

An Introduction to Sustainability at Edmonds Community College

Abstract

Title: An Introduction to Sustainability at Edmonds Community College

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Department: Career College and Life Success

Class: CCLS 100 Steps to Success

Integrative Statement:

CCLS introduces new students at EdCC to the college. This assignment introduces the use of the Blackboard Discussion Board as well as the college's commitment to sustainability and the idea of sustainability itself to students. The college's sustainability website statement in response to the question "What Does a Sustainable College Do?" is used to introduce the discussion. This statement incorporates "Big Idea" concepts of environmental, social and economic values. College resources which further the goal of sustainability are included within the class presentations.

Introduction and Overview:

CCLS 100 is a two day class which introduces college resources as well as college success strategies to students. Financial Aid, Advising, specific student services are all integrated into a two-Saturday class framework. Important cornerstones of the class are detailed introductions to the library and Blackboard. Students complete homework assignments in Blackboard and complete steps for college success in the month between the two classes.

The topic of sustainability will be one of the areas in which students discuss online during the weeks between classes. Students are able to choose student success topics (which includes the sustainability option) in order to post threads or respond to other students' posts after their introduction to Blackboard.

Students are required to initiate two threads and respond to five during the four weeks between classes. During the two Saturday classes, an eventual goal will be to have a member of the Sustainability Council present current activities and/or goals of the council. In the current class, whenever available, presenters introduce Service Learning options to students.

The goals of the assignments are to have students increase their understanding of EdCC's commitment to sustainability while increasing their comfort in using Blackboard. A desired outcome is that some lively discussion occurs where students can discuss sustainability. Another outcome about which I am hopeful is that students increase their incorporation of service learning/sustainable practices into their learning at EdCC.

Teaching and Learning Activities:

Here is the introduction to the Sustainability Forum on Blackboard:

What steps are you taking (or thinking of taking) to increase our campus commitment to sustainability? What steps do you think the college can take to increase our commitment?

Here is information on sustainability from our college website:

"What does a sustainable college do?"

It helps students become more environmentally literate and motivates them to seek environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable practices while modeling these same values and practices in its operation."

Instructions for Assignment as described in class syllabus:

Assignment 1:

Initiate two threads in one of the forums on the discussion board. Reply to at least five posts in any of the forums on Blackboard **except the Classroom Exercise forum**. Both the initial posts as well as the reply must reflect academic thought and the ability to think critically, and employ college-level spelling and grammar, or they will not be counted. How to use BlackBoard will be explained on the first day of class.

If you are baffled by BlackBoard after the first class, contact me via email PRIOR TO THE FRIDAY BEFORE THE SECOND CLASS MEETS! Being successful in college requires basic computer competency. If you do not feel confident in your computer abilities, plan to set up a time to meet with me to review how to navigate BlackBoard. I will meet with you individually in order to help you complete this task. *Do not let your lack of computer skills prevent you from doing this assignment!!! I will help you, or I will refer you to other resources if you require assistance.*

Optional Assessment elements:

Described above

Resources, if needed:

<http://www.edcc.edu/sustain/>

<http://www.edcc.edu/servicelearning/>

Optional Teacher notes:

I could not wait a quarter to implement this activity. My class only meets two days during the quarter, so I immediately launched the assignment for my first of the two classes in mid-July. Summer is a difficult time to draft speakers, so I was not able to get a speaker to come in to discuss service learning this quarter. While I will always mention the topic myself, I believe that students respond more positively when they make a connection with the person or persons who work in the campus area we are discussing. I believe that the responses will increase as more class time is spent introducing the concept of sustainability.

My second class meets tomorrow, and it is not unlikely that more comments will come in tonight. (Not unlike the responses on this board!) Below you will see the two threads developed so far. It is heartening to see the commitment and the willingness on the part of our students.

First Thread:

A change I would like to see EdCC make is to have sustainability mentioned in each syllabus, so that when the syllabus is reviewed at the beginning of the course the class notes where the recycling bins are and how they can be sustainable within the course while maximizing their learning. Sustainability should have a symbol in the course catalogue and like Cultural Diversity etc, be a graduation requirement. When leaving college students should know a little about their environmental impact and that of their intended industry.

This is a topic I truly do not understand the word "sustainability" can you please help me and explain what that word means?

You are right. We need to get more serious about the importance of sustainability. All of us are responsible to keep our earth clean as best as we can for the future generation who are our children and their children to enjoy.

Christina's Response:

Hi H, S and R

H - that is a great idea. It makes me think of how to incorporate it into the classroom. Perhaps during the introduction, an instructor could at least mention where the recycling is. I do not mention it in my class, and I usually note that, at the end of a long day, the trash and recycling are intermixed.

I just went to a workshop here at the college where we looked at how to integrate sustainability into our curriculum, hence this new topic area in the online class.

Did you know that EdCC has a carbon neutral goal which they hope to achieve in the next couple of years? Now if we can only get rail service or bus service from Bellingham to Lynnwood, I would be truly happy.

S - Here is a website which has a good description of sustainability: <http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/>

Here is the definition from the EdCC website, borrowed from the Washington Center:

"What do we mean by sustainability?"

We like the definition developed by the Washington Center 'Curriculum for the Bioregion Initiative':

"Sustainability encompasses four intertwined ideals: economic wellness, social justice, human health, and biodiversity and ecological integrity. It is a systemic concept, relating to the continuity of economic, social, institutional, and environmental aspects of human society."

Here is the EdCC sustainability website: <http://www.edcc.edu/sustain/>

Thanks Christina - that was the exact quote I was looking for to give to S.

People have different priorities on those 'streams' into sustainability, but the more I learn the more I find they are interlinked. I was raised on environmental issues (I've lived through a drought), but since I also attend the Evergreen State College I have become friends with other students who are focusing on the labor side of sustainability and here is an illustration of one of my thought processes to realizing its all linked.

good job -> money/health benefits -> access to healthcare -> less illness (and/or recurrences) -> less environmental impact of the health industry.

To me sustainability means to have a broad skill base that is applicable for a wide range of industries, in this way you may be able to choose the job you want instead of the job available.

Sustainability. Well, S my own definition sustainability means to do something that can be done over and over again into the future; ad infinitum without damage or harm to the biosphere of the planet, including no undue hardship for people everywhere.

I am very skeptical this will be achieved but hope that it will be!

As for sustainability, Heather on campus I don't have any grand ideas like your own one which is a very good idea. The kind of idea that makes you say why didn't someone think of it before now?

I like to garden but I don't know if Horticulture Dept. at Edmonds has student plots that any student could use to have their own small garden. While I'm not the one to start such a program I would surely participate!

Reading through the responses you've received so far, it's evident that there is a need to increase awareness of overall sustainability at Edmonds. Your suggestion to have it included in each class syllabus would pinpoint how each industry can affect and is affected by their environmental impact, and would reinforce that information with both students and faculty every quarter.

Second Thread:

I'm frustrated that BB does not have the word Sustainability in its dictionary, the college community would speak about it more, with more confidence if the spelling was confirmed!

Anyone know how to get a new word in BB spell check? Probably an email anyone willing to join me in pestering them?

Each person adding it to the individual dictionary isn't good enough!

I'm in! You should bring it up in class tomorrow and bring this issue to life outside of BB!

