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This Issue: Florida Gulf Coast University, USA

This special section begins a new series in which we take an in-depth look at universities with exemplary programmes in education for sustainability. The academic programmes section usually profiles a particular programme, but occasionally we will profile universities that incorporate sustainability goals throughout their curricula—in their physical plant and business plan and in their governance. We do not expect to find a general model but rather a rich diversity of approaches.

In this issue, we examine Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in Southwestern Florida, a young university that began with sustainability in its mission statement, but struggled to live up to its mission for the past 12 years. The story of how it overcame challenges of doing business as usual by establishing participatory governance structures and reaching out to national and international organisations, such as the National Wildlife Federation, the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment and the Earth Charter Initiative, Humane Society of the United States, may help other universities that are in the midst of a similar struggle to make their campuses and curricula more sustainable. We were also impressed with how FGCU has integrated sustainability into the humanities as well as into science and business curricula. Finally, the university relies heavily on service learning, which integrates the university and the community, so that each can learn from the other.

The story of FGCU is told by the people who made it happen. James Wohlpart, professor and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Joseph Shepard, vice president of administrative services and finance and Peter Blaze Corcoran, professor in the College of Arts and Sciences and Senior Advisor of the Earth Charter Initiative, describe the inception of FGCU and the development of its campus and academics programmes. Shepard and Lewis Johnson, director of environmental health and safety, take us on a tour of the physical plant, which employs many passive and active methods to conserve energy. Sharon Bevins, associate professor and chair of
the physical therapy department and Neil Wilkinson, instructor of environmental science, explain how sustainability is purposefully infused throughout the curricula. Then, professors and instructors give us two examples of how sustainability issues are brought to bear in a writing programme (Rowland, Millner, Hill, Towne and Wohlpart) and in humanities courses, including service learning (Otto and Wohlpart). Finally, Shepard and University President, Wilson G. Bradshaw, discuss priorities for the future.