SUSTAINABILITY INTEGRATED INTO GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS
by Valerie Beyer

In fall of 2010, faculty overwhelmingly supported the goal of a new general education requirement here at UCCS. In support of the UCCS Sustainability Strategic Plan Goal 2, which aims to, “Provide excellence in leadership and execution of economic, environmental and social sustainability”, students obtaining their bachelor’s degree will be required to take one course which has sustainability integrated into its coursework. Now in its third and final phase of being implemented within the General Education requirement program, the requirement would be completed in the same manner as other general education requirements, like global diversity and writing courses. With these requirements in place, students will graduate from UCCS with an understanding of the impact they make locally, nationally, and globally.

As defined in the general education requirements, sustainability is the interaction between human development and the natural environment. UCCS has made it a priority to provide leadership in sustainability education. In 2007, Chancellor Pam Shockley-Zalabak signed the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) on behalf of the university. This commits UCCS to reduce our impact on climate and educate the campus community about climate change and sustainability. A group of dedicated students, faculty, and staff developed the 2012-2020 Sustainability Strategic Plan (http://www.uccs.edu/sustain/overview/ucss-commitments.html), which identifies specific goals, actions and measurable outcomes to expand sustainability-related education and research. To achieve this goal, students will gain knowledge on how to promote sustainability in their community and place of employment. Campus-wide, students will learn to nurture a sense of place and to participate effectively in new experiences and perspectives, regardless of their major.

Dr. David Havlick, Assistant Professor in the Geography and Environmental Studies Department and the Director of the Sustainable Development Minor, as well as one of many people overseeing UCCS’s general education curriculum states, “[We] are making this program so it makes people want to come to UCCS. We would really like for the sustainability requirement to become a key feature of the campus’ signature General Education program.” UCCS could see the new general education requirements beginning in fall 2014.
With the new general education requirements in place, each department will have their own set of classes with sustainability topics integrated into them—either taught to students in one specific course, or integrated across several major degree requirements. Students will still take courses that associate with their major, but with sustainable concepts and ideas blended into the coursework.

Faculty and instructors will have access to educational resources for identifying the appropriate courses and content to achieve the sustainability component. “The Sustainability Committee and faculty from the different colleges here at UCCS have really tried to make this an open process,” explains Havlick. “We opened this idea up to the campus community and held student and faculty focus groups for any questions and comments individuals had.”

There are many ways instructors can implement sustainability concepts and content in the courses, including: in course content, required readings, course objectives, assignments or activities, among other ways. For more information regarding UCCS general education requirements, see http://www.uccs.edu/provost/general-education.html.