In the Midst of a Green Revolution on Metropolitan Campuses

Guest Editor: Roger Munger

For better or worse, I missed the cultural protests and social revolution occurring on college campuses and elsewhere across the United States in the 1960s. I wasn't even born yet when Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* focused public concern on the environmental dangers of indiscriminate spraying of DDT pesticide and, more generally, on how people affect the environment. Instead, I grew up in the 1980s, a decade of excess, yuppies, hair bands, and Reaganomics. Recycling, energy conservation, e. coli scares, organic food, and greenhouse gases just weren't on the public radar yet. If you wanted to eat organic or vegan foods, you had to grow it yourself or visit a specialty "health food" shop. On trips to these health food stores, my mom would point out a world of products that I had never seen at our local supermarket. Admittedly, I wasn't happy when my mom started substituting gorp, carob chips, and carrots for my Hostess Ding Dongs in my school lunches. However, it helped me learn early on that I have choices—healthy, animal-friendly, and environmentally sustainable ones—when it comes to eating and living my life.

Of course, the concern for the planet and all its inhabitants that crystallized in the 1960s never went away. It simmered for decades in grassroots activists, environmental organizations such as Friends of the Earth, and animal-rights advocates, only occasionally making its way to the nightly news or above the fold in national newspapers. That's just not the case anymore. Stories and images of melting glaciers, dead zones in the oceans, contaminated food recalls, energy shortages, and exploitation of human and natural resources in developing countries now confront us throughout our daily life. We think about renewable and alternate energy sources when we fuel up our vehicle. We learn about fair trade when we buy our coffee. We see food packaging with "vegan" labels at the market. We do business with companies located in certified green buildings. We recycle and bring our own shopping bags. Browsing at our local bookstore, we see shelves with guides to sustainable living (my favorite being *Time to Eat the Dog?* by Brenda and Robert Vale [2009]) and mainstream magazines such as *Vanity Fair*, *Fortune*, and *Time* celebrating green issues. In just a few years, green has gone from the color of corporate indulgence and Kermit the Frog (of "It's not easy being green" fame) to a pop-culture phenomenon, marketing bonanza, and one-word label for a revolution focused on positive change in the world.

Green *fill-in-the-blank* has become so common, it is often hard to consider the green label as much more than a marketing ploy or *greenwashing* (see "Sins of Greenwashing" at www.terrachoice.com). Yet, when we look past the hype, we see a collection of people dedicated to one or more principles focused on the health of the entire planet. People concerned about ecological balance seek to examine how humans

can have a beneficial effect on the natural world. They seek harmony between human civilization and natural habitats. Animal-rights advocates want to end unnecessary animal suffering. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), for example, seeks to educate people about animal suffering on factory farms, in medical research, in the clothing and cosmetics trades, and in the entertainment industry. Advocates for social justice believe that all humanity deserves equal rights and opportunities. Programs with a social-justice focus might, for example, try to increase economic opportunities for urban residents or encourage businesses to enter into fair trade agreements with producers in developing countries.

Advocates of a sustainable economy are concerned that we are living unsustainably: we are consuming our nonrenewable natural resources at an alarming rate, ultimately threatening our lives, the lives of future generations, and the life of all organisms with which we share our planet. *Green* effectively captures in a single word for mainstream society the principles of ecological balance, animal rights, social justice, and sustainable economy. Of course, these four principles have been around for a long time, and people have been advocating for these principles for a long time as well. What's changed is that public interest in these principles has reached a critical mass, aided by the growth of the interactive Web (such as blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, and video-sharing sites) and social media sites (such as MySpace and Facebook). People are better informed today on the issues and this has led to more people wanting to get involved, to make a difference in their local and global community.

Such interest has created a green revolution on our campuses as well, especially urban ones. The proximity of urban campuses to high density, mixed-use zoning and diverse metropolitan communities places urban universities in excellent positions to be more than just good neighbors. Partnerships among faculty, students, and community members provide opportunities for universities to address community needs and to be stakeholders in the local neighborhood. Not surprisingly, green issues are increasingly the focus of community development and revitalization projects. With interested community members, faculty, and students, we are in the midst of a green revolution on urban campuses with green issues becoming the focus of curriculum, research, service-learning projects, student organizations, and campus events.

The green revolution on our campuses not only provides fertile new research and civic engagement opportunities but also offers urban universities another way to attract and retain top students. Reflecting students' interest in a college's environmental commitment, *The Princeton Review*, for example, has recently added a new "green rating" category to its annual review of colleges. *Washington Monthly* annual college rankings reflect what good deeds colleges are doing for their local communities. Once students are on our campuses, we can encourage them toward action through our green-inspired research, curriculum, and service projects. When we can connect our students to programs on our campuses and in our local communities, we stand a better chance of keeping them enrolled.

The next two issues of this journal focus on green efforts on our campuses and the resulting value to our local communities. The authors seek to examine how this green revolution in learning is affecting curriculum, academic culture, and community partnerships. Contributors to this issue write broadly about campus-wide green initiatives. Singly and together, these authors describe the greening of campuses and their communities.

In the first article, "Partnering for Environmental Sustainability: A Case Study of a University's Participation in the Community Action for a Renewed Environment Program," Ellen Szarleta examines how the Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) model of collaborative problem solving, an initiative of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, provides the framework for addressing toxic pollution at the local level by building community capacity and creating knowledge. The CARE model, argues Szarleta, provides an opportunity for the university and the community to effectively create a process for discovering public health issues, identifying solutions, creating consensus, and ultimately creating a more socially just and environmentally sustainable community.

In "The Green Quad as a Catalyst for Change: Spreading Green Values across the University and Community," David Whiteman describes a model of how a living-learning community can become a catalyst for sustainability on campus and in the community. The Green Quad Learning Center for Sustainable Futures at the University of South Carolina is an experimental, residential living-learning community. Whiteman seeks to inspire scholars and administrators by the scope of green-learning initiatives that can be created at an urban campus in a conservative state.

Joy Hart, Kandi Walker, and Barbara Burns, in "Sustainability and Student Research: Sowing Seeds for Another Tomorrow," examine sustainability work led or driven by students at the University of Louisville, an urban university with nearly 22,000 students and 6,000 employees. The authors' analysis provides insights on how student interest and expertise can help meet community needs and how a focus on sustainability can change the way we approach education.

In "Building Capacity for Sustainability through Curricular and Faculty Development: A Learning Outcomes Approach," Jennifer Allen, Jeffrey Gerwing, and Leslie McBride take an interdisciplinary approach to discussing the recent efforts at Portland State University to engage faculty in curricular development for sustainability organized around student learning outcomes. Starting with the results of a survey to identify specific learning outcomes directly related to sustainability in undergraduate and graduate courses, they discuss how course assignments encourage students to interact with sustainability concepts and related learning outcomes. Learning outcomes, the authors suggest, can be used to identify curricular gaps and overlaps and to assess what students are learning about sustainability.

Patricia James, Education Director for the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), provides an off-campus perspective in "University Green: Urban Forestry Partnerships

Plant More Than Trees." James and coauthors Mindy Maslin, Susan M. Pringle, and Barley Van Clief describe an urban partnership among four colleges and universities in the Greater Philadelphia metropolitan area. Although rare at institutions without forestry schools, the partnership developed by PHS demonstrates that civic engagement is the key ingredient in sustainable urban greening efforts.

In "Greening the Teacher Preparation Curriculum," Leighann Forbes explores how teacher candidates use a multi-semester, cross-discipline curriculum with a focus on sustainability to engage their students in a deeper knowledge of both science content and problem-solving strategies. Teacher candidates at Gannon University are introduced to Learn, Use, Teach, and Embrace (LUTE) curriculum and the Community Action and Problem Solving (CAPS) model. These future teachers then identify real-world environmental issues and serve as environmental stewards as they complete their practicum experiences.

Mixing high-tech, traditional, and field-based learning in the Chicago metropolitan area, Michael Bryson and Carl Zimring in "Creating the Sustainable City: Building a Seminar (and Curriculum) through Interdisciplinary Learning" describe how the theme of urban sustainability can enrich undergraduate general education and connect city and suburban students to local environmental concerns. Specifically, Bryson and Zimring describe how the analytic methods of the social and natural sciences can be integrated to shed light on issues related to urban sustainability and plant the seeds for a sustainability studies initiative on their campus.

In the final article, "Sustainable Architecture that Teaches: Promoting Environmental Education through Service Learning," Grace Eason, Rebecca Berger, and Pamela Green chronicle the sustainability efforts of the University of Maine at Farmington. With two new LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified buildings serving as the focus of a campus-wide green-building curriculum, the authors describe how their university maximizes the use of these buildings through civic engagement opportunities for university students and by establishing a culture of sustainable collegiality among faculty. In the process, the university administrators are able to make it clear to campus residents and local community members that the university is modeling sustainability in campus operations.

Although varied in both topic and approach, I believe common threads do exist, pointing to topics of general interest to administrators and faculty at urban campuses and suggesting directions for innovative new community partnerships. One common thread, for example, highlights the civic engagement opportunities created by the green revolution on campuses. A second common thread concerns the impact urban campuses are having on their local communities. These threads will be explored further in the next issue of *Metropolitan Universities* journal, which presents a series of case studies examining green-inspired curriculum in specific departments, courses, and programs.

I want to close this introduction by acknowledging the people whose assistance helped make this issue and the next a reality. First, I want to thank Barbara Holland, the editor of Metropolitan Universities journal, for inviting me to serve as a guest editor of these two issues and for her support and guidance throughout the project. I am also grateful to the four colleagues who served as peer-reviewers of the many proposals for articles I received: Kara Brascia, Director of Service Learning at Boise State University; Dusty Bodie, Assistant Professor of Management at Boise State University; Lori Pennington, Senior Publications Manager at Cougar Mountain Software; and Cindy Salo, Founder and President of Sage Ecosystem Science. Each provided thoughtful comments on the proposals and made insightful recommendations for the contents of each issue. These two issues are stronger for their contributions.

We have an opportunity as administrators and faculty at campuses in urban and metropolitan regions to inspire our colleagues, students, and community partners to find solutions to help restore our planet and make our lives healthier. Such an opportunity carries with it both responsibility and hope. The contributors to this issue and the next have provided you with practical ideas for bringing the green revolution to your campus and community.

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