

SUSTAINABILITY SKILLS MATTER: A NATIONAL POLICY DISCUSSION TO ADVANCE A COMPETITIVE WORKFORCE FOR THE CLEAN ECONOMY

APRIL 10-11, 2013 • PEW CONFERENCE CENTER 901 E STREET, NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20073

On April 10-11, 2013, a dedicated group of national thought leaders will convene in Washington, DC, to discuss how to advance the place of sustainability skills in community college career and technical education in ways that align with employer demand and help grow demand for these skills.

This invitation-only meeting is hosted by the Greenforce Initiative, a partnership of National Wildlife Federation and Jobs for the Future, with support from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation. The American Association of Community College's SEED Center, the Center on Wisconsin Strategy, and a number of other partners will join in this national policy discussion.

The meeting will bring together a select group of approximately 50 representatives of prominent community colleges, employers, unions, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations advancing sustainability in career and technical education. They will utilize their successful experiences and diverse expertise to develop a public policy agenda in support of building the capacity of community colleges to create the high-quality workforce needed for a clean economy.

The community college is the nation's premier education and training platform, and a number of leading institutions have made significant advances in integrating sustainability skills into career and technical education. There is a pressing need to sustain and expand their effective innovations to other regions and states, and

also to maintain the momentum of the colleges and their partners and to disseminate the lessons they have learned.

FROM THE FRONTLINE OF THE CLEAN ECONOMY: WHY THIS MEETING, WHY NOW

As the clean economy grows, employers seek employees with the sustainability skills that contribute to essential, widely shared goals: profitable enterprises, environmental stewardship, and worker health, safety, and productivity.

Mastering sustainability skills—encompassing both systems thinking and environmentally conscious technical skills—makes workers and jobseekers more competitive in their regional labor markets. For example, manufacturing employers often note a need for a workforce that can implement "lean and green" manufacturing processes, while also contributing to streamlining processes and creating greater operational, environmental, and cost efficiencies.

At the same time, a dual focus by policymakers on increasing workers' skills in science, technical, engineering, and math (STEM) while also developing solutions to climate change creates a window of opportunity to further support and invest in sustainability career education at community colleges. Moreover, college leaders themselves are helping to shape and grow demand for greener skills and jobs through a variety of means, including projects on their own campuses and partnerships with local employers and organizations.









Our goal at this convening is to craft a common platform for action in developing a competitive workforce for the clean economy. Reflecting on the significant innovation and successful models in sustainable career and technical education to date, this meeting will develop a "Greenprint" of policy recommendations and opportunities that:

- > Aligns sustainability skills education with employer **demand** in key industry sectors
- > Creates incentives for broad employer engagement with community colleges to create career pathways that enable lower-skilled students to gain valuable skills and advance in careers
- > Supports community colleges in helping students develop skills linked to real-world experience offered through campus or community sustainability projects
- > Supports community colleges in promoting student, consumer, and employer awareness that can enhance demand for sustainability skills in the workforce and contribute to growth of the green economy
- > Supports the roles of nonprofit organizations and other labor market intermediaries in linking community colleges with employers and other key stakeholders to expand effective practice
- > Addressing barriers to scaling up the adoption of sustainability skills, for example, by strengthening the systems for credentialing these skills, by better framing them in the context of career and technical education, and by promoting their value to students, employers, and other stakeholders.

The potential for sustainable jobs and economic growth is great, but we must work together to realize it. Widely replicating successful models-on the job and in higher education-for building a workforce with strong sustainability skills will come from concerted action to change state and national policies and scale effective practices. With few existing venues for bringing together such a diverse group of stakeholders to address this fundamental challenge, this convening has been created and designed as an important step toward making this concerted action possible.

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National Wildlife Federation has a 20-year history of working with colleges and universities through its Campus Ecology program to improve their overall green educational programming and onsite sustainability. Its student outreach programs, campus consulting, climate action competition, and educational events and resources reach about 1,000 campuses each year.



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Jobs for the Future works with our partners to design and drive the adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today's economy.