



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Sustainability & Climate Action Plan

Create a General Education Sustainability & Climate Action Requirement

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT(S) THIS INITIATIVE SUPPORTS

- 7 - Sustainability Literacy
- 9 - Courses

INITIATIVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE CHARGE

- Demonstrate Leadership: This will help to solidify the university as a leader in sustainability and climate education.

INITIATIVE DETAILS

Initiative Summary

This initiative proposes to enhance the new General Education Curriculum implemented in Fall 2022 by integrating sustainability and climate change in a substantive manner. These actions aim to embed sustainability and climate-forward thinking across the General Education Curriculum, fostering awareness and action among students on issues crucial to global and local communities. Actionable items include:

- Introduce an environmental justice component in UNIV 101 and UNIV 301 to educate students on the intersections of sustainability and social equity.
- Add a requirement for sustainability and/or climate justice emphasis within Exploring Perspectives or Building Connections General Education courses to deepen understanding of these critical issues.
- Initiate discussions with the Office of General Education to outline the process for incorporating a Sustainability attribute into the curriculum, similar to ongoing efforts for the Civics attribute mandated by ABOR.

Proposed Initiative & Background

The new General Education Curriculum took effect in Fall 2022. The revisions to the program include classifying general education courses as Exploring Perspectives or Building Connections. Several attributes have also been defined, those being writing, quantitative reasoning, diversity and equity, and world cultures and societies. It is possible to incorporate sustainability and climate-forward thinking in either a separate attribute or as a component of an existing attribute.

We recommend updating the new General Education Curriculum to include climate change and environmental justice in a meaningful way. We propose (1) an environmental justice component in UNIV 101, Introduction to the General Education Experience, and UNIV 301, General Education Portfolio and (2) adding a requirement for a climate justice and environmental justice emphasis in the Exploring Perspectives or Building Connections General Education courses.

The General Education curriculum has been recently revised to include a new structure and attributes. There is currently ABOR-mandated work underway to add a Civics attribute. A similar process would be required to add a Sustainability attribute. Discussions with the Office of General Education would help clarify the most efficient direction forward.

Data Analyses to Support Initiative

UC Irvine has included sustainability outcomes in their General Education program.

As a starting point, text from UCI statements includes, “UCI has identified campus wide learning outcomes to transform sustainability learning, moving beyond the level of exposing students to sustainability principles to a level of fully integrating sustainability learning into all areas of campus practice, campus life, and the operation of the university. This next level of learning outcomes engages students in the application of sustainability practice and collaboration and will help move the collective value of the institution to embrace sustainability in all aspects of what we do. This progression, building from fundamental learning outcomes to full engagement, will more fully prepare students to apply sustainability as a standard practice when they leave UCI.”

Travis Huxman
Chair, UCI Faculty Task Force on Sustainability Education

Resource Requirements & Return on Investment

Resource Requirements

- Changes would require committee and administrative work so there would be no additional cost other than personnel time.
- Required financial investment is minimal but would have broad-reaching impacts on the education of all students at the University of Arizona.

Return on Investment

- The return on investment in this initiative is unclear due to the highly qualitative nature of its proposed activities; however, it is unlikely that this initiative will result in a direct return on any investments made.

Potential Funding Sources

- Because this initiative should not require new financial resources and the only resource requirements are employee time, no funding sources should be required.

Accountable Division(s) & Department(s)

- This initiative would require discussion with the Office of General Education, the University-Wide General Education Committee (UWGEC), and the Undergraduate Council.
- Initiative 9.3, “Create Climate Change Education Plans” recommends the establishment of an Academic Committee on Climate Change and Sustainability Education. This committee could also be tasked with facilitating the work necessary to add a general education sustainability and climate action requirement (this initiative).

Partners & Collaborators

- Office of Sustainability

Implementation

Length of Time to Implement

- Less than one year
- One to five years
- More than five years

Difficulty of Implementation

- Low
- Medium
- High
- Extremely High

Relative Timing

- Begin within two years
- Begin in three to five years
- Begin in six years or later

Metrics for Success

- The Office of General Education would track student exposure to the attribute in the same way they do for the other attributes. Courses that incorporated such an attribute would have built-in assessment as part of the overall course learning outcome assessment.