



National Wildlife Federation®  
**CAMPUS**  
ecology®

**Unity College  
Unity, Maine**

**Spring 2008, Environmental Education and Outreach**

**BACKGROUND**

**Campus Profile**

Unity College provides dedicated, engaged students with a four-year liberal arts education that emphasizes the environment and conservation of natural resources. Located in Unity, Maine, the college is situated on 185 acres of a former farm and chicken hatchery, where more than 500 students prepare to become environmental stewards, effective leaders and responsible citizens through active learning experiences within a supportive community.

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**GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Goal**

The creation of an Environmental Stewardship Core Curriculum for every student at Unity College was driven by a commitment to providing a developmentally appropriate introduction to environmental stewardship, leadership and citizenship on campus and within the surrounding community. The intended outcome is providing each student with the foundation for a comprehensive environmental ethic to carry with beyond the time spent at Unity College. In the coming years, we would like each academic center to adapt the first of the curriculum courses, The Unity Experience, to elevate the science content and enhance the immersive nature of the course.

**Accomplishments**

The Environmental Stewardship Core Curriculum consists of four courses every Unity College student is required to take. They are presented here with their learning outcomes:

**Course**

The Unity Experience

**Learning Outcomes**

- Engage in personal development opportunities at Unity College
- Engage in the student's new community
- Demonstrate environmental stewardship

The Environmental Citizen

- Contribute significantly to project planning and implementation
- Contribute to the collective understanding and problem-solving efforts of a group regarding an environmental

issue

- Demonstrate an applied understanding of group dynamics and the student's role as a leader and citizen

Environmental Sustainability

- Demonstrate an applied understanding of how science informs sustainability issues
- Demonstrate an applied understanding of how social science informs sustainability issues

Environmental Challenge

- Participate in meaningful conversation regarding challenging environmental ideas
- Consider the example presented by inspiring and provocative individuals
- Demonstrate a disposition for effective leadership and responsible citizenship

### **Challenges and Responses**

We have to ensure faculty are available to teach the Environmental Stewardship Core Curriculum courses and reach out to faculty who traditionally do not teach general education courses. This means supporting faculty teaching in new content areas and exercising pedagogical approaches they may not be comfortable with. One successful response has been forming instructor groups where faculty teaching sections of a core course meet weekly to discuss content and pedagogy.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

### **Leaders and Supporters**

The creation of the Environmental Stewardship Core Curriculum relied on the General Education Committee, the 1st Year Experience Task Force, faculty working groups, instructor groups and an extremely supportive senior administration.

### **Funding and Resources**

This effort was financially supported by two Davis Educational Foundation grants and a Maine Campus Compact grant. Internally we used summer development time for faculty, as well as faculty course reassignment.

### **Community Outreach and Education**

Each of the four Environmental Stewardship Core Curriculum courses educates and engages the campus and local community in unique ways. The Unity Experience contains a service learning component that has included Get Out the Vote, Community Trail Maintenance and the Empty Bowls Project. The Environmental Citizen is entirely built around involvement in a local environmental problem and works toward forging lasting solutions. Environmental Sustainability opens avenues for student projects in several areas, which have included energy audits for local homes and schools, participation in Keep ME Warm and wind turbine feasibility assessments. As a part of the Environmental Challenge course, the Lapping Lecture Series runs in town and is open to the public. Students also coordinate an environmental advocacy and education campaign. Past projects have included trading lead sinkers for non-lead sinkers, discontinuing the use of plastic water bottles and ten energy saving tips for homeowners.

### **Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint**

Unity College is a charter signatory of the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment. As a part of this commitment we are ensuring that our path towards carbon neutrality and

sustainability is woven throughout our curriculum and every student's college experience. The Environmental Stewardship Core Curriculum includes education and action for mitigating climate change on campus and in the local community.

### **CLOSING COMMENT**

American colleges and universities are only responsible for a small percentage of the greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, but we are responsible for one hundred percent of the college students. Examining our core curriculum may reveal if we are ensuring that graduates are prepared with a sound environmental ethic to guide them as citizens and professionals.