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English 102

11/21/13

Our future took place yesterday

As the summer of my junior year in high school approached I had no idea I would spend the whole break dwelling in new waters. Never having worked a job before, it was a surprise to have been chosen as one of two inters in the 2012 United States Geological Survey (USGS) summer internship program. This was where I was first introduced to water quality treatment methods and a branch of environmental science. With this the yearning for a way to help our society grew. However being a relatively new topic and being obscured with controversy it is a difficult path to follow. When searching for relevant peer-reviewed one will spend countless hours due to the little amount of publications to date. From prior knowledge my understanding of this profession had been limited to water quality and water preservation, but in my research I discovered that environmental scientists have a very bright future within sustainability, and am now beginning to explore alternatives in bio-mimicry specifically.

To effusively encompass what this major deals with and what it is like to be in a relatively unknown or emergent field, one must have a glimpse or its roots.

Environmental science has a background full of obstacles and controversy. In the book

“Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things”, writers William McDonough and Michael Braungart evaluate practices in today’s society. In their book they state “Modern industries still operate according to paradigms that developed when humans had a very different sense of the world” (McDonough and Braungart 26). At that time society believed resources to be infinite, and it would be absurd to run out of everything mother earth provides. In 1972 the UN convened the Conference on the Human Environment where “the global community acknowledged that more exploration was needed of the inter-relationships between the environment and socio-economic issues of poverty and underdevelopment” (Education, par. 2). Thus the concept of sustainable development arose in the 1980s in response to a growing consciousness of the need to balance economic and social progress with trepidation for the environment and the stewardship of natural resources.

The notion of sustainability has since permeated the globe. It has been integrated within courses, at select universities across America. It has also been used to refer to “green” campus ingenuities at numerous international and national universities, including: Yale, Stanford, Harvard, Arizona State University, UMass, UMass Amherst, UMass Boston, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Alaska Anchorage, George Washington University, Colombia, and most importantly here at our very own Washington State University. Historically MIT is part of an international partnership called the Alliance for Global Sustainability (AGS). Created in 1997, the Alliance “brings together hundreds of university scientists, engineers, and social

scientists to address complex issues that lie at the intersection of environmental, economic and social goals” (AGS).

In 1999 Dow Jones launched Sustainability Indexes, which were “the first global indexes tracking the financial performance of the leading sustainability-driven companies worldwide” (Dow Jones). These indexes kept track of a couple companies who were thought to be the next hits on Wall Street. However many have ceased to operate due to lack of support. By 2002, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ESCO), had acknowledged social justice and poverty as “key principles to development that is sustainable” (ESCO) at the UN Johannesburg Summit. The human and social facets of sustainable advance meant that cohesion, fairness, syndicate and cooperation were as fundamental as scientific methodologies to environmental protection.

Furthermore at the 2002 Summit, the United Nations General Assembly declared the years 2005–2014 to be the “Decade for Education on Sustainable Development”. The proclaimed decade for education on sustainable development was used “As a way of signaling that education and learning lie at the heart of advances in sustainable development” (ESCO). In accordance with ESCO the United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) believed that “Improving the quality of education and reorienting its objectives to distinguish the importance of sustainable development must be one of UNESCO’s and the world’s uppermost priorities”. At this time the Association of University Leaders for Sustainable Future (AULSF), whose mission has been to “make sustainability a major focus of teaching, research, operations