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## Saving the environment, one student at a time

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That there are sustainability problems of the environment on this planet is a fact. That more than one solution to these many problems must be found sooner rather than later is a bit frightening. Environmental issues are so complex and interconnected that finding solutions is not a simple matter. But for those students willing to take up the challenge, there are now schools ready to prepare them to address sustainability issues, whether in science, public policy, business or the arts, and whether locally or globally.

"How do we conserve resources through design," is the question asked by Hugh Pocock, professor and coordinator for the Sustainability and Social Practice concentration at The Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). The first of its kind for an art college, the 15-credit concentration grew out of the increasing interest of students and faculty members. It is open to all majors and spans coursework throughout the curriculum working toward practical solutions in sustainability for the environment, the economy and in social justice.

"Student ideas can be applied across the spectrum from applied to visual arts or a hybrid of cross-disciplinary work," says Pocock. "From introduction to advanced courses, the sustainability concentration is the theme between the different departments." With offerings in ecology, sustainability, urban studies and social engagement, the concentration is designed to give students the flexibility to choose courses that best support their field of interest or skill set.

A student club, Students of Sustainability (SOS), exists to help educate about sustainability issues as well as promote practical solutions on campus. "We started a bike share program on campus that was very successful," says Vivien Wise, a sophomore fiber major at MICA and a member of SOS. "We have written a proposal for a free store that we hope to have at the end of the year. Students will donate art supplies and odds and ends that they don't need and will be able to take donated items that they do need." SOS members also campaign and work with MICA's administration on alternative energy changes they would like to see on campus.

With the skills and experience gained in cross-disciplinary work on campus, students of MICA's program will be well prepared to take on the sort of creative problem solving that will be needed not only in the arts, but also in government and in the business community upon graduation.

"Sustainability has been a part of our culture at Notre Dame for some time," says Patricia Brelford, Ph.D., associate professor of economics at Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU), speaking of the green practices already in place on campus and the work of the Notre Dame Sustainability Committee. "Now the major programs will take that to a different level." An environmental sustainability major is now offered to students in NDMU's Women's College who are interested in finding solutions for environmental problems.

Under the guidance of professor Robert Hoage, Ph.D., who heads the sustainability program at NDMU, three tracks leading to a Bachelor of Arts are offered with a choice of emphasis in science, public policy or sustainable entrepreneurship. There are core course requirements for each major emphasis as well as seminar work, an internship, a capstone course and service projects. Local field trips to composting and waste energy facilities are part of the program. Students also have the opportunity to continue their environmental studies abroad.

Also in keeping with NDMU's emphasis on service and education, students are prepared to take what they learn into the community. This starts while they are still on campus. "Our students are involved in the 'Recycle Mania' program in the spring," says Brelford, "which has different categories for recycling and reducing in the residence halls." The Student Environmental Organization plans and implements a series of projects on campus throughout the year from educational displays to garden tending and tree planting.

Students have also chosen to do projects with a green theme for their capstone projects, such as a focus on the rainforest. A service project to help to rebuild in New Orleans took on a green orientation. Students also have the opportunity to be part of NDMU's Sustainability Committee comprised of faculty, staff, graduates and students. Not only they are implementing a five-year plan for sustainability at NDMU, they also work to develop awareness of green principles and practices on campus.

At Frostburg State University their sustainability studies minor has grown out of the school's long-term commitment to the environment. Their Learning Green, Living Green Initiative (LGLG) has been in place for a number of years. Through it they encourage faculty, students, staff and the community to work together on sustainable solutions to environmental problems that face us through climate change and the overconsumption of resources.

"Sustainability is a strategy for creating ways of living with a minimal impact on the environment but still providing a good quality of life and a more equitable quality of life for everyone on the planet," says Henry W. Bullamore, Ph.D., professor in the department of geography and coordinator of the sustainability minor. These ideas are introduced in the core courses that are part of the minor.

"Students need some background in science," says Bullamore, which is covered in the minor in focus or elective courses taken from chemistry, biology, geography, or global climate systems, "but it's mostly about the choices in how we live." Coursework in history, philosophy, English, economics, public policy or business serves to open up a dialogue about those choices. The minor is truly interdisciplinary and will focus on helping students find real-world solutions to problems in whatever their field of interest might be.

For example, the Silent Killer Project combines the efforts of students in the geography department, the Wildlife Society and LGLG members. By monitoring salt contamination from snow melt within the Sand Spring Run watershed, particularly on the Frostburg campus, students will learn to use and maintain monitoring equipment, how to retrieve and analyze datum and how to give public presentations on the results.

It is too soon to tell what the students from these programs will do when they graduate. But whatever career they pursue, they will be making changes with positive results for our environment.

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