

Faculty Professional Development Program Debriefing:

By: Tyrone Jackson

It is hard to fathom something when you or an associate of yours doesn't have a concept of what that something is. That was my experience before the sustainability conference in Otzenhausen, Germany. I went through my checklist of items for travel: passport, toiletries and clothes but I wasn't prepared for what I was going to experience. Upon arriving to Frankfurt we were greeted and ushered to our bus that would take us to the Academy. I remember glancing out the window of the bus in a haze, due to jet lag, thinking—"the landscape is not much different than America". For the first hour of travel, the topography wasn't much different from the Blue Ridge Mountains in Georgia and then I saw fields of gigantic wind turbines. I sat up, pondered about why I didn't see this in Georgia. My curiosity was piqued and at that moment wanted to learn more. We arrived at the EAU and gratefully checked into our rooms, freshened up and began our first session. After introductions, the speaker told us that "we are one large world planet—we must solve this together". Overcoming nationalistic views was the top of the order. I realized that Americans are part of a world team, in which Georgia is a subset, Kennesaw another, then myself. What is my role in everyday life, as an educator? Initially I was overwhelmed, climate change, forestry, inequality, consumption patterns, the topics one by one seemed to give me a headache. Wow, the first day! I went to my room, pleased at the little things that I saw—recycled materials, environmentally friendly toiletries, led lights, liquid soap, and automatic switches. I went to sleep eager to

absorb as much as I could the next day. At a wonderful breakfast that was provided by the EAO, I interacted with others from KSU and learned about their different disciplines. It was a bit of irony that we had to travel 9 hours to meet each other when on campus we are only buildings away from each other. I met two members of the architecture/engineering department and ran an idea that I had about green practice rooms. Immediately one of the engineers called over a construction specialist and asked him what materials were sound proof or wouldn't transfer sound. I was amazed at how a simple idea that I had guarded, was now being talked about in ways I didn't even imagine. It's in the uniqueness of this situation that I thought, "KSU could be a leader in this field." As a team we discussed the earth system, our common future and the limits to growth. Our group of professors began asking questions, we were on the verge of solving problems, we were stocking up all the knowledge we could in order to save the planet! The next day we were met with a challenge—"The U.S. needs 5 times the planet's demand for energy." Oh no! That's me. I wrote it down, challenged myself to do better. Like a bad VCR player, I saw myself leaving lights on, wasting food, (drinking) cases of water bottles. How could I save the big issues if I wasn't doing my part at home, on the job? What was my Ecological footprint? Some members of our team were already practicing conservation—I was a little ashamed but gleaned from them effective things to change in my daily life. (When I got home, I bought a water bottle that I refill at the drinking fountains at KSU and encouraged my students to do the same). The next day we had a field trip to an organic farm—everything was top notch. We saw how the farmer transformed a bunker in to a warehouse to store food and vegetables.

Our food operations specialist eyes lit up and he began asking questions, I was proud to be a part of such a knowledgeable group of people. Over the next several days we visited windmills, pumping stations, Institutes for climate, attended more lectures, and bonded with our group and our hosts. What a wonderful opportunity. It changed our lives. We need other professors from KSU to come out—how many problems could we solve in Kennesaw, Georgia, America, and the World? You see, I never knew that this trip would affect me this way. That haze that I had, became crystal clear and I snickered thinking that the next group will feel the same way before enlightenment. I highly recommend that this program continues and that other professors get the opportunity to learn about “Sustainable Development”. I do truly believe that because of this program, Kennesaw State University could be a leader in doing our part as a responsible institution that seeks to save the planet.