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# Forming a community partnership to enhance education in sustainability

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – To provide an example of how colleges can partner with local EcoVillages to further sustainability curriculum on campus and the educational mission of the EcoVillages, and to strengthen ties with the community.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Describes four structured courses developed for the Environmental Studies Program, including sustainable communities, sustainable land use, sustainable energy and environmental futures. Additionally, independent research opportunities in wind energy, solar photovoltaics, and GIS/GPS developed as part of the curriculum. Describes numerous ancillary activities that have promoted sustainability across campus and the community.

**Findings** – Provides information about how to develop educational partnerships with community groups, foster sustainability education on campus, recruit additional faculty involvement, and influence college operations with respect to sustainability.

**Practical implications** – A very useful source of information for those involved in building sustainability curriculum and linking it to campus operations and community outreach.

**Originality/value** – This paper describes a unique partnership between a college and an intentional community that serves as a model for other colleges and universities.

**Keywords** Partnership, Sustainable development, Universities

**Paper type** Case study

## Introduction

Environmental Studies (ES) Programs at undergraduate institutions face considerable challenges because they are inherently multi-disciplinary. This has led to a criticism of many such programs for curricular incoherence, shallow and hyper-diverse curricula and a lack of program planning and vision (Soulé and Press, 1998). As a relative newcomer to the growing number of ES Programs, Ithaca College (IC) sought to develop a focused curriculum in ES that incorporates the most successful aspects of other programs and the suggestions of critics of the academic discipline to provide a new model of education in ES. We chose to academically unify our curriculum by focusing on the concept of sustainability, and to broaden our course and research project offerings, while encouraging student community action, by formalizing our

