



BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE AMERICAN CENTER FOR LCA

**INCREASING KNOWLEDGE AND PROMOTING THE USE OF
LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT IN THE UNITED STATES**

2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **American Center for Life Cycle Assessment (ACLCA)** was formed in 2001 to increase knowledge and use of life cycle assessment (LCA). It has operated since then gradually developing programs in support of the LCA community. This document describes how ACLCA will operate in the future to meet expanding needs of its constituents.

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) LCA is incorporated widely today as an important tool for policy, environmental marketing and industrial decision-making globally, and it is increasingly used for the same purposes in the United States.

ACLCA is managed by a five-member executive committee, with a cross-section of representation from the non-governmental organization (NGO), academia, government, and consulting and industry sectors. The Executive Committee is supported by a distinguished advisory council of individuals who represent the range of interests and expertise in the field of LCA.

The ACLCA promotes the use of LCA through **direct contacts** with key individuals in government, industry, academia and the non-profit sectors. It also supports dissemination of knowledge of LCA through a strong **web presence**, and through electronic and in-person LCA **conferences and workshops**. The ACLCA holds annual conferences and certifies LCA professionals.

ACLCA is taking up the role of providing more active policy and technical guidance and educational support.

The work will be done through a system of committees led by volunteers and supported by paid staff. Some of these committees already exist while others are new, and provide a new venue for those wishing to be active in the field.

ACLCA Committees

Executive Committee	Policy Committee
Advisory Council	Product Category Rule Committee
Conference Committee	Technical Committee
Certification Committee	Educational Committee
US LCI Database Committee	Membership Committee

The ACLCA is a program of the Institute for Environmental Research and Education (IERE), a non-profit 501c3 organization with offices in Washington State. The ACLCA is funded through a combination of grants, fees and membership.



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1 BACKGROUND AND NEED

1.1 *The Role of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) in Decision-Making*

LCA is a holistic yardstick of environmental performance. The method is a science-based assessment of the environmental impacts of products and services. LCA captures relevant environmental impacts from cradle to grave thereby providing comprehensive information on such issues as human health, ecological health, climate change, land use, and resource depletion. LCA is a flexible tool that provides vital support to environmental decision-making.

Several documents developed in the 1990s under the auspices of the International Organization for Standardization (The ISO 14040 series) describe the general LCA approach and the issues that are involved in conducting LCA. ISO 14044 defines LCA as the “compilation and evaluation of the inputs, outputs and the potential environmental impacts of a product system throughout its life cycle.” The ISO standards have established worldwide recognition of LCA as an important and viable environmental management tool. LCA provides the basis of an informed approach to environmental decision making.

Since the 1990s, there has been a remarkable growth in the field of LCA.

- A recent internet search on “Life cycle assessment” and “environment” yielded 289,000 hits.
- The use of LCA as a tool for determining “carbon footprint” has become commonplace, and the methods have been formalized in the British Standards Institute publically available standard PAS 2050, the World Resources Institute Protocols and in the soon to be finalized ISO 14067 standard.
- The development in 2006 of the ISO 14025 standard on environmental product declarations has permitted nations to develop legal requirements for both carbon footprints and more comprehensive LCA-based ecolabels.
- Many companies are making use of LCA as the basis of their sustainability programs, with Wal-Mart and the retail/consumer products community leading the way.
- Several industry groups and non-governmental organizations have developed LCA-based tools.
- The ACLCA annual meeting has been growing at a rate in excess of 30% per year, with over 500 participants expected in 2010.

❖ **LCA supports the concept of sustainability and sustainable development.**

On May 31, 2000, Ministers of the Environment from countries around the world adopted the Malmo Declaration, which states, “... We have at our disposal the human and material resources to achieve sustainable development, not as an abstract concept, but as a concrete reality. Our efforts must be linked to the



development of cleaner and more resource-efficient technologies for a life-cycle economy...” LCA, life cycle management, and life cycle thinking have been identified as key and important tools to achieve sustainable development.

❖ **LCA supports science-based legislation that leads to overall environmental improvement, not impact shifting.**

Because LCA is comprehensive in scope, it captures issues related to exchanging environmental impacts from one type or one environmental compartment or location in the life cycle to another. LCA can inform the public policy process so that laws and regulations assure overall environmental improvement, not improvement in one area at the cost of another.

❖ **LCA provides a logical framework for corporations to manage their environmental aspects and issues.**

Corporations employing LCA as an environmental management tool discover opportunities to decrease environmental burden and reduce resource consumption, often leading to cost savings and value increases. Furthermore, LCA provides a framework to identify the environmental challenges facing a new or proposed product or service, as well as providing a yardstick that can compare environmental performance between disparate business options.

❖ **LCA engages the Public in environmental decision-making.**

LCA provides a systematic approach to capturing stakeholder input. At the same time, while LCA can be challenging to perform, its output is often put in a format that is easy to understand. In this way, LCA is a very valuable tool to engage and educate the public. By capturing public and expert concerns throughout the life cycle, environmental performance information is organized into a handful of performance indicators. Thus, LCA provides a system to encourage public input into decision-making at all levels of the public and private sectors. LCA can be used to inform the public about the environmental performance of products and influence their purchasing decisions.

LCA can be used as a framework to systematically capture public input at an early stage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process. The nature of LCA’s mathematical framework makes the thorniest NEPA issues related to cumulative effects disappear. In this way, LCA serves many of the needs of NEPA compliance at a lower cost.

❖ **LCA provides a framework to identify where research dollars should be spent.**

LCA is a flexible tool that accommodates new and comprehensive information and science. Because LCA is an iterative process, it’s a tool that can integrate up to date information. Thus LCA can be used to identify science, technology, and



infrastructure gaps helping to focus research expenditures for environmental science and engineering.

1.2 LCA Activities Abroad and in the United States

1.2.1 Europe

Europe has been a leader in LCA research and application. LCA is commonly used for environmental management and policy in Europe, where its output is called an ecoprofile. European companies and governments use ecoprofiles for marketing, permitting and environmental management.

Europe has several LCA national centers in member states. The activities of these centers are coordinated with government policy. Several LCA databases have been developed in Europe and represent European industrial practices. The European platform on LCA is ramping up efforts to develop Life Cycle Inventory data through a comprehensive outreach program both inside and outside the EU.

European practitioners have been especially influential in the United Nations (UNEP) SETAC Life Cycle Initiative, which has focused on sustainable consumption and production.

1.2.2 Asia and Asia Pacific

In addition to activities in Europe, LCA is currently being embraced in other areas of the world, notably Japan, India and Korea, which have active professional LCA societies.

Japan is a leader in LCA and has held EcoBalance conferences every other year since 1994. The Life Cycle Assessment Society of Japan was formed in 1996. Its members include industrial associations, corporations and individuals. The Japanese Federal government has spent the equivalent of US\$ 60 Million to develop the national LCA database.

Due largely to support from the Japanese government, LCA programs have been developed in several other Asian states, including China, Malaysia and Korea.

Australia has an active LCA community as well, complete with regular conferences, an ecolabel program and the beginnings of an LCI database.



1.2.3 Central and South America

The Central and South American countries have become active in the LCA field over the last several years. There is a SETAC-UNEP Life Cycle Initiative group active there and there as well as a non-profit group called ALCALA, headquartered in Costa Rica that supports LCA policy and conferences in Latin America. Efforts are underway to develop life cycle inventories in Latin America, with quite active programs in Brazil and Argentina.

1.2.4 Canada & Mexico

Both Canada and Mexico have active LCA research programs. In Canada, the CIRAI has organized universities in Quebec to form a research coalition that has been very successful at raising the visibility of LCA. In Mexico, CADIS and ITAM are research centers that are leading in LCA in the country. Both Canada and Mexico are working on developing national Life cycle inventories.

1.2.5 Global Efforts

The UNEP-SETAC Life Cycle Initiative has taken on the work of promoting LCA and building capacity in the developing world. They have developed working groups in Africa South America and continue to actively support LCA development world-wide from their headquarters in Paris, France.

1.2.6 United States

In the USA, the life cycle effort has largely been led by industry. For example, aluminum, steel, copper, glass, plastic, cement and forest product industry associations have performed life cycle inventories and made them publicly available. Several companies have published LCAs of their own products, often as support for environmental product declarations as have representatives of the forest and building products industries. For example, the Construction Specification Institute has a “green format” based on life cycle thinking. Company-specific database and assessment activities have also emerged in the electronics and automotive industries.

The United States Federal government has several programs directly or indirectly related to LCA

- The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) developed the US LCI Inventory Database, with a goal of providing life cycle inventory information about US processes. This program is currently being re-vamped. The private sector has contributed its “cradle-to-gate” LCI data to the US LCI Database.
- The U.S. EPA’s *Environmentally Preferable Products Program* requires as part of its guidelines that multi-attribute qualities of products over their life cycle be assessed.



- Several executive orders have required federal facilities to implement LCA in their programs. A recent executive order (13514) requires all federal agencies to report scope 1 and 2 carbon footprints and plan for scope 3 (LCA-based) carbon footprints.
- USDA biobased products program requires that products seeking preferential purchase undergo LCAs.
- The US EPA National Risk Management Laboratory has developed several tools for LCA, such as the TRACI impact tool and the LCAccess web portal.
- The National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST) developed and support the BEES program (Building for Environmental and Economic Sustainability). This program is an LCA tool that started with LCAs and LCCs (life cycle costing) of building components and has expanded to bio-based materials.
- The Energy Independence Act of 2007 required that LCAs be performed on biofuels and that agencies of the federal government show that such alternate fuels had a lower carbon footprint than conventional fuels before adopting or funding them. The Energy Acts currently under consideration in the US Congress (in January 2010) call out carbon footprinting in both the House and Senate versions.

State and local governments have been taking a closer look on how to incorporate LCA principles.

- The California greenhouse gas program is based on a life cycle approach to carbon footprinting.
- The State of Oregon is using LCA as a routine tool in its waste management program.
- Many States and municipalities incorporate Life cycle thinking into their green purchasing programs.
- King County, Washington uses LCA in its sustainability tracking program, as required by ordinance.

Several not-for-profits are using LCA as a tool to support their missions.

- The Green Building Initiative has developed Green Globes, a building rating program that incorporates life cycle assessment.
- The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) incorporates LCA in their Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating program.
- The Athena Institute has a long history of LCA in the building products industries.
- The Green Guide has recently begun a program for Environmental product Declarations.
- The “Good Guide” references LCA in its program.
- The Construction Specifications Institute’s Green Format references LCA.
- Ecotrust performs LCAs in support of their sustainable agriculture program.



- The Food Alliance and Greenseal are both investigating LCA as part of their Type I ecolabelling programs.
- GreenBlue used LCA in its sustainable packaging program.
- Clean Air-Cool Planet has expanded its focus from greenhouse gas emissions to full LCA in its latest tool to calculate the impacts of campus food.
- [American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers](#) has developed ASHRAE Standard 189 – a Standard for High-Performance Green Building Except Low-Rise Residential Building which includes the use of LCA
- The International Code Council has nearly completed the International Green Construction Code, which also includes life cycle considerations

LCA is beginning to be important in the retail industry. Walmart's sustainability program is based on life cycle assessment. Several other retailers are investigating LCA as a tool to educate consumers and as an aide to their own sustainability programs.

These efforts in the United States provide the beginning of what is needed to develop a comprehensive platform to build capacity and disseminate knowledge of LCA in the United States.

The results of these activities will support the competitive advantage of corporations and governmental bodies in the United States, both financially and in terms of environmental quality and security. In recognition of this, the United States is involved in a number of centralized efforts in which LCA is a part of a larger initiative.

2 MISSION AND ACTIVITIES OF ACLCA

2.1 Mission Statement

The **American Center for Life Cycle Assessment (ACLCA)** was formed in 2001 to increase capacity, knowledge and use of life cycle assessment (LCA). ACLCA's specific goals include:

- ❖ Increase awareness of and promote the adoption of LCA and the life cycle approach among academia, industry, government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
- ❖ Support education and outreach through conferences, online educational opportunities, information exchange and other media;
- ❖ Advocate for quality assurance, peer review and transparency of life cycle studies;
- ❖ Support the presence of underrepresented American groups, e.g. students and teachers, in national and international conferences and other forums related to LCA; and
- ❖ Facilitate interaction within the LCA community.



Academia, governments, not-for-profits (NGOs), consultants and industry are all interested in the application of life cycle approaches as they provide tools to achieve their various goals. As a result, ACLCA has a broad-based constituency to serve, and its activities must support these diverse needs.

This business plan was approved by the ACLCA Advisory Council in February 2010. It will be revised at least every five years, or more frequently if the advisory council so requests.

2.2 Needs Assessment

ACLCA has the following audiences with separate needs.

Academia's needs include:

- Proposal and article partners
- Educational materials
- Funding sources for research
- Student recognition through contests
- Employer connections for student placement

Government's needs include:

- Policy analyses
- Education of legislators and other public servants
- Model legislation and regulation
- Assistance to support sustainable purchasing efforts

NGO needs include:

- Guidance and support for stakeholder inputs into studies
- Assurance of transparency and reproducibility of LCA studies
- A code of ethics of LCA practitioners

Industry needs include:

- Opportunity for market development and growth
- Mechanisms to support customer inquiries about the environmental characteristics of their products
- Cost reduction and process optimization
- Credibility of their published reports
- Source of LCA-knowledgeable employees
- LCA data and tools



Consultants' needs include:

- Opportunity to meet potential clients
- Opportunity to prove capability/credibility
- Education/capacity improvement opportunity
- High quality LCA guidance
- Source of new employees
- LCA data and tools

The Public's needs include

- Information about LCA, what it is and what it can and cannot do
- Assurance of the quality and independence of LCA studies
- Support for understanding LCA results
- Education on how LCA can support their sustainability aspirations

Purchasing agents, specifiers and sustainable purchasing organizations' needs include:

- Clear guidance on how to distinguish good quality from low quality LCA studies
- National infrastructure to support sustainable purchasing activities
- Support for understanding LCA results

2.3 ACLCA Activities

To support these diverse constituents, ACLCA has developed these programs:

- 1) The LCA Annual Conference, held annually, and growing at over 30% per year. This conference consistently brings together all the ACLCA constituents and provides a venue for cross-fertilization within the LCA field;
- 2) An Ethics statement for LCA professionals;
- 3) Financial support for student to attend the conference. In 2009, 45 students received subsidies to attend the conference, much of it aimed at under-represented students (women and people of color);
- 4) Life Cycle Assessment Certified Professionals the world's first certification program conforming to international standards on certification of persons. This certification allows an independent verification of LCA professionals so that non-professionals can distinguish professionals from non-professionals in the field;
- 5) Regular program for outreach to business and government organizations: ACLCA staff appears at dozens of locations every year for the purpose of promoting the use of LCA;
- 6) Policy commentary: The ACLCA advisory committee comments on US government policy actions with respect to LCA;
- 7) The U.S. EPA has recently joined with the American Center for Life Cycle Assessment and others to begin the process of infrastructure development for Product Category Rules, further supporting LCA in the U.S.;
- 8) The ACLCA website at Icacenter.org has a wealth of information for the expert and the non-expert;



9) ACLCA provides seminars and webinars on different topics for LCA.

3 ORGANIZATION OF ACLCA

ACLCA has been formed as a program of the Institute for Environmental Research and Education (IERE) a 501c3 organization, with offices in Washington State

The work of ACLCA is carried out by its committees, composed of volunteers and supported by paid staff.

3.1 Executive Committee

Currently Antoinette Stein (IERE), Scott Matthews (Carnegie Mellon University), Michael Deru (U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Lab), Mike Levy (American Chemistry Council) and Tom Gloria (Industrial Ecology) form the Executive Committee, which is responsible for general direction of the day-to-day activities of ACLCA and ensuring that the efforts fulfill ACLCA's mission. The directors speak informally with each other often, and meet by scheduled conference call on a regular basis. These discussions are documented with minutes. Terms are for three years, renewable: failure to attend meetings is cause for removal.

3.2 Advisory Council

ACLCA has engaged a large advisory council spanning the range of practice and interest in LCA in the United States. The Advisory Council, like the executive committee, seeks to be representative of the diversity of stakeholders in the LCA community, although no hard and fast rules exist for coverage. The advisory council advises and provides leadership to address issues of policy and strategy for ACLCA. Its goal is to support the ACLCA's mission by providing ideas, manpower and two-way linkage to other organizations and communities. The advisors provide the kernel around which all ACLCA activities grow.

The ACLCA Advisors must be members in good standing of the ACLCA, and should represent a cross section of the LCA community: industry, academia, consultants, government and NGOs. Tenure is indefinite, but failure to attend planned meetings is cause for removal from the council.

The Advisors do most of their work via teleconference, on an as-needed basis. They meet in person annually at the ACLCA conference. Total amount of time is variable depending on the issues being raised, and the individual interests of the members. The Council plays a critical role in reviewing ACLCA activities to ensure that the results support the mission. This includes but is not limited to networking with each other and with individuals outside ACLCA, chairing other ACLCA committees and opening doors



for ACLCA to find opportunities for promoting LCA and for funding for ACLCA. A current list of members of the Advisory Council is shown in Table 2.

Close interaction between the Advisory Council and Executive Committee is very important to keep the activities of ACLCA in line with its mission as well as in producing quality outputs. The advisory council is not a board of directors. The decision about any action rests with the executive committee, with oversight of the board of directors of IERE.

3.3 Conference Committee

Every year, a new committee is convened to plan the next LCA annual conference. The committee is responsible for several tasks including:

- Choosing a conference theme
- Assisting in identifying opening and closing plenary speakers
- Identifying and executing educational opportunities for the conference
- Assisting with the social event planning
- Soliciting abstracts and special session proposals by disseminating announcements among committee member networks
- Assisting with fundraising
- Reviewing special session proposals
- Reviewing abstracts
- Promoting attendance at the conference
- Developing and implementing awards
- Where appropriate, assisting with details of the conference (e.g. chairing sessions).

The work of the committee is primarily carried out through conference calls and emails/internet, with some physical activities related to the conference itself. For most committee members, the planning activities requires 6 to 10 hours of conference calls and about the same amount of other work spread out over the year. For those who are located where the conference will be held, the work may be twice this amount.

3.4 US LCI Database Committee

This committee supports the National Renewable Energy Laboratory's (NREL) LCI database activities, with the goal of fulfilling the aspirations of the [Camp Long Declaration](#). The committee meets approximately monthly by phone, and develops draft technical documents.



3.5 Certification Committee

This committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining the quality of the LCACP certification, and any other certification ACLCA may develop. They meet monthly by phone to develop exam questions and address other quality issues for the certification. They meet annually at the conference.

Committee membership is for a staggered three year period, with members split among LCA providers, consumers and interested parties, none of which can be more than 50% of committee membership. Full details about the [certification management system](#) can be found at the ACLCA website. This committee meets regularly by phone and annually at the LCA conference.

3.6 New Committees

ACLCA is also starting additional committees to expand its support of the LCA community. These committees will include advisory council participation and will solicit ACLCA members and other interested parties outside of the advisory council to do the work. As a first task, the chairs for each committee will be identified and will develop a plan for operations for the committee.

3.6.1 Policy Committee

This group of individuals is responsible for identifying policy issues in the scope of ACLCA and forming draft policy approaches to be taken. Their recommendations are to be taken into the advisory council for discussion and acted on by the executive committee and staff.

3.6.2 Product Category Rules (PCR) committee

This group supports the development and management of a national PCR repository resident within ACLCA. Among other things it develops procedures on how the repository should be run, and guidance for organizations to become better program managers and to develop PCRs for storage in the repository. It performs outreach to interested parties to assure that the national need for PCRs is met.

IERE has an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with ASTM-international related to PCR generation, and this committee is empowered to work with ASTM as needed to accomplish the goals laid out in the MOU.



3.6.3 Technical Committee

This group organizes workshops on current LCA topics with a goal to provide guidance on LCA technical issues. Examples of technical issues to be addressed include:

- Allocation methods: when and where different ones are applicable;
- Methodology for impact assessment;
- Conventions for naming of unit processes;
- Approaches for addressing multiple functions of product systems;
- Coordination with ASTM-international on relevant standards.

The actual issues taken on will be reviewed by the advisory council, and may differ from these mentioned here.

3.6.4 Outreach Committee

The role of this committee is to increase membership of ACLCA and to provide a conduit to members to raise issues of import to them. It will also work to increase communications to the LCA community and to seek support broadly.

3.6.5 Education Committee

This committee will organize education and outreach to NGOs and other organizations about LCA and will also consider education tools for the LCA profession. Their work should include documents and presentation materials, and perhaps webinars. For example, the committee may take up the task of writing/editing an LCA textbook.

In order to avoid conflict of interest related to its certification activities, and in conforming to its certification management system, ACLCA will not undertake direct primary education programs for preparing LCA professionals for certification.



4 MEMBERSHIP/FUNDING REVENUE GOALS

The ACLCA developed a 2010 program and operating budget to support its programs and mission, and utilizes a combination of member dues, certification fees, grants and conference revenues to meet program expenses.

Potential Members: There are three types of membership categories:

- Regular members – non-student individuals
- Student members, from universities and high schools (also high school teachers)
- Organizational members, from corporations, industry groups, LCA consulting firms, universities, national and local governmental bodies

Membership fees are either for an individual or organizational member, and offer services for members only. For 2010 fiscal year, the annual membership fees are as follows:

Individual Members

Students and high school teachers:	\$20
Regular members:	\$75

Organizational Members

Platinum	\$30,000
Gold	\$10,000
Silver	\$ 5,000
Bronze	\$ 2,000

Table 1 below shows the benefits of membership.



Table 1 Benefits of Membership in the American Center for Life Cycle Assessment

	Annual Fees	Consulting support from ACLCA staff (person days)	Free Conference Registrations	Page in the conference packet	Scholarship/research fund contribution, recognition and access (intern, coop, hiring)	Speaking Space at the conference plenary	table top space at the conference	Logo on conference materials	Logo on LCAcenter website	Access to "members only" materials	Support LCA in the US	Support for ethical behavior in the LCA field
Platinum Membership	\$30,000	2	5	1.00	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Gold Membership	\$10,000	1	2	0.50			•	•	•	•	•	
Silver Membership	\$5,000	0.5	1	0.25				•	•	•	•	
Bronze Membership	\$2,000	0.5						•	•	•	•	
Individual Membership	\$75								•	•	•	

5. Resources of ACLCA

As a program of IERE, ACLCA is housed in the IERE offices in Vashon, Washington (outside Seattle). ACLCA will staff ACLCA with an operations manager and from existing staff. IERE is currently developing a sustainability center with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians in Tacoma, and will move ACLCA operations there when the building is complete, currently anticipated late in 2012. ACLCA will be staffed by employees of IERE, with assistance from the Executive Committee.



ACLCA’s primary resources lie in its reputation and its volunteers. The list of interested parties is approaching 1000, so ACLCA has a very good sampling of the LCA community both in the US and globally. IERE and ACLCA have together a reputation for integrity consistency and openness.

- Its conference is the only one in the world that brings together the entire range of the LCA community in a repeated format that is always managed by a single organization.
- It has a very strong set of advisors, shown in the table below. The advisors represent all the groups of constituents supported by ACLCA.
- The financial support of IERE permits volunteers to support ACLCA without incurring the liability that would exist were they to be fiscally responsible. Its 501(c)3 status makes IERE eligible for funding not otherwise available to a professional society.

Table 2 ACLCA Advisory Council Members

Name	Affiliation
Carina Alles/ Todd Krieger(alternates)	Dupont
Paul Bertram	Kingspan
Bob Boughton	State of California
Michael Deru	NREL
Nuno da Silva	PE Americas
Beverly Sauer	Franklin Associates
Roland Geyer	University of California, Santa Barbara
Tom Gloria	Industrial Ecology Consultants
Gary Jakubcin	Owens Corning
Anne Landfield Grieg	Four Elements Consulting, LLC
Mike Levy	American Chemistry Council
Lise Laurin	Earthshift
Margaret Mann	NREL
H. Scott Matthews	Carnegie Mellon University
Omar Romero	ITAM, Mexico
Rita Schenck	IERE
Antoinette Stein	IERE
Wayne Trusty	Athena Institute

