Campus Sustainability Leadership

Instructor Biographies

Lead Instructors

Stephanie Kaza

Dr. Stephanie Kaza is Professor of Environmental Studies Emeritus at the University of Vermont and Director of the Environmental Program. Her courses include Unlearning Consumerism; Religion and Ecology; Women, Health, and Environment; and other values-based courses. She co-founded the Environmental Council at University of Vermont, a campus-wide consortium on sustainability, and is the faculty director for the UVM Sustainability Faculty Fellows program. She advises graduate and undergraduate research on sustainability related topics and is currently working on quality of life indicators for bicycle commuters.

Dr. Kaza is the 2011 winner of the UVM George V. Kidder Outstanding Faculty Award for excellence in teaching. Her books include Mindfully Green (2008), Hooked! Buddhist Writings on Greed, Desire, and the Urge to Consume (2005), Dharma Rain: Sources for Buddhist Environmentalism (2000, co-edited with Kenneth Kraft), and The Attentive Heart: Conversations with Trees (1993). She serves on the Executive Councils of the Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences and the Council of Environmental Deans and Directors and is vice-president of the UVM Faculty Senate.

Elizabeth Palchak

Elizabeth is a PhD student in the Rubenstein School of Natural Resources at the University of Vermont. She is also a fellow in the Office of Sustainability and at the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics. She was drawn to UVM, in part because of the demonstrated commitment to sustainability. Her interests cross boundaries between the environmental sciences, education and behavioral science. As a fellow in the Office of Sustainability at UVM, she works on socially responsible investing of the University’s endowment. She also teaches courses in the Environmental Program, including Campus Sustainability and Introduction to Environmental Studies.

Prior to beginning her PhD work, Elizabeth lived in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where she was a faculty member in Teton Science Schools’
Graduate Program teaching courses in leadership, climate change science, and systems thinking. Over five years she also created the Sustainability Studies program, developing the first courses that combined the framework of social-ecological systems with the existing ecology curriculum. In addition, she facilitated the development of the first Sustainability Initiative at Teton Science Schools, overseeing a major sustainability audit and the creation of a formal sustainability report. She was also named the organization’s first Sustainability Coordinator.

She has also held a position as Adjunct Professor of Environmental Science at Franklin Pierce University where she developed courses in food systems and sustainability. As a mountain instructor with the National Outdoor Leadership School, she led expeditions in the Rocky Mountains teaching leadership skills in the context of mountain travel. She earned her M.S. from Antioch University New England.

Elizabeth is originally from Michigan. She loves big mountains and backcountry skiing with her husband. She lives in Burlington and is an avid bike commuter.

**Additional Instructors & Guest Lecturers**

**Christina Erickson, Ph.D.**

Christina is the Sustainability Director at Champlain College where she works on integrating sustainability concepts and practices into the institution, operations, academics and culture of the campus. Prior to Champlain, she ran the Eco-Reps Program, a peer-to-peer sustainability outreach program, at the University of Vermont as a Graduate Fellow in the Office of Sustainability. Before UVM she worked as the Sustainability Coordinator at Sterling College in Craftsbury Common, VT where she also taught outdoor education courses.

Christina has a PhD in Natural Resources with a focus in Sustainability Education, from the University of Vermont, a M.S. from the Audubon Expedition Institute at Lesley University’s Ecological Teaching & Learning Program, which focuses on place-based, ecological education and has a B.A. in Environmental Studies and Sociology from St. Lawrence University.

Christina lives in the Old North End of Burlington with her husband, daughter, dog, and chickens. Favorite activities include skiing, canoeing, growing and processing food, and generally playing outside.
Tom Hudspeth

Tom is Professor of Environmental Studies Emeritus in the Rubenstein School of the Environment and Natural Resources. In May 2002, he received UVM’s highest honor, the George V. Kidder Award for Excellence in Teaching. He is a recipient of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Environmental Merit Award and is a 1999 Fulbright Senior Scholar for a German Studies Seminar on “Alternative Forms of Energy and Environmental Protection.” His interests focus on: sustainable community development; environmental education; environmental interpretation; citizen participation in natural resources planning; and international environment issues. Currently he is working on Sustainability Stories: A Field Guide to Sustainability in the Greater Burlington, Vermont, Area.

Dr. Debra Rowe

Debra is the President of the U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development (www.uspartnership.org). The U.S. Partnership convenes members of the business, education, communities, government, and faith sectors of the U.S. and catalyzes sustainability initiatives. Dr. Rowe is also National Co-coordinator of the Higher Education Associations Sustainability Consortium (www.aashe.org/heasc), Founder of the Disciplinary Associations’ Network for Sustainability (www.aashe.org/dans) and Senior Advisor to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (www.aashe.org ).

Through the American Association of Community Colleges, she was also a U.S. Designee to the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics’ for their international sustainability group. She helps higher education associations and institutions integrate sustainability into mission, curricula, research, student life, purchasing and investments, facilities and operations, and community partnerships. She also teaches the Corporate Sustainability online for the University of Vermont.

Debra Rowe is often a keynote speaker at national and international education conferences. She is the author or editor of numerous publications on the integration of sustainability into education including an encyclopedia on Sustainability .

Debra has been professor of energy management, renewable energy technology and psychology for over 29 years at Oakland Community College. Oakland Community College offers degrees in Environmental Systems Technologies and certificates in Renewable Energies and Sustainable Living (www.oaklandcc.edu/est) . Dr. Rowe created a model energy services technician degree design for community and technical colleges, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. She also created and teaches energy management and renewable energies in an on-line format with National Science Foundation support as professional development for community college faculty offered by the Consortium for Education in Renewable Energy Technology. Dr Rowe is presently working with the American Association of Community Colleges to create the Sustainable Economy Resource Center (www.theSeedCenter.org) that is designed to share curricula, partnership models, quality criteria, and promising practices relating to sustainability and green energy. She has helped numerous colleges develop their energy curricula.

Michelle Smith

Michelle is the Green Building Coordinator at the University of Vermont. She helps to facilitate the USGBC’s LEED process, is involved in strategic capital planning, and works collaboratively across campus to advance sustainability initiatives within university operations. She has also co-taught an undergraduate campus sustainability course, and recently managed an EPA grant which produced an online program and waste tracking tool to minimize construction & demolition (C&D) waste. She is the Vice President of the Staff Council, chair of its Employee Environment and Facilities Committee, and a founding board member and chair of the Education Committee of the Vermont Green Building Network, the USGBC VT chapter. Michelle is a LEED AP and graduated from the University of Vermont in 2002 with a B.S. in Environmental Studies, with a focus in ecological design and green building practices.

Gioia Thompson

Gioia has been working on sustainable practices at the University of Vermont since 1996, where she has recently been appointed director of the new Office of Sustainability. She is responsible for tracking the institution’s environmental performance; recommending environmentally responsible practices; working with students, faculty members, and staff members on environmental projects; and connecting with the Vermont and higher education communities.

Gioia has been working since 1996 with the UVM Environmental Council, a group of faculty, staff, students, and community members dedicated to promoting excellence in academic programs and campus operations. Her 2002 publication Tracking UVM: Environmental Report Card 1990-2000 has been hailed as a model for tracking environmental performance. Recent activities include support of the EcoReps, a residential education program; developing public information for the University’s new LEED™ Gold certified student commons; analyzing the University’s greenhouse gas emissions; co-teaching a project-based course focusing on the Presidents’ Climate Commitment; and participating in regional and national professional dialogue on environmental performance in higher education. She currently serves on the steering committees of the Northeast Campus Sustainability Consortium and the Burlington Legacy Project.

Gioia received a B.A. in Environmental Studies in 1987 with an honors thesis on municipal leaf composting, and an M.S. in Natural Resources in 2000 on sustainability in higher education, both from the University of Vermont.