

BENEFITS of Sustainability Courses and Using the SUS Attribute

Making sustainability visible in the curriculum through the use of the sustainability attribute should yield benefits at a number of levels, as described below, all toward the ultimate goal of fostering environmentally and socially aware, engaged, and responsible students and citizens across all colleges.

Benefits to Students

For students a SUS attribute on courses will facilitate:

- **The easy identification of sustainability courses for students and minors/majors/degrees.**
Students interested in courses that make an explicit connection to sustainability will be better able to find them with a designator.
- **The crafting and revision of interdisciplinary programs/degrees that focus on sustainability or environmental studies/science** such as AA/AS and BA/BS degrees and/or certificates, and/or a sustainability themed “path” through General Education (currently in the design phase for a proposal), and the Environmental Studies Minor.
- **The creation of a potential future “Sustainability Certificate” and/or “Excellence in Sustainability” recognition** (like the current “*Excellence in Community Engagement*” program run through the Center for Community Engaged Learning) for students who complete a given number of SUS designated courses and perhaps a capstone course/applied project.
- **Recognition that sustainability is relevant across all colleges** and that solutions to addressing complex sustainability challenges can come from a diverse array of disciplines.

Benefits to Faculty

In terms of faculty, having courses with a SUS attribute will:

- **Signify faculty engagement with innovative teaching and [High-impact Educational Experiences \(HIEE\)](#) in the rank and tenure process.**
- **Facilitate and encourage faculty to consider and apply the frame of sustainability to their teaching/research interests** (recognizing the intersections and interdependencies between environmental, social and economic realms) and to bring their relevant scholarship to the classroom.
- **Promote recognition that sustainability is relevant across all colleges** and that solutions to addressing complex sustainability challenges can come from a diverse array of disciplines.
- **Fit well with the “Big Questions” and solutions framework adopted for General Education.**

Additionally, faculty may be encouraged to include sustainability in, and designate, their courses, with the availability of:

- **Faculty development for teaching sustainability** available via the SPARC/TLF (online or via workshops, etc.);
- **Resources for teaching sustainability and “big questions”** (e.g., signature assignment examples, case studies, references), via the SPARC;
- **Help with promotions for SUS courses**, via the SPARC;

- **Green Team Departmental points** awarded to the faculty's department (if participating in the Green Team program) for teaching a SUS course;
- **Letters of recognition and thanks** for faculty teaching sustainability courses, to acknowledge their support in fulfilling the University's commitment to advance sustainability education.

Benefits to the Institution

At the institutional level the use of the SUS attribute will:

- **Make visible in the curriculum the institution's commitment to sustainability** and thereby help communicate recognition of its importance across campus.
- **Help foster a culture of sustainability in concert with the institution's own commitment to sustainability in practice.**
- **Ease a regular inventory of sustainability related courses taught at WSU** for WSU's curriculum related reporting to the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS) administered by AASHE, which includes measures of administration and planning, facilities operations, and curriculum to rate the university's progress towards sustainability goals.
- **Facilitate a regular inventory of the number of academic departments which teach sustainability courses** for WSU's reporting to STARS.
- **Improve WSU's overall "Green"/Sustainability rating** with the increasing presence of sustainability courses across the curriculum over time. WSU currently has a silver rating through the STARS and aims to achieve higher ratings (e.g., gold, platinum) over time. It is also listed in the Princeton Review to Green Colleges and the Sierra Club's Cool Schools list.
- **Contribute to wider and improved sustainability literacy across the campus over time.**

Benefits to the Community

Many of the benefits identified above may have a cumulative impact with respect to serving the wider community by helping to:

- **Foster a wider pool of sustainability literate and prepared students who have an awareness and understanding of sustainability challenges and are equipped with the skills to address them in our surrounding communities.**
- **Cultivate graduates who are environmentally and socially responsible citizens.**
- **Cultivate graduates who are comfortable with systems thinking.**
- **Cultivate graduates who are able to reduce waste and associated costs.**
- **Contribute to wider and improved sustainability literacy in the community over time.**