

DEFINITIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability

"Sustainability" implies that the critical activities of a higher education institution are (at a minimum) ecologically sound, socially just and economically viable, and that they will continue to be so for future generations. A truly sustainable college or university would emphasize these concepts in its curriculum and research, preparing students to contribute as working citizens to an environmentally sound and socially just society. The institution would function as a sustainable community, embodying responsible consumption of food and energy, treating its diverse members with respect, and supporting these values in the surrounding community.
--University Leadership for a Sustainable Future, Sustainability Assessment Questionnaire

Sustainability is a vision for the world in which current and future humans are reasonably healthy; communities and nations are secure, peaceful and thriving; there is economic opportunity for all; and the integrity of the life-supporting biosphere is restored and sustained at a level necessary to make these goals possible. All four dimensions of sustainability must be addressed to achieve this vision.

--Anthony D. Cortese and Debra Rowe, "Higher Education and Sustainability Overview"

Sustainability is "a process that helps create a vibrant economy and a high quality of life, while respecting the need to sustain natural resources and protect the environment. It expresses the principle that future generations should live in a world that the present generation has enjoyed but not diminished."

--Clough, G. Wayne, Jean-Lou Chameau, and Carol Carmichael. "Sustainability and the University." The Presidency, winter 2006.

Sustainability is achieved when all people on Earth can live well without compromising the quality of life for future generations.

--Rolf Jucker, "A Vision for a Sustainable University"

Sustainability is a systemic concept, relating to the continuity of economic, social, institutional and environmental aspects of human society. It is intended to be a means of configuring civilization and human activity so that society, its members and its economies are able to meet their needs and express their greatest potential in the present, while preserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems, and planning and acting for the ability to maintain these ideals in a very long term. Sustainability affects every level of organization, from the local neighbourhood to the entire planet.

--Wikipedia 30 June 2006

Historically, the term "sustainable" arose among those with environmental concerns, and most of the literature and assessment instruments reflect this emphasis. However, it is increasingly recognized that sustainability cannot be achieved without addressing social justice issues. There can be no sustainable communities and institutions without social justice. So too is humane consideration toward the whole community of life an essential part of true sustainability. An academic institution committed to sustainability should help students understand the roots of today's injustices and motivate them to seek justice and humaneness in full integration with understanding the roots of environmental degradation and modeling environmentally sustainable practices.

--John B. Cobb Jr., "Sustainability and the Liberal Arts" conference, 1998

Sustainability is an ideal end-state. Like democracy, it is a lofty goal whose perfect realization eludes us. For this reason, there will always be competing definitions of sustainability. We know these definitions will always include the well-being of people, nature, our economy, and our social institutions, working together effectively over the long term.

--Alan AtKisson, "The Compass of Sustainability," 1998

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (It aims at assuring the on-going productivity of exploitable natural resources and conserving all species of fauna and flora.)

--Brundtland Commission (United Nations), 1987

Sustainable human development: This concept has been further developed within the UN system, which tends to use the term: sustainable human development. The introduction of the "human" dimension places human development at the forefront of regional integration and sustainable development of a country or continent. "In recognition of the centrality of the human dimension to development, the UN general Assembly in 1986 adopted a 'Declaration on the right to development' stating that the human person is the central subject of development,' and called upon member states 'to ensure access to the basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income.'"

--*Sustainable Human Development*. United Nations Economic Commission for, Africa 1995

--http://www.unesco.org/iau/sd/sd_definitions.html 28 June 2006 .

Sustainable development has three components: environment, society, and economy. If you consider the three to be overlapping circles of the same size, the area of overlap in the center is human well-being. As the environment, society, and economy become more aligned, the area of overlap increase, and so does human well-being.

-- Ithaca College?

Education for Sustainability

Education for sustainability is a lifelong learning process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy, and commitment to engage in responsible individual and cooperative actions. These actions will help ensure an environmentally sound and economically prosperous future.

--Presidents Council on Sustainable Development, "Education for Sustainable Development"

Education for Sustainable Development is a . . . dynamic concept that encompasses a new vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future. . . . Education for sustainable development is about learning to:

- respect, value and preserve the achievements of the past;
- appreciate the wonders and the peoples of the Earth;
- live in a world where all people have sufficient food for a healthy and productive life;
- assess, care for and restore the state of our Planet;
- create and enjoy a better, safer, more just world;
- be caring citizens who exercise their rights and responsibilities locally, nationally and globally.

--UNESCO