Wasatch Experience Impact Summary

The summer of 2014 was an effective beginning for the year-long Wasatch Experience Faculty Sustainability Workshops. Sixteen faculty members, led by four mentors, worked in interdisciplinary teams to integrate the big ideas of sustainability into their courses.

Immersion into core ideas like systems thinking, justice and life-cycle analysis allowed faculty to integrate sustainability content in some unique and powerful ways. For example, in a course on Materials Science, students disassembled old appliances to explore themes of design, recyclability, waste, value, and production. An instructor in Ethnic Studies added systems mapping as an assignment to explore how indigenous women have sustained culture and community within ecological limits over time. And faculty from the Political Science department devoted the final module of an international relations course to issues with a global sustainability frame to them.

The numbers show the ripple effect of Wasatch Experience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating departments/colleges</th>
<th>New Sustainability Teaching Scholars</th>
<th>Courses with new descriptions/outcomes</th>
<th>Additional classes impacted</th>
<th>Presentations and collaborations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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Faculty participating in the workshops appreciated support from and connection to a broader network of sustainability-minded colleagues, the chance to develop collaborative partnerships in teaching and research, and access and exposure to useful sustainability-related materials. Their comments tell an impressive story:

“After The Wasatch Experience, I was able to incorporate sustainability as both a major theoretical and practical element of the course itself … Many of the resources and readings that were provided during the workshop allowed me to expand my conception of how and when sustainability could be directly connected to other subject matter that I had not previously thought of as related. —NUTR faculty

“I am much more aware of the resources on campus. I feel solidarity with others pursuing this important goal. I also see how the topic applies to every field on campus, not just to my own or the ENVST program. —POL S faculty

“The year-long workshop has more than surpassed my expectations and allowed me to go beyond my initial objectives. Because of the partnerships and
collaborations developed in the Wasatch Experience, I not only feel connected to and supported by a broader network of sustainably minded faculty at the university, but also have developed collaborative partnerships in teaching and research as a result of the workshop. —ANTH faculty

The fact that the workshop involved people from a wide range of disciplines allowed me to see ways in which sustainability could be taught in courses that would not have struck me as closely related to sustainability, and that helped me to see new ways in which I could use sustainability as a framing device for units in my own course. —PHIL faculty

Using the three pillars of sustainability to help thematize the course was a key for me. I had previously thought of sustainability mostly in ecological terms, so drawing the connections to economics and social justice was something I would not have been able to do as effectively before the workshop. —PHIL faculty

And the effort is already having an impact on students:

Students demonstrated a strong interest in topics related to sustainability and responded favorably to the introduction of engineering applications in this area. —ME EN faculty

Introducing a sustainability perspective (via a reading and an activity) at the outset also allowed more in depth discussion of several course topics (students were clearly more attentive to sustainability dimensions in this round of teaching). —ECON faculty

By the end of the course, most students seemed to have a sustainability mindset. When I asked which course-related issues they will follow after the course, over one half indicated sustainability questions. —ECON faculty