

# CHICOSTATE Inside

Volume 36, Number 3; November 10, 2005.

## A Sustainable Future

On October 7 of this year, the campus welcomed Jane Goodall, known throughout the world for her work in the 1960s with chimpanzees in Tanzania and for her environmental activism since the 1970s. She was here for the President's Lecture Series, and she brought a message of hope and inspiration that reminded her audience how every day each one of us makes choices that affect the lives of people throughout the world. She was speaking, specifically, of the choices people make in their use of finite resources and the impact the choices of one generation have on future generations. Education is the primary means by which we help people understand the fragility of the world in which we live and the differences their choices make.

In 2005, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) proclaimed a decade of education for sustainable development. The values that undergird this initiative are worth identifying. Sustainable development promotes

- A vital and sustainable economy.
- Respect for the dignity of people throughout the world.
- A commitment to social justice.
- Respect for the rights of future generations.
- Respect and care for the greater community of life in all its diversity, which involves the protection and restoration of the Earth's ecosystems.†

Education for sustainable development is values driven and assumes that the peoples of the world have a common future, which means learning to act together. Education for sustainable development requires an understanding of the relationships among poverty, wasteful consumption, environmental degradation, health, and the world conflicts that result from a competition for shrinking natural resources. Sustainable development also requires us to train caring citizens who exercise their rights both locally and globally. Such an effort requires an interdisciplinary and holistic approach, embedded in the whole curriculum, drawing on different disciplines and pedagogies. In short, any effort involving sustainability on a campus will include three essential components: the curriculum, our outreach to the community, and our own campus practices.

Our campus and community are special places. The clean water that runs through Bidwell Park and the campus would be regarded as a miraculous resource in many areas of the world. Our clean air, sunshine, and vital agricultural community are the envy of many. Protecting this landscape requires a respectful awareness of what we have and what we need to leave to future generations of students.

Historically, and currently, our students have taken the lead in engaging in wise environmental practices and in connecting to the community. A list of all that our students are doing would fill an entire issue of *Inside Chico State*. Let us just encourage you to learn about the Green Campus Initiative ([greencampuschico@sbcglobal.net](mailto:greencampuschico@sbcglobal.net)). This co-curricular effort seeks to reduce energy consumption, encourage solar-covered bike parking, and establish "green" computer labs.


We are one of the few campuses in the country to have an endowed chair in environmental literacy. We also have the Bidwell Environmental Institute to enhance grant and contract activity and to encourage the development of an enriched environmental curriculum. Our Academic Senate endorsed the Talloires Declaration in 2002, which proposed a set of actions to deepen an awareness of sustainability, to change campus practices relating to the use of energy, and to embed the study of sustainability across the curriculum. We take that declaration seriously.

On September 13, we called a meeting to assess campus interest, curricular and research strengths, campus sustainability practices, and our connection to the community. It was clear that, building on what we are doing, we can become a campus known nationally for its leadership in

- Environmental education and environmental sciences.
- Building environmentally friendly facilities and sharing information about sustainable business practices.
- Our stewardship of public land.
- Serving our community and the North State through knowledge and engagement in the management of land and natural resources.

- Educating environmentally literate students.
- Helping people realize that a vital and a sustainable economy are inextricably linked.

Let us consider how we might combine some of these goals. The diverse agricultural community that makes up Northern California is constantly threatened by the rising costs of doing business and by pressures to take agricultural land out of production. This means that food supplies, not only for our region but for a goodly part of the United States, are threatened. As part of a sustainability program, we would try to help our community address issues such as these and raise awareness at the national level. Our students, while working on these problems, would become more aware of their ability to make a difference.

Here is our question: "Given the importance of issues of sustainability, should we now add one more belief statement to our Strategic Plan for the Future? A sixth priority might parallel our others, such as, "Believing in the importance of student engagement and the need to create environmentally literate citizens, we will develop a sustainability plan for the campus that focuses on community outreach, the curriculum, and campus practices." If your answer is yes, we can become one of the few public universities in the country known for its creative problem solving in the area of sustainability and for its commitment to the future. The opportunity to address this question will formally be before the University soon, as we consider a draft update to our Strategic Plan. We look forward to this examination of our distinctiveness and future. 

—Paul J. Zingg and Scott G. McNall

† See UNESCO, Education for Sustainable Development, Oct. 3, 2005, "Background," "Concepts," and "Objectives."