
Preface

Institutions of higher education have been among the leading places where sustainability is promoted on campus and beyond. For example, universities and colleges have been on the forefront of embracing green building design and adopting technological innovations to reduce their ecological footprint. As suggested by these examples, higher education institutions' efforts to transition toward sustainability have been largely dominated by natural science and engineering-based approaches. Consistent with the broader sustainability movement, however, universities and colleges are beginning to recognize that this is not enough and that the transition to sustainability cannot be achieved without attention to the human dimension. Administrators, campus sustainability, and other university staff, faculty members, students, alumni as well as external constituents all play roles in which sustainability innovations and initiatives are considered and pursued, how they are implemented, and through their behaviors or participation (or lack thereof), determine the ultimate success of sustainability efforts.

The social sciences, with their focus on human behavior and interactions, therefore have an important role to play in understanding and overcoming the sustainability challenges confronting universities and colleges. Yet, in our experience, relatively little is known about just what role the social sciences can play to help higher education institutions transition to sustainability or their role is fraught with misperceptions. As such, we believe the potential contributions of the social sciences to advancing campus sustainability are currently not being optimized.

The goal of this book, to the best of our knowledge the first on this topic, is to address what we perceive as some of the challenges to the greater use of the social sciences to advance the sustainability goals and efforts of higher education institutions. The chapters introduce readers to different, relevant theories from a range of basic and applied social science disciplines and illustrate how these can be applied to a variety of sustainability challenges confronting higher education campuses. Moreover, we asked the authors to avoid the use of disciplinary jargon which has traditionally made much of social science research inaccessible to non-experts, and they delivered! In light of this, readers should find the book's content comprehensible and "user-friendly."

Readers will gain a sense of the breath of the social science disciplines that can contribute to advancing campus sustainability efforts, of the types of questions that

the respective social science disciplines focus on and thus, the types of campus sustainability challenges they can help to address, the methods these scientists use, and the many and various types of contributions the social sciences can make to developing, implementing, and evaluating campus sustainability initiatives.

This book is structured in two parts. Part I presents an overview of theoretical frameworks and analyses. It outlines some of the issues concerning campus sustainable development research, the links with internationalization of higher education institutions and fostering of competences, among other issues.

Part II introduces a set of projects and case studies on social sciences and sustainable development at universities, including on assessing resources and dynamic capabilities to implement the projects and aspects of community-specific sustainability initiatives, and takes a look at obstacles to curriculum greening. It also introduces a case study on changing energy behavior through community-based social marketing.

We thank the authors for their willingness to share their knowledge, know-how, and experiences and hope that the content gathered here supports current and future efforts toward realizing the potential of the social sciences in advancing sustainable development on campuses across the globe.

Enjoy your reading!

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