

Executive Summary: Sustainability Teaching Circle

The purpose of the Sustainability Teaching Circle was to bring together faculty from various disciplines to discuss methods of teaching the issue of sustainability. The goals of the teaching circle were (1) to define and explain what sustainability means to us at GCSU and to explore how various fields use the word and concept in different ways, (2) to gather ideas and examples of what people at GCSU and at other campuses are doing to incorporate the issue of sustainability into their classrooms, (3) to develop teaching modules (self-contained lessons, student projects, etc.) that could be used by any faculty who wanted to add sustainability to their curriculum and (4) to share these modules with GCSU and the community; and each of these goals have been met by this group. The main product of this teaching circle has been the development of modules focused on sustainability. Currently, we have five sustainability teaching modules include single activities that could be done in one class period, projects that utilize community-based research, and full courses that focus on sustainability. Additionally, we have begun a directory of courses at GCSU that contain content on sustainability. These results were shared at a reception for GCSU faculty and staff and the Milledgeville community entitled "Sustainability: Bringing GCSU classes and Milledgeville community together".

Full Report for the Sustainability Teaching Circle at GCSU

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1. Introduction and Goals

The Sustainability Teaching Circle (STC) has been a very productive and successful endeavor. This group grew out of GCSU's Green Initiative, and fits in well with the recently approved Green Fee coming to our campus in future years. Clearly, sustainability is gaining popularity on our campus, but what is it? The purpose of this teaching circle was to bring together faculty from various disciplines to discuss methods and perspectives on teaching about the issue of sustainability. The main product of this teaching circle was the development of several teaching modules focused on sustainability. To achieve and share the products of these goals, several sub-goals needed to be met. Our sub-goals were:

- 1) to define and explain what sustainability means to us at GCSU and to explore how various fields use the word and concept in different ways,
- 2) to gather ideas and examples of what people at GCSU and at other campuses are doing to incorporate the issue of sustainability into their classrooms,
- 3) to develop teaching modules (self-contained lessons, student projects, etc.) that could be used by any faculty who wanted to include sustainability in their curriculum and
- 4) to share these modules with the campus community.

Regarding these goals, we feel that we have been quite successful as will be outlined in the document below.

2. Process

Utilizing the teaching circle model, most of the work of the STC centered around lunch meetings. These times were used to collaborate, and often ideas would "take off" as each person added their own input and melded new ideas into what had previously been discussed. Since each person had completed research (or other assignments) *before* the meeting, each member was able to contribute meaningfully and no time was wasted. Assignments were planned as a group in the previous meeting, rather than being

handed down by one person. A key strength of this teaching circle was its focus of actions for its goals and objectives. This ensured that any assignments related directly to the outcomes of the group, and so members were unlikely to see the outside work as wasted time. In general the four sub-goals (shown above) were each covered in one meeting dedicated to that topic.

The STC also sought out collaborations to broaden our perspective of the issues, both in and outside of the official meeting times. This included GCSU faculty (e.g. several professors in the department of government and sociology) and administration (Provost Dr. Jordan). Although dissemination on campus was already a goal, Dr. Jordan highlighted the need to make sure that sustainability becomes a university focus rather than a fad. An idea along these lines would be creation of a sustainability certificate program (similar to the current leadership certificate program), but will require significant research and alignment of courses before it can become a reality. This may become a future project of the group.

3. Goals Met and Final Products

Of the goals listed above (section 1), all were met by the STC this semester. During our first lunch meeting, the group discussed definitions of sustainability from various perspectives ([goal 1](#)). This led to a definition that could be applied to the university (as well as to any community-based project) that was more all-encompassing than what any of us might have held previously. An excerpt from the opening statement at the STC's reception "Sustainability: Bringing GCSU classes and Milledgeville community together" reveals how the traditional definition of sustainability has been expanded.

Sustainability is best understood within a local and isolated context. At GCSU, our long-term relevance and very survival is dependent on the degree to which we consider the social, ecological, and economic implications of our actions and relationships within the university, the community, and other stakeholders. These elements exist in a constant state of flux, or change, and thus require a university environment that is also responsive to that change. However, traditional notions of the university as "The Institution" challenge a practical level of responsiveness and flexibility. We consider the university as an organism: living, breathing, growing, and evolving to improve our responsiveness to cultural and social needs.

[Beyond the university context], **sustainability** is an integrated and interconnected concept that draws on sociological, psychological, ecological, physical, and economic aspects of an organism and its local context.

For [goal 2](#), a list of courses at GCSU that contain sustainability content and models for incorporation of the topic currently used at other universities were gathered. The list of courses at GCSU was obtained by directly emailing faculty. Since a general "call" failed to generate a response, specific faculty and department chairs were targeted and asked via email for either class information and/or recommendations of other faculty within their department. This list will provide a start to a directory of courses at GCSU that contain content on sustainability, and can be found in the flyer for our reception ([Appendix 1](#)).

Five distinct teaching modules focusing on sustainability were developed by the STC ([goal 3](#)), and these represented the primary product of our teaching circle's efforts.

A teaching module was defined as a lesson, assignment, or project that could be easily adapted for multiple courses offered at GCSU and used by other faculty. Full courses were also included if their smaller assignments could be used in other courses, or if they could serve as a model for developing a new course on campus that is centered around sustainability. Each module (or course) fit into one of the following categories: (1) class activities, (2) course design, and (3) community-based research. The activities designed are listed below with their numbered category.

Mercury in the Environment (1) *Well to Wheels: Gasoline and Alternative Energy* (1)
Phytoremediation of Lead in the Environment (3) *Bioassessment with Algae-sustainable Producers* (3)
Animal, Vegetable, Human: The Science and Sociology of Your Food (2)

Another product of the work done in the sustainability teaching circle was the reception “Sustainability: Bringing GCSU classes and Milledgeville community together” held on campus, May 4th (goal 4). The purpose of this reception was to share the results of the STC and to discuss with others sustainability ideas to bring GCSU students and the Milledgeville community together. The invitation was sent via email and personal contact to GCSU faculty and many community groups (the Farmer’s market, Baldwin school administrators, the local community garden, etc.). After a brief introduction of our goals and definitions of sustainability, the floor was opened up for discussion. People outside of our circle introduced their community-based and/or sustainability related projects, and others asked questions about the various projects. The event was book-ended with snacks and a poster session, including a poster of modules created by the STC, as well as other undergraduate projects from GCSU. We believe the reception was well received and noted at least 18 people in attendance. These included GCSU faculty from several departments (environmental science, sociology, education), and multiple members of the Baldwin school district faculty and staff.

4. Final Insights

Through careful planning, focus, and hard work the STC was able to achieve all of its goals. In this way, many of the expected outcomes of the teaching circle were met. However, we also gained insights and inspiration that were unexpected. For example, the idea of the “university as an organism” really provided a way for us to look at GCSU and the need to keep changing and growing. Also, our interaction with the campus and Milledgeville communities gave us new ideas on how to better bring sustainability to courses so that we can maximize participation, while minimizing resistance. For example, our group received helpful feedback on better ways to gather information for our GCSU directory. At the reception, Karynne Kleine (in Education) stated that even using the term “sustainability” may cause some faculty or members of the community to feel that they are not included under that terminology due to it’s “green” connotation. Overall, this experience has proven to be highly successful and rewarding, and we would recommend the teaching circles model to any faculty member.

(See attached appendix)

Appendix 1. Flyer handed out at the STC reception “**Sustainability: Bringing GCSU classes and Milledgeville community together**”, May 4th, 2010, Georgia College & State University.

Number	Name	Description	Professor
PHSC 1100 (UGA)	(not currently offered)	application of those physics principles in regards to global issues, such as sustainability, recycling, population growth, climate change and possible solutions to these problems, such as renewable green energy sources.	Busche
SOCI 1121	Sociological Perspectives	Global Inequality and Population/Demography issues, discussion of problems (and possible solutions) with sprawl and a discussion of water resources and water scarcity, as well as some of the environmental consequences of population pressures in developed and developing countries.	McClure
SOCI 4950	Volatile Places: Jekyll Island Development (Maymester)	studying communities and environmental controversies as described in the text, "Volatile Places" by Valerie Gunter and Steve Kroll-Smith.	McClure
If you have courses to add or any changes to this list, please contact Kimberly Cossey at kimberly.cossey@gcsu.edu			

Sustainability Resources

Teaching Sustainability with the Earth Charter

This chapter appeared originally in Teaching Sustainability at Universities: Towards Curriculum Greening, Walter Leal Filho ed., published by Peter Lang © 2002.

By Richard M. Clugston, Wynn Calder & Peter Blaze Corcoran

Roundtable: Reluctant Professors

How can higher education leaders persuade foot-dragging faculty members to incorporate sustainability into their classrooms?

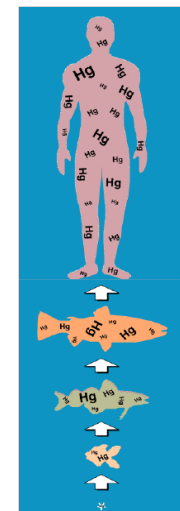
What Is Education For?

Six myths about the foundations of modern education,
and six new principles to replace them

by David Orr

One of the articles in [The Learning Revolution \(IC#27\)](#)
Winter 1991, Page 52

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2009-2010 CIRCLE ON TEACHING SUSTAINABILITY

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TUESDAY, MAY 4, 2010
GCSU NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM & PLANETARIUM
HERTY HALL

Number	Name	Description	Professor
BIOL 1120	Biodiversity	ecology and conservation biology are covered	Zehnder
BIOL 2800	Ecology	human modification of nutrient cycles, conservation biology	Zehnder
BIOL2800	Ecology	water conservation, biodiversity, sustainable urban ecology	Manoylov
BIOL5490	Phycology	water indicator development, diversity of freshwater primary producers	Manoylov
CHEM1212L	Principles of Chemistry Lab for Majors	Biodiesel - students make, purify, and analyze	Metzker
CRJU 4510	White Collar Crime	Environmental Crime	McDowell
ENSC 1000/1000L	Introduction to Environmental Science	sustainability is a theme running through the entire course	Zehnder
ENSC 4950	Alternative energy	alternative energy is theme of entire course	Zehnder
ENSC1000	Introduction to Environmental Sciences	resource and water sustainable uses and approaches	Manoylov
GEOG 3500-	Geography of Latin America		Oetter
GEOG 3500-	Geography of Africa		Oetter
GEOG 4080/5080-	Environmental History		Oetter
GEOG 4130/5130-	Wetland Environments		Oetter
GEOG 4400/5400-	Resource Use	sustainability is a theme running through the entire course	Oetter
GEOG 4450/5450-	Environment and Society		Oetter
HIST 4080	Environmental History		Oetter
IDST 2210	Ethics, Society & The Environment	contains some sustainability content	Blick
IDST 2405	Necessities of Life	This science course addresses various environmental and social issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. Themes have included AIDS, Climate Change and Food Systems.	Metzker
MGMT 6155	Business Ethics and Global Relations	sustainability plays a major role	Sams
MKTG 3161	Principles of Marketing		Sams
MKTG 4161	Marketing Research and Decision Science,	contains some sustainability content	Sams
MKTG 4166	Promotion and Advertising	social marketing, green marketing, sustainable products, and economic	Fontenot
MKTG 4175	International Marketing	sustainability plays a major role	Sams

Number	Name	Description	Professor
MKTG 4198	Strategic Marketing	social marketing, green marketing, sustainable products, and economic	Fontenot
MKTG 6161	Advance Marketing Theory and Application	sustainability plays a major role	Sams
MKTG 6161	Advanced Marketing Theory	social marketing, green marketing, sustainable products, and economic	Fontenot
	WebMBA Global and International Business	sustainability plays a major role	Sams
ODED 2110	Basic Outdoor Education Strategies	minimizing impact of outdoor travel and adventure activities including Leave No Trace principles, environmental ethics, etc.	Hobbs
ODED 2120	Theories and Foundations of Outdoor Education	historical and philosophical groundings of teaching and learning in and through the outdoors, Human-nature relationships, sense of place, place attachment, systems theory, etc.	Hobbs
ODED 3020	Challenge Course Management	environmental aspects of teaching outdoors/building in/with nature is a concept that is covered but not necessarily a specific lesson	Speelman
ODED 3210	Environmental Education Methods	opportunity to learn about sustainability. Students acquire 15 service hours working with others in environmental education (by teaching EE or participating in service projects like trail cleanups, etc.) has them going into the community and teaching students about the environment and learning the benefit of treading lightly	Eilers
ODED 4500	Ecological Connections in Outdoor Education	examining multiple social and non-human environmental issues including population dynamics, manufacturing, consumerism, climate change, environmental values and beliefs, environmentally responsible behaviors, etc.	Hobbs
ODED 6906	Outdoor Pursuits: Facilitation and Management	challenge course building that I need the students to walk away is safety considerations but where and when I can, we talk about the environmental concerns. I would say that it is more of a thread that comes through the class rather than a specific content area.	Speelman
ODED 6913	Principles of Field Leadership	personal/professional development of outdoor leaders, Designing learning experiences using the outdoors as modality and location for effecting positive change	Hobbs