

COPLAC Summer Institute 2006
Integrating Environmental Stewardship Across the Curriculum
UNC Asheville, June 8 - 11

Attendees

30 people attended from 12 institutions representing disciplines from architecture and literature to geology and religious studies.

Starting Point for the Institute

All participants agreed during the first session with the fundamental starting point of this institute: Science is clearly indicating that the systems which support and maintain life on the planet are declining at an alarming rate. We are “standing on the air hose.” Our students are far more aware of this than is the average faculty member, according to multiple surveys. Thus, integrating “environmental stewardship” or “environmental sustainability” or “ecology” into the curriculum will increase the attractiveness of an institution to prospective students. As well, participants agreed that there is an ethical obligation for the academy – all of the academy - to respond to this crisis.

Participants presented several examples of how to integrate environmental stewardship into individual courses (e.g., art, architecture, literature), throughout the general education curriculum, into the senior capstone course, into service learning, and throughout the institution.

Recommendations

1. Participants stated most strongly that they think a commitment to integrating environmental stewardship into the curriculum (and across campus activities) is a high-leverage opportunity for COPLAC and COPLAC schools to increase our attractiveness, leadership and credibility in the world.
2. Infusing the environment across the curriculum is possibly the best opportunity for COPLAC schools to attract more prospective students and donors because it is needed, desired, increasingly recognized, and long-term.
3. Integrating environmental stewardship across the curriculum gives presidents “crowing rights” to use with donors and deans rights to crow about academics. It also gives students what they want and need. It was seen at the Institute as a true win-win-win for our schools.
4. Environmental performance and stewardship should be integrated into schools at the institutional level, e.g., into guiding concepts, mission statements, planning guidelines, procurement guidelines, course development requirements, educating staff, freshman orientation, key hiring guidelines, etc., rather than being led only by people. Experiences at other institutions, in which their program fizzled when the leaders left, bear this out.