Academic Forum on Sustainability

On April 18th, over 30 professionals came together representing 22 different departments and organizations. They worked to answer the following questions:

1. What do we want our students to learn about sustainability in their professional career and personal life skills?
2. What are the best mechanisms and tools to accomplish the goal of integrating sustainability in the curriculum?

The forum was coordinated by the Office of Sustainability and the University Senate. Co-sponsoring offices included the Office of the Provost, Student Association and Graduate Student Association. If you would like to be part of this conversation, please reach out to the Office of Sustainability at gogreen@albany.edu.

Key professional skill outcomes

- Students can contribute to practical solutions by their daily choices and actions
- Local actions can have global consequences
- Self-awareness and independence
- Be a contributor to the greater good
- Think about consequences and equity; indigenous peoples; global connections

Take home messages:

- Appreciate interconnectedness and biodiversity
- Sustainability is a necessary force in creating a unified and healthy community

Key personal skill outcomes

- Communication: expand conversation beyond your network
- Adaptability: understand your mistakes and learn from them
- Intersectionality: realize that your organization and career connect to your community and world
- Interdisciplinary: seek answers beyond your niche and think how you can learn from other disciplines

Take home messages:

- Envision, problem solve, question, be creative
- Understand issues systemically (historical, social, economic, cultural)
- Caring, kindness, compassion, equity

Mechanisms to achieve these outcomes

What faculty can do:

- Invest in solutions to connect students to their natural and cultural heritages
- More interdisciplinary instruction on sustainability—bring your expertise to the entire university and community
- Develop co-taught courses that foster community engagement
- Build sustainability into Challenges of the 21st Century general education credit

What the University at Albany can do:

- Incorporate the value of sustainability in an evaluation process similar to public engagement
- Build up undergraduate minor and create a major and graduate certificate in sustainability
- Offer/mandate sustainability course for students on campus
- Make it real—give students real paths to promote change on campus
- Reconstitution of the Office of Sustainability under President’s Office to be an autonomous organization
- Develop an institute: curriculum transformation institute