

# Sustainability Major Assessment Report May, 2017

## I. Program Assessment Meetings

On May 2, Marion Brown, Kent Klitgaard, Laura McClusky, and Milene Morfei met to discuss assessment. We met for approximately one hour, and we discussed the program coordination and planning that we intended to implement during the 2016 -17 academic year. For a variety of reasons, including changes in responsibility for communicating and implementing our action plan, we did not achieve many of the objectives we set for ourselves during the past year. As a result, we are committed to meeting weekly or bi-weekly during the 2017-18 academic year to address the issues identified in the action plan below.

## II. Closing the Loop

As stated in last year's assessment report, we recognized the need to make changes to the major and minor due to the fact that there were courses listed that were either no longer taught or were taught infrequently. At the time the assessment report was submitted, we were still waiting for approval of the Sustainability major from the New York State Department of Education. Having received that approval, we submitted a proposal to change the structure of the major to address the issue noted above and to make other changes that we were unable to make until the State made its decision. Curriculum Committee determined that the changes we proposed were too exhaustive, given the recent approval of a significantly different major structure. We will continue to work on changes to the major and minor during the 2017-18 (see action plan below)

## III. Data

Our detailed assessment plan was developed in 2016, prior to the New York State approval of the Sustainability major. We are still working to successfully coordinate this interdisciplinary program, including communicating clear assessment objectives to all faculty members who contribute courses to the major.

Last year's assessment report indicated several objectives for 2016-17:

- 1. Meet together regularly as a group.** We did not do this and intend to rectify that in the 2017-18 academic year. We will meet at least bi-weekly (see below).

**2. Actively work together to avoid course scheduling conflicts within the Sustainability major.** Done.

**3. Develop new or highlight existing sustainability learning objectives for required and elective courses.** This still needs to be done in a systemic manner but will be considered in conjunction with our work on revising the major and minor during 2017-18. Examples of two courses in the major that highlight sustainability learning objectives are ECON 326 and PSY 335.

**4. Sustainability Literacy Assessment.** Although we have a measure at present, it was not used in the way we had hoped; i.e., not everyone used the measure in the pre- and post-test way in which it was envisioned. One of our tasks for the coming academic year is to either use it in its current form, alter it, and/or decide which courses should be using it. That is, it may not be appropriate or useful to require its use in all of the courses in the major.

**5. Capture relevant assessment data from each required and elective course in the major.** Again, this was not done as planned. Coming to agreement as to what relevant data we should be collecting will be an integral part of our work during the coming academic year.

**6. Capture data on student pathways.** We currently have just one student majoring and one student minoring in Sustainability. As the major grows, we will have the necessary data to determine relative popularity of areas of specialization, popularity of elective courses, reasons for lack of success, etc.

#### **IV. Program Changes for the Upcoming Year**

Our main goal in this area is to implement changes to the structure of the major and minor. As noted above, the changes we proposed were not approved by Curriculum Committee because the new structure was too radically different from the documents approved by New York State. We plan to meet with Provost Speaker and/or Curriculum Committee to discuss how we might move forward to improve the major. We could not make badly needed changes before the Sustainability major was approved, and we need to understand the extent to which we can make changes now.

#### **V. Action Plan for 2017-18**

We clearly need to work toward a coherent, viable Sustainability Major. To that end, our plan to the upcoming academic year is to:

1. **Meet biweekly — if not weekly — to discuss and implement changes to the sustainability major and minor.** We will meet with Provost Speaker and/or Curriculum Committee to obtain clarification as to what we can and cannot change at this point in time.
2. **Work on sustainability learning objectives** that will be included in the syllabi of courses required in the major. We will also determine the extent to which this could/should be included in electives.
3. **Work on Sustainability Literacy Assessment** tool to determine whether and how it should be used. Decide what additional assessment data should be collected from required and elective courses.
4. **Rework the Sustainability Assessment Plan** based on the action items listed above.

Respectfully submitted,

Milene Z. Morfei  
Chair, Sustainability Major