AMERICAN LEADERSHIP ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Guide to incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals into education at U.S. universities

This resource guide presents options for universities to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their educational activities by assessing how they align with the SDGs and implementing programs based on those findings.

It is a part of a series of guides for U.S. universities interested in engaging with the SDGs. The full series can be found here.

Getting started: Assess how the SDGs are addressed through education at your university

Three ways to explore how the SDGs are addressed through education at your university are manual reviews, automated tools, and surveys. These approaches are most effective when they are employed together as complementary efforts. As the SDGs are broad, starting your analysis at the more descriptive SDG target level can help capture the granularity of your activities. Keep in mind that this process can be just as valuable as the final product. You will likely uncover unexpected connections, identify possible opportunities for action, and connect with potential allies across your institution to close sustainability gaps.

Approach 1: Manually review course descriptions to find alignments with the SDGs	
Benefits	Manual reviews result in a more accurate analysis based on context (e.g., a human reviewer can distinguish when "landslide" is used in relation to an election versus the movement of soil or rock).
How to get started	• Select the time frame for courses you will analyze, taking into consideration your capacity and timeline for completion, and request this information from the registrar. • Establish guidelines to standardize your assessment, especially if more than one person is involved in the review. For example, should there be a cap on how many of the SDGs are connected to a single course? It can be harder to determine where there is more or less activity across the SDGs if each course is connected to too many of them. • Consider engaging students in the analysis to spark their interest in the SDGs.

Approach 2: Use an automated system to review course descriptions for alignments with the SDGs	
Benefits	Automated tools surface general trends using minimal time and resources.
How to get started	- There are several tools and systems that automate text analysis, including [R](#), a popular, free software environment. Carnegie Mellon University's [open-source materials](#) include R code and keyword lists for an automated course mapping. - Consider approaching students or colleagues who may be able to assist in the automated analysis if you are unfamiliar with these tools.

Approach 3: Survey faculty on how their courses align with the SDGs	
Benefits	Asking faculty how their work relates to the SDGs captures information that a third party or automated tool cannot, and also creates valuable engagement opportunities.
How to get started	- Create a short survey with questions asking faculty whether or not they are familiar with the SDGs, how they are addressing the SDGs in their work, and how specific courses align to the SDGs. - In order to encourage participation, it is helpful to provide an incentive for people to respond, such as a gift card or another small giveaway. - Individual interviews or focus groups may also be helpful.

Next steps: Implement programs that meet your university's goals

Based on this analysis, explore programming options that meet your institution's goals for engaging with the SDGs. Here are examples of what U.S. universities have implemented.

Tag courses with relevant SDGs	Tag courses with the SDGs so students can find relevant courses outside of their disciplines that will enhance their understanding of sustainability. Carnegie Mellon University has created an [interactive site](#) and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, [publishes a course list by SDG](#).
Connect instructors with resources	Share guides for faculty to incorporate the SDGs into courses, such as [Accelerating Education for the SDGs in Universities](#) and [Education for Sustainable Development](#), or develop resources specific to your institution that empower faculty to teach about the SDGs.
Encourage inclusion of the SDGs into syllabi	Encourage faculty to include the SDGs in their syllabi to enhance both student and faculty understanding of how courses connect to sustainability.
Create communities of practice	Establish communities of practice for faculty who are interested in sharing and learning from each other about how to use the SDGs in their courses.