

# What is the Role of Undergraduate Institutions in Environmental Education?

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Environmental education at the undergraduate level had its first major blossoming about thirty years ago. The popularity of this curriculum then waned until the mid 1980s, from which time environmental curricula appear to be undergoing a renaissance. Yet, a serious question still must be asked: How many undergraduate institutions address environmental issues at all, or in any degree of depth, and more importantly, how many address these issues outside of a strict scientific context? As it is a fact that graduates of liberal arts colleges comprise a larger percentage of graduate and professional school enrollments than do those of large universities, are these institutions educating future professionals and civic leaders to be competent to make the myriad of environmental decisions with which they certainly will be faced? How successful have undergraduate institutions been in incorporating a trans-disciplinary approach to this area? Do students receiving degrees in such "non- environmental" disciplines as economics, engineering, and sociology, to mention a few, recognize the interdigitation of their disciplines with the environment? More importantly, is the interdigitation of those disciplines with environmental issues being taught? If not, what could and should be done to incorporate analyses of environmental concerns into these and other disciplines? If a goal of sound education is to prepare a citizen to make reasoned decisions on issues of significance, then the way in which our youth are taught must be carefully analyzed. Environmental concern is no longer, and can no longer be, the sole concern of the scientific community. Education must adapt to broaden its focus on these issues.