

# Lifestyle

## Green job opportunities appear to be growing

### SOU students see hope for future employment

By Jude Wait  
For the Tidings  
May 26, 2009 3:25 PM

Sporting locally made t-shirts with their personal carbon footprint number on the back, students in Steve Schein's Sustainability Leadership class presented the results of their search for green jobs across the Pacific Northwest.

"It feels like an explosion in mainstream attention, and a tipping point," observed one community member.

More than 50 people attended the Sustainability Leadership Symposium last week, which was part of the second annual Southern Oregon Arts and Research (SOAR) celebration at Southern Oregon University (SOU).

Steve Schein, Program Coordinator for SOU's new Certificate in Sustainability Leadership, in his fifth year of teaching in the SOU School of Business, designed the program "for the next generation of leaders, where success is measured by the Triple Bottom Line — the three E's of sustainability: Environment, Equity and Economy," he said.

A core class of the program, Schien said "it offers a broad understanding of all of the major applied areas of sustainability, including alternative transportation, waste reduction, renewable energy, green building, corporate social responsibility, fair trade, localization, and community finance."

Both undergraduate and graduate level students are eligible for the Certificate.

In addition to snapshots of the growing database the class is compiling, with nearly 200 jobs, companies and other resources, most of the ten presentations pointed to the local opportunities — including what homeowners can do, the importance of education, respecting what nature has to offer, and lessons from the past.

"This course should be a requirement in the MBA program," said James Smekal, MBA candidate who shared his research on green building. "This class is changing the way I view my work in the world, and Oregon seems to be way ahead."

Even in a depressed housing market, one company Smekal researched could not keep up with demand for their green building construction services.

"Residential buildings yield nearly half of the building-related green house gas emissions from fossil fuels," MBA candidate Steve Vincent said. "Investing in home-based energy efficiency measures can have a significant benefit in stemming the climate change trends."

After buildings, transportation and industry are the other big pieces of the CO2 emission pie chart, according to Schein.

Renewable Energy researcher Rockelle Holcomb showed how one homeowner benefited from incentive payments and tax credits that reduced the investment cost of solar electric and solar water heating systems by more than a third. She emphasized the need to "check out what is going to work for your specific home situation, before you decide to pursue solar, wind or ground source heat pumps."

For instance, it takes 10-mph winds to drive a wind turbine, Holcomb said.

An environmental educator who holds a bachelor of science in psychology from the University of Oregon, John Mackin believes that "Understanding ecosystems is essential to facing challenges of building sustainable communities, economies and technologies."

He illustrated this point by describing the discipline called Biomimicry, whereby "technological innovation based on lessons from nature can bring new efficiencies."

He showed the example of how Mercedes studied the hydrodynamic efficiency of the tropical boxfish, as they set out to create their new aerodynamic Bionic turbodiesel car that gets up to 84 mpg.

Tracey Dolezal, an environmental studies major pursuing the newly instituted Certificate in Sustainability Leadership, values ecological literacy to be as important as teaching the facts of life, and stated: "Economic deficits we borrow from each other, but ecological deficits we take from future generations."

Ashland is not the only city where children might have an opportunity to have a multi-purpose outdoor classroom. Amid current budget crises faced by schools and counties, "we're focused on being more innovative with the resources we do have, like bringing in local farmers to teach the kids how to work in their own school gardens, growing the food they eat in the cafeteria," said Sherry Ely, business director for the Grant Pass School District.

"All the jobs in school districts, whether in safety, maintenance, purchasing or food services, require a view of sustainability, and there's no better place to start than with our Farm to School program," Ely said.

Inspired by their research on corporate social responsibility, business students are redefining their role in sustainability. MBA candidate Jinno Ordinez is focused on strategy, and will help advance the use of "internet technology through the green revolution." Carter Franklin would consider work as a "green field salesman" for an exemplary company like 3M, whose motto is "Pollution Prevention Pays." He also values the idea of "eco-auditing — a way to ensure the claims in CSR are credible, and not green washing."

Another student defined social responsibility as meaning that "your decision-making, both short term and long term, considers the costs and benefits to an entire community, not just your consumer; It is a mutual respect for anyone and anything that could be affected by the decision you make."

Schein explained that, for him, "sustainability is studied on several scales — global, national, regional and local — but the most important is the personal."

The Sustainability Leadership Certificate coursework explores how personal values and future goals relate to the practice of sustainable organizational leadership. For more information, contact Steve Schein, [ScheinSt@sou.edu](mailto:ScheinSt@sou.edu).