



May 12, 2014

To: AASHE STARS

From: Professor John Katers

Re: Fall 2013 Sustainability Learning Community

In the Fall 2013, the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay launched a pilot Learning Community program with the goal of giving sophomores an opportunity to engage in a truly interactive learning experience on a pressing social issue within a small group setting. Community members took a common set of three linked courses that all related in some way to the theme of the community and attended an additional course meeting each week where the students and all three professors of the courses further discussed the topics at hand. There was also a required field trip to a wind energy installation and the Aldo Leopold Foundation.

The Sustainability Learning Community focused on the interconnections between science, business and philosophy, in relation to the concept of sustainability. This is an increasingly important area that all students as future participants in the global economy need to understand as they will be dealing with climate change, increasing population, and resource scarcity. Courses that the students took as part of the Sustainability Learning Community included my course, Environmental Science 260 – Energy and Society; Business Administration 202 – Business and Its Environment, taught by Don McCartney; and, Philosophy 101 – Introduction to Philosophy taught by Dr. Christopher Martin.

The students were engaged in the coursework and at the end of the semester, comments showed the Learning Community program structure provided these students with a unique perspective on the interrelationships between academic disciplines that tied to real-world issues. It should also be noted that many of these students subsequently enrolled in the Certificate Program in Sustainability, offered through the Environmental Management and Business Institute. Because of this successful pilot, the Sustainability Learning Community will be offered again in the 2015-2016 academic year.