

Sustainability Summit - Presentation Summary

Maricopa Community College's Global Sustainability Initiative

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Background

Maricopa Community Colleges is one of the largest and most forward thinking community college systems in the entire nation. The Maricopa system is an urban community college system located in the metropolitan Phoenix area. It is made up of 10 colleges, 2 skill centers and numerous education centers. Each college is individually accredited, yet part of a larger system. There are approximately 1,000 occupational programs (degrees and certificates), 37 academic associate degrees and 10,254 courses available for offering. There are more than 250,000 students (51,766.3 FTSA for fall 07) in the Maricopa system of which 34% intend to transfer to a college or university, 28% intend to gain or improve workforce skills, 13% attend for personal interest. There are nearly 4,500 full-time faculty/staff and more than 9,000 part-time faculty/staff.

Maricopa's Global Sustainability Initiative

The Maricopa Community Colleges began the global sustainability initiative in the spring 2006 in order to prepare students for the unique challenges facing today's world. The Maricopa's Global Sustainability Initiative (MGSI) is a cross-disciplinary program that recognizes that our students need to be appropriately educated in order to make informed choices on the social, environmental and economic issues facing us today. MGSI's goal is to answer the call to prepare our student to meet the needs of the present and improve the quality of life for us and for people around the world without jeopardizing the future.

The Maricopa's Center for Learning and Instruction (MCLI) has sponsored the Global Sustainability dialog days where speakers of national renown have presented in order to excite and empower the faculty and staff. An active Global Sustainability Listserv is maintained through which the latest information and updates on different issues of sustainability is distributed. The listserv members have been in active educational dialog about various issues of climate change. Two Maricopa- wide initiatives have been adopted; The AACU Presidents' Climate Challenge Commitment and Focus the Nation. The MCLI sponsored a Statewide Summit on Focus the Nation which was a big success. MCC with its large cadre of faculty has yielded many examples of infusion of sustainability into the curriculum across many disciplines. Faculty and Staff have gathered together from many Maricopa colleges at the Global Sustainability Conversations to exchange ideas, engage in dialogue, share best practices and forge partnerships across the different campuses in an interdisciplinary manner. The faculty have showcased their work on sustainability at the Faculty convocation and the students have showcased their exemplary sustainability projects at the Maricopa Sustainability Showcase. As a result of the Maricopa-wide effort, there has been tremendous excitement about the global sustainability initiative at the individual campuses. Here are a few examples:

- Chandler Gilbert Community College team was recently the winners of the prestigious 'AASHE sustainability leadership award'. They have instituted a green initiative and a unique partnership between the facilities and the faculty. They have had interdisciplinary teach-ins and have embedded sustainability into the Strategic goals and objectives for 2007-2012. CGCC's President has signed the Presidents' Climate Commitment and the campus is active in the Focus the Nation national initiative. The faculty development team adopted the 'SEE your world' campus theme on sustainability. The graduation pledge was adopted by students at the time of graduation pledging towards social and environmental justice.
- Gateway Community College has certificate programs in 'Water and industrial treatment technology'. They have a very active student club, recycling program and show movies on issues relating to sustainable.
- Glendale Community College offers an environmental ethics which discusses sustainability issues such as ethically acceptable food. Future project is on Energy and the automobile industry. They have a student initiated recycling program and have signed up for the 'Focus the Nation' national teach-in day.
- Mesa Community College has started an Interior design advanced certificate program for which the learning outcome relates to sustainability. They have many examples of best practices such as 'The Dumpster Drive' where garbage is used for student learning. The faculty learning community on sustainability is very active in bringing together the interdisciplinary programs across the campus. They have signed the President's Climate Commitment and are working on making all their new buildings LEED certified.
- Phoenix College, South Mountain Community College and Estrella Mountain Community College are part of the science alliance group to combine research to their environmental biology classes. Phoenix college is also signing up for the Focus the Nation national initiative.
- Rio Salado Community College has recently signed the president's climate commitment.
- Scottsdale Community College has a Center for Native and Urban Wildlife to teach and advocate responsible desert living by conservation of native and urban wildlife. In addition, they have a very active recycling program that is student driven and fosters student learning.

These are just a few examples of the many projects on sustainability in the Maricopa system. Maricopa strives to change norms so that students become environmentally responsible, socially responsible and engaged citizens in a global economy. For the Maricopa-wide events and co-curricular events at individual campuses, there have been evaluations and assessments performed at the end of the events. Classes incorporating sustainability into the curriculum have built-in classroom assessments such as rubrics for student projects and presentations.

Lessons Learned

As a result of these myriad programs across Maricopa, there are many lessons learned. As Maricopa has started embarking on building new classroom buildings, there have been discussions on LEED certification and green buildings at the various campuses. Forging partnerships across and within campuses is a key element to success. Collaborations between the sister colleges, between different types of committees, collaborations within campuses and collaborations between faculty and administrative services ensures that student learning is enhanced. As a result of the lessons learned, there have been meetings scheduled at the different campuses to get all the campuses involved in this important initiative. People interested in recycling are getting in touch with their counterparts in the sister colleges to exchange ideas. The Dumpster Drive which began in one campus has now been adopted by some of the other campuses. The Focus the Nation initiative has brought together many staff and faculty across the many colleges to brainstorm about ideas to incorporate climate change into their curriculum. The dialogues on innovative pedagogy and focus on student learning have been rich. Overall, learning at Maricopa is meaningful and fun.