Intersections between Environment, Economics, and Social Justice

Recognizing that the environment, economics, and social justice intersect and impact our perspectives and experiences in the world, Colorado State University strives to intentionally develop academic programs, research projects, operations initiatives, and engagement campaigns that acknowledge and address this intersectionality.

Here are just a few examples of how the environment, economics, and social justice intersect on a daily basis at Colorado State University:

- Low income communities are more likely to be located near polluting establishments, and suffer from adverse health effects related to pollution, like asthma and attention deficit disorder; whole and organic foods are typically more expensive than highly-processed and fast foods, limiting access to nutritious and sustainable diets; and low income students struggle with food insecurity and first generation students and students of color are more likely to face so much more than their peers. Lack of affordable housing and lack of public transportation can create hardships for low-income students and employees who face long commutes and struggle to secure safe and affordable housing.

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Here are just a few examples of how the environment, economics, and social justice intersect on a daily basis:

- Low income communities are more likely to be located near polluting industries and social justice intersects on a daily basis: address this intersectionality.
- Food insecurity and experiences in the world, Colorado State University recognizes that the environment, economics, and social justice intersect.
- Students and students of color are more likely to suffer from food insecurity. Processed and fast foods, limiting access to nutritious and sustainable diets; whole and organic foods are typically more expensive than highly-processed and fast foods.
- Adverse health effects related to pollution, such as asthma and respiratory issues, are more common in low-income and minority communities.
- The CSU chapter of Engineers Without Borders partners with developing communities in over 45 countries across the world to address some of the most prevalent challenges in these communities, including water purification and delivery, sanitation, transportation and accessibility, and sustainable and renewable energy.
- The CSU chapter has two projects currently underway and one in development.
- CSU Hillel has created a living and learning environment that is open to students of all backgrounds and beliefs.
- The Spoke is a low-cost bike repair shop run by student mechanics as a living lab for students to learn how to make repairs to their bikes.
- Alternative Transportation: CSU is one of just five Platinum-rated Bicycle Friendly Universities in the U.S. of a City of Fort Collins that is providing free or reduced-cost public transportation, and social responsibility.
- CSU has been named a Platinum-Level Bike Friendly University for 9 years and a member since 2000.
- Social Justice Initiatives: The Neighbor to Neighbor program connects employees with local community members to find and retain housing and prevent homelessness.

Operations

- Universal Design: Last chance rooms, shower rooms, break rooms, meditation rooms, gender inclusive restrooms, and free period products ensure access to resources and heighten awareness of multiple identities including religion, gender, ability, and parenthood.
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Research

- Food Systems Research Team: Through an applied and holistic approach to the environment, economics, and social justice, the Food Systems Research Team is working to connect food systems and access with agriculture, natural resources, and economic development communities in the Denver area.
- National Park Service STEM Kits: The Education and Outreach Center within the College of Natural Sciences has a contract with the National Park Service to develop kits on National Park Service (NPS) for kids through 12th grade at various National Parks. The kits allow students to become familiar with local ecosystem in real-time, learn more about climate change, and engage with local communities.

Social Justice Initiatives

- Living Wage: Employees working in low-wage jobs make insufficient to meet minimum standards. Many communities do not offer access to resources and heighten awareness of multiple identities including religion, gender, ability, and parenthood.
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Engagement

- Eco Leaders Program: The largest environmental organizations (budgets over $1 million) in the U.S. are led by and rely on 10% of the staff as people of color.
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Academics

- Global Social Sustainable Enterprise MBA: The unique MBA program seeks to provide sustainable and social enterprise solutions to some of the most stubborn issues of our time including poverty, disaster, malnutrition, and environmental degradation. Graduates go on to create and operate for-profit and nonprofit social enterprises, non-environmental organizations, and to work in multinational companies.
- Global Environmental Sustainability Minor: During the 2017-2018 academic year, the GES minor had more than 100 students enrolled. Offered through the School of Global Environmental Sustainability, the minor requires students to take a range of interdisciplinary courses focused on environmental, economic, and social perspectives of sustainability.
- MS in Conservation Leadership: The 17-month Conservation Leadership Specialization within the Human Dimensions of Natural Resources Department addresses some of the greatest challenges in our society: climate change, biodiversity loss, and human security now and beyond. The program aims to produce leaders who think differently, embrace complexity, and see the human and environmental conditions as an integrated system.
- MS/PhD in Ecology, specialization in Human-Environment Interactions: Increasing rates of poverty, unemployment, and declining health co-occur with rapid shifts in land use, land cover, forest development, and global change. These are all driven by humancentric environmental changes that affect the well-being of individuals, communities, and societies now and in the future. Students in this program learn about the human and environmental conditions and how to address them on both an individual and systems level.
- Sustainable Peace and Reconciliation Studies: By working through the Ralston Programs and Rotary International, CSU is able to influence Sustainable Peace and Reconciliation Studies at the university level in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Nepal.
- Introduction to Sustainable Design and Construction Course: The 3-day course in Cooke, Iowa offered by the Institute for the Built Environment, focuses on energy, healthy buildings, waste reduction, sustainable materials, code design, and environmental topics pertinent to the sustainable practices affecting the built environment. The program participants gain knowledge about best practices through experiential learning and case studies, and cover various aspects of sustainable design.
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  - People of color are more likely to live in low income communities and suffer from adverse health effects related to pollution, like asthma and asthma-like disorders.
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