

## OPENING THE PORTAL TO SUSTAINABILITY BY BREAKING DOWN ACADEMIC SILOS

Daniel Meyers\*, Program of the Environment, University of Washington

Site Supervisor: Marilyn Ostergren, UW Sustainability, University of Washington

Faculty Advisor: Claudia Frere-Anderson, UW Sustainability, University of Washington

Universities and college campuses have a history of preparing students to solve the problems of the world, but academic silos hinder the ability of students to learn. Academic silos form when members of an academic field become isolated from other departments leading to a lack of collaboration across departments. As a result, academic silos prevent students from becoming interdisciplinary problem solvers and limit their ability to understand complex topics such as sustainability. The purpose of this study was to look into potential techniques and tools for breaking down academic silos on university campuses. To accomplish this goal, I worked with UW sustainability to create a sustainability portal and interviewed members of the UW community on their ideas for breaking down academic silos. Findings show that the command structures, views of sustainability, financial situations, and community layouts on university campuses all contribute to academic silos. The techniques and tools recommended to address these issues include involving all levels of the hierarchy in the decision making process, universities developing a definition for their vision of sustainability, financial incentives for interdisciplinary research, and creating a community on campus. These techniques and tools are valuable to the University of Washington and other universities across the world that want to integrate sustainability into their campuses. In addition, these findings may be valuable to other industries where silos are a problem such as the medical and pharmaceutical industries.