI, especially in dining services. Have a plastic-free campus and attract media attention.*
- *Have recycling bins in all building around campus.*
- *There is a strong opposition of industries against the ban of plastic products because it is cost effective.*
- *Focusing on research and not attacking corporations.*
- *Informal seminar series (high level fundamentals to help folks have a better understanding of issue).*
- *Have guidelines of plastic usage at URI to convince the administration to ban plastic usage and to offer all first year students reusable mugs.*
- *Have a campus sustainability officer*
- *Working with students to turn them into advocates in this issue.*
- *Education as a tool to influence behavior change.*
- *Re-inforce what we are doing well and what we need to improve on*
- *A module in K-12 for students to learn about plastic (What are the types of plastic? How to use plastics in a way that reduces the negative impact on the environment?)*
- *Create a competition (between high schools in RI) and award a prize to the school that comes up with the best ideas about how to reduce practice.*
- *What are the types of plastic? How to use plastics in a way that reduces the negative impact on the environment?*
- *What is the actual negative impact of plastic? What are the harms? Help people get a better understanding of these key questions.*
- *Challenges: Compagnies focus on cost and benefit.*
- *There is not much research on the cost and benefit of plastic usage.*
- *A plastic usage reduction campaign at URI because it might take longer to have a plastic free campus.*
- *Conduct research on plastic with a high priority on objectivity (what is good about it, wat is bad, what can be changed, etc.).*
- *We have efforts going on (e.g. Biobased material in chemistry)*
- *Get a group together that will meet do work collaboratively to identify some next steps that the university should take.*

- *Incorporate plastic in classroom lectures do develop student activism in regards to this issue*
- *There is a class entitled “you, me and life in the sea”; this class offer alternatives to plastic usage.*
- *Give a reusable water bottle to all freshman like UVM does; students cannot buy water bottles. They have water stations all around campus.*
- *Host seminar series for the URI Community (e.g. First one should be focused on what is plastic and over time get to more complicated topics)*
- *Form interdisciplinary teams that can put research proposal to attract funding*
- *A day dedicated to plastic: multiple hourly session to discuss particular plastic related topics.*
- *Having private sector corporations participate in these discussions and possibly provide some funding for these events.*
- *What is the expertise we have locally? What do we not have locally? Asking these questions will be a good start. Then we can build collaboration networks.*
- *You anticipate what will be the next*
- *Sheldon Whitehouse has plastic and micro plastic remediation as one of his top three priorities. In three weeks Dr. Dooley and Dr. Snyder will meet with the senator. It might be a good time to talk about funding for research.*
- *How to use plastic more responsibly?*
- *Most people are already on board in this issue. It makes it easier because the push is not coming from academia.*
- *Take advantage of URI research and scholarship capabilities*
- *Talk about how our research could support the idea that national and international policies is required to combat the issue.*
- *How do we develop that sense of helping others? We should identify: 1)who is getting sick and 2) what are the areas where people are getting sick the most as a result of plastic exposure?*
- *Identify which URI communities use plastic the most and work with them to reduce their usage; maybe offer them water bottles with plastic harms printed on them.*
- *Research Narragansett bay for the presence of plastic. Also think about how to support local compagnies to make sure the results of the research does not negatively impact their businesses.*
- *Build a generation of more responsible consumers by education our students.*
- *URI should: require that all vendors use aluminium instead of plastic or maybe remove all vending machines.*

2. How does work in this topic open up research/scholarly activity <u>across disciplines</u>? - Who is already working on this topic?

3. *What is the right breadth of areas to be covered?*

4. *What are the University's strengths that would build out this topic well?*

5. *What areas of the topic would be a main focus for URI?*