

Curriculum for the Bioregion: Connecting Teaching and Learning to a Citizenship of Place

Land Cover

- Water
- Ice/Snow
- Residential
- Commercial/Industrial
- Non Vegetated/Transitional
- Deciduous Forest
- Coniferous Forest
- Mixed Forest
- Shrublands/Transitional
- Grasslands/Herbaceous
- Agriculture/Cultivated
- Wetlands



“life places” . . .

Our environment is everywhere around us. Puget Sound is right out the car window as well as in the headlines. Yet, most college students say they know little to nothing about the issues facing the Sound and this region.

If we come to understand our local piece of the environment through active learning, our understanding will last. And it will become the foundation for understanding broad, complex, systemic issues—healthy communities and ecosystems, environmental justice, and sustainability. Undergraduates tell us that this is the way they want to learn; growing numbers of faculty are excited about teaching this way too. The Curriculum for the Bioregion initiative is working to make active learning about our local environment a part of every undergraduate’s academic experience. Bioregions are, literally, “life places”—defined by the intertwined natural and social systems upon which we rely for our well-being. Situating learning *in* our bioregion means engaging students with the immediacy and significance of what is happening here, connecting classroom learning to local places, issues, people, and practices. Creating curriculum *for* our bioregion aims to give students both the tools—and the inspiration—to assume responsibility for environmental and community stewardship here, or wherever they live.

Strategies

Curriculum for the Bioregion is now in development - a planned array of place-based learning opportunities across multiple academic disciplines created by a community of faculty members from institutions across the bioregion. Activities include:

- “Faculty learning communities” within and across disciplines to build place-based learning and sustainability concepts into college and university classes;
- Leadership institutes on curriculum development for campus teams, with seed grants for those teams to involve additional faculty members on their home campuses;
- Workshops and conferences to share teaching approaches and resources;
- Field- and community-based workshops that update faculty about pressing bioregional issues as well as the people and organizations working on solutions; and
- A website that shares curriculum activities, learning opportunities, and teaching resources.

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Participating Campuses in the Puget Sound Bioregion

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|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Antioch University Seattle | Seattle Central Community College |
| Bellevue College | Seattle Pacific University |
| Cascadia Community College | Seattle University |
| Centralia College | Saint Martin’s University |
| Cornish School of the Arts | Shoreline Community College |
| Edmonds Community College | South Puget Sound Community College |
| Everett Community College | South Seattle Community College |
| Grays Harbor College | Skagit Valley College |
| Green River Community College | Tacoma Community College |
| Highline Community College | The Evergreen State College |
| North Seattle Community College | University of Puget Sound |
| Northwest Indian College | University of Washington Bothell |
| Olympic College | University of Washington Seattle |
| Pacific Lutheran University | University of Washington Tacoma |
| Peninsula College | Whatcom Community College |
| Pierce College | Western Washington University |

*“Learning in this way
has made me not only a more
conscious and compassionate
citizen, it has evoked
personal lifestyle changes . . .
I have never felt more
engaged in my living space.”*

Student reflection,
“Bioregional Field Studies”
class at University of Washington.

The Washington Center

Established by the Washington State Legislature in 1987, the Washington Center is a statewide resource for two- and four-year higher education institutions, with a national reach and a sustained record of educational reform. The Center serves as a National Resource Center for Learning Communities—a proven strategy for accelerating student progress, increasing student engagement, and improving student learning. Washington Center’s work is focused on: (1) improving students’ college readiness and completion rates; (2) providing professional development, technical assistance, and developmental evaluation for educational reform initiatives; (3) offering intensive curriculum planning retreats, institutes, and consultations; and (4) connecting campuses and communities through projects like Curriculum for the Bioregion.

How You Can Get Involved

To learn more, contact Jean MacGregor (360-867-6608) or macgjean@evergreen.edu
Website: Visit <http://bioregion.evergreen.edu>

Visuals and photos: Cover created by Tom Carlson, University of Washington Tacoma, with 2001 Landsat 7 imagery; territorial view by Ross Mulhausen, University of Puget Sound; inset photos from The Evergreen State College, University of Washington Seattle, North Seattle Community College and the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

