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Five College *Ink*



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Five College sustainability studies opportunities expand



UMass student Jeremy Fellows, on a fieldtrip to the Hampshire College Farm as part of the Agroecosystems and Sustainable Agriculture course taught at Mount Holyoke last fall.

A variety of Five College sustainability studies programs and services now offer additional opportunities and support for students who want to study the impact of humans on the environment. Current initiatives include a Five College lecture series, a website listing available courses and programs, a proposal for a Five College certificate in sustainability studies and an investigation into a possible Five College food and agriculture summer institute.

This comes at a time when interest among faculty members, students and administrators alike in improving the sustainability of their campuses is on the rise (see “Sustaining the environment, sustaining our institutions” in the 2009–2010 issue of *Ink*). “The search for sustainability is something that campuses around the country are really going to have to get behind,” says Jan Dizard, professor of sociology and American studies at Amherst College. “We can make an impression, we can make a dent, as a result of the five institutions collaborating.” Dizard is a leader in an effort to create a Five College certificate program in sustainability studies.

Akin to a degree minor, each Five College certificate program enables a student to investigate a field of inquiry that may not otherwise be available. The sustainability studies certificate program, which could be offered on at least some campuses as soon as fall 2011, will combine a

broad course of study in three core areas of sustainability (environmental sustainability, sustainable economics and politics, and sustainable society and culture) with an internship or independent-study project that culminates in a symposium presentation to students and faculty members. The Five College certificate-program model is perfect for offering students an important—and new—field of study, according to Dizard. “None of the college campuses has the sufficient breadth or depth of courses to offer this on its own,” he says, “so this strikes us as a perfect example of a Five College program in which pooled resources amount to everything.”

Closer at hand, each campus has been sponsoring speakers this semester as part of the Five College Sustainability Studies Lecture Series. Issues explored in it have included the environmental impact of war, the BP oil disaster, global land-use patterns, the human and natural ecology of the Connecticut River and the economic opportunities presented by current environmental challenges.

“There’s a tremendous interest among students in looking at the environmental aspects of what they’re already studying,” says Beth Hooker, a visiting assistant professor of environmental studies at Mount Holyoke, who is coordinating many of the Five College sustainability efforts this year.

For more information about sustainability studies at Five Colleges, go to fivecolleges.edu/sites/sustain.

Three campuses earn top sustainability scores

Amherst, Mount Holyoke and Smith colleges each earned a score of A- on the College Sustainability Report Card 2011. This score gives each the title of Overall College Sustainability Leaders along with 49 other institutions of the 322 ranked for the report card. Among the key criteria for all colleges were: using Energy Star appliances, constructing LEED-certified buildings, buying local and organic food and encouraging alternate forms of transportation. The College Sustainability Report Card, a project of the Sustainability Endowments Institute, looks at the colleges and universities in the United States and Canada with the largest endowments and grades each institution in a variety of categories, including Administration, Climate Change & Energy, Green Building, Student Involvement, Transportation, Endowment Transparency, Investment Priorities and Shareholder Engagement.



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