

Green Movement Inspires Campus Curricula

Guest Editor: Roger Munger

Search the Internet using the keyword *green* and you will find over 110 million sites in 0.15 second. You will find advice, blogs, conferences and festivals, research reports, not-for-profit and for-profit organizations, and guides to green travel, green pregnancy, green buildings, and green weddings (as well as information on the Green Bay Packers, John Deere enthusiasts, the color green, and people with the last name of Green). The green movement has been slowly building, mostly behind the scenes, over the past century, exploding into mainstream consciousness and on our campuses in the past decade. For example, all fifty states are now represented in the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (see <http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org>).

Although our campuses have a long tradition of offering courses on topics such as ecology, animal rights, social justice, and sustainable business practices, it has been only recently that such topics have gained critical acceptance and popular appeal. Green-inspired curricula have taken root on our campuses not as a passing pop-culture trend but as a Klaxon warning us to take action. Overwhelming data show that we are living in a time of accelerating decline: decline in our physical environment; decline in the fabric of our society; decline in the living cells of our bodies. Such decline has created a sense of urgency on our campuses and in our communities—a call to action.

In this issue, authors focus on specific programs, courses, and disciplines as they discuss the value of using green-inspired curricula to promote healthy communities, both locally and globally. As you read these articles, you will likely notice three recurrent themes: (1) green-inspired curricula empower our students to be agents of change; (2) green-inspired curricula facilitate partnership between urban universities and local communities; (3) green-inspired curricula focus on outcomes and achievements.

In my article, “Green Writing Curriculum: Showing Your Students How to Make a Difference,” I suggest that by including a green-inspired writing assignment, unit, or course in your curriculum you can show your students how writing can move people to take action. Focusing on the details of a green writing course offered through an English department, I provide resources and suggestions for teaching students across the disciplines how they can use writing to be agents of change in their communities.

Lili Vélez and Jane Wolfson, in “Preparing Students for the Environmental Workforce,” expand on the idea of students as problem-solvers in their community. They describe how Chesapeake Bay, which geographically and culturally shapes metropolitan Baltimore, provides a local context for students to examine global environmental challenges. Through interdisciplinary learning, civic-engagement opportunities, and a strong emphasis on writing and reflection, Towson University has

strengthened its connection to its metropolitan community and given its students the intellectual tools to change behaviors and shape policy.

John Abell, in “Logos, Ethos, Pathos, and Ecos: Neighborhood Housing Design Research and Development,” examines neighborhood working family housing:

Neighborhood working family housing is, like the miner’s canary in a coal mine, an early warning sign of the effects of globalization on the working family. Accessible and livable family housing is central to family well-being and neighborhood ecos.

Highlighting linkages between environmental sustainability and social justice, Abell reports the results of a study that asked what helpful role metropolitan university teaching, learning, and scholarship might play in sustainable neighborhood housing. Three neighborhood prototypes are presented.

In “Sustainability Education as a Catalyst for University and Community Partnerships,” Shane Lishawa, Adam Schubel, Alison Varty, and Nancy Tuchman illustrate the potential for green-focused curricula to create successful relationships between community partners and the university. The authors share the results of the Loyola University Chicago Biodiesel Program (LUCBP), including a revenue-generating business venture with a campus transportation provider and a local restaurant, a student-built lab, a continuing education program with Chicago Parks District employees, renewable energy curricula for area high schools, and a \$75,000 EPA grant.

Social Entrepreneurship—recognizing a social problem and then seeking ways to bring about change—is the focus of “Teaching Environmental Entrepreneurship at an Urban University: Greenproofing,” by Kevin Foster, Jonatan Jelen, and Anasa Scott. Reporting on an interdisciplinary partnership among faculty in management, engineering, and earth science, the authors show how a student-led environmental consultancy, specializing in green roofs, empowered students to design their own solutions to the problems they and their communities faced.

Lynn Pelco, director of the Service-Learning Program at Virginia Commonwealth University, and her colleagues, Mark Wood, Helen Aspaas, and Edward Crawford, argue that service-learning courses at urban universities should play a vital role in the promotion of sustainable urban environments in “Green Service-Learning Across the Curriculum: Model Courses at an Urban Research University.” They describe service-learning courses in geography, religious studies, and biology, as well as GreenStem@VCU, an outreach program for teachers from low-resource middle schools. The authors show how the integration of green service-learning projects in natural science, social science, and humanities courses contributes to students developing an ecological worldview.

Philip Stoesser, in his article, “A Green Auditing Course for Undergraduate Students: The York University Experience,” shares his experiences as instructor of York University’s senior-level course on environmental auditing. With a sprawling footprint of 540 acres within metropolitan Toronto, Canada, and a student population over 50,000, York University provides students enrolled in this course with a variety of on-campus environmental issues to be audited. Highlighting significant recommendations that have been implemented on campus, Stoesser emphasizes that ongoing support and involvement of university administration is critical to the success of the course. Such improvements result in York University modeling responsible environmental stewardship.

In the final article, “Beyond Greening the Business School Curriculum,” Lilly Lancaster and Sarah Rook report the results of their investigation into efforts of business schools to produce business school graduates with new skill sets, motivation, and values. Lancaster and Rook examine how business schools have created new curricula that are responsive to the economic, social, and ecological issues that are increasingly valued in corporate decision-making. New models for curricula are discussed as well as metrics for evaluation.

Together these eight articles illustrate the versatility and power of green-inspired curricula. Topics covered under the umbrella of *green* offer faculty multiple perspectives from which to introduce course content from across the disciplines. Once introduced into a course, green topics provide a clear opportunity to forge partnerships with the local community. In the end, courses making use of green-inspired curricula engage students with civic life beyond the campus and provide them with the intellectual skills to address global challenges in their local communities.

When Barbara Holland first approached me about editing an issue of *Metropolitan Universities* journal focusing on green-inspired curricula, we planned on a single issue. However, the response to our call for article proposals was significantly greater than we expected. The number and quality of proposed articles helped us decide to expand the coverage of the topic to include two back-to-back issues, with the second issue in your hands right now. Unfortunately, we were not able to include all worthy articles even with two issues. To give you an even better idea of the great green courses and programs at urban universities, I would like to mention a few that, although commendable, we just did not have space for in this final issue.

Faculty researchers are working hard to meet the challenges facing our planet. For example, Marcus Felson, a professor of criminal justice at Rutgers University, is pioneering a way to reduce crimes against the environment. Jennie Stephens and Mary-Ellen Boyle are investigating ways a community-university partnership, the Institute for Innovation in Energy and Sustainability, enhances learning and sustainable economic development. At York University, Adrina Ambrosii is examining the social disparities in forest cover in Canadian urban areas and the lack of an urban forest education in Canadian universities.

Green courses across the disciplines, many with service-learning components, are inspiring students, addressing needs in the community, and preparing students to be leaders in changing our planet. Engineering students enrolled in the Structural Analysis and Design program offered by the University of Houston Downtown learn environmentally friendly alternatives to traditional cement. English Professor Jim McGavran, UNC Charlotte, teaches an “Easy to be Green?” course that seeks to instill environmental awareness in first-year students. Similarly, composition students at the University of Texas at Arlington have partnered with Arlington Parks and Recreation to participate in community events. Social justice and ethical and sustainable food practices are the focus of Florida Gulf Coast University’s Sociology of Food course. Kurt Stanberry, Professor of Business and Law at University of Houston Downtown, teaches students how to start their own business and become certified MWBE (Minority and Women Business Enterprises).

In addition to specific green courses, some departments have included green themes across whole programs and degrees. For instance, the Pratt Institute of Art and Design in New York City promotes a sustainable economy through its Design Management graduate program. Likewise, a partnership between Buffalo State College and local not-for-profit Buffalo ReUse provides graduate students enrolled in the Student Personnel Administration program opportunities to contribute to the community. Faculty at Washington State University Spokane’s Interdisciplinary Design Institute (IDI) have been using green curricula for more than fifteen years. The British Columbia Institute of Technology’s School of Construction and the Environment committed three years ago to incorporating sustainability in all of its curricula. The University of South Carolina Upstate integrates sustainability themes into its Spanish-language courses. Portland State University’s Sustainability in Engineering course reflects the American Society of Civil Engineers’ Code of Ethics, which mentions sustainability in its first fundamental canon.

Organizations providing services to urban universities offer faculty and students resources to grow and support green-inspired curricula. Affiliated with Cambridge College, the Institute for Humane Education seeks to “redefine the purpose of education so that all students gain the knowledge, tools, and motivation to be ‘solutionaries’ for a peaceful, sustainable, and humane world through whatever careers they choose” (www.humaneeducation.org). The Northwest Earth Institute (www.nwei.org) has offered self-guided discussion courses highlighting sustainability to more than 100,000 people.

Universities are also playing a role in fostering greater synergy between campus and the local community. For over fourteen years, for example, Medgar Evers College has hosted an Annual Environmental Issues Conference. Mississippi State University is using the green movement as a springboard for change in the surrounding Starkville community. Regis College recently added a “Global Environmental Awareness” requirement to its core curriculum. Alexander Wait at Missouri State University is guiding the incorporation of sustainability into the university’s existing mission in

public affairs. Since 1993, Miami Dade College's Earth Ethics Institute has sought to integrate sustainability principles across the college curriculum.

The work of urban administrators, faculty, and community members is cause for optimism. Our campuses and communities are part of the largest movement in the history of our planet: caring people committed to ecological balance, animal rights, social justice, and sustainable economy. The contributors to these two green-inspired issues of *MUJ* have shown us how we can use the power of our faculty, students, and communities to take a leadership role in restoring our planet, revitalizing our communities, and improving the lives of all our planet's inhabitants. Deep down in our hearts, we each know what needs to be done. All you need are some ideas on how you can make a difference. And now you have them.

Author Information

Roger Munger, Ph.D. (Communication and Rhetoric, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), is associate professor of technical communication at Boise State University. His teaching and research interests include internships at socially just and environmentally sustainable companies, green writing, eco-friendly printing processes, service-learning, and publications management. He's also a vegan.

Roger Munger
1910 University Drive
Boise, ID 83725-1525
E-mail: rmunger@boisestate.edu
Telephone: 208-426-4211
Fax: 208-426-4373