

12-14 APRIL

2024 EARTH CHARTER CONFERENCE

Reimagining education for Ecological
Civilizations

SPEAKERS AND ABSTRACTS



One Human Family and One Earth Community: My Journey into Leading a Values-based University



James Wohlpart

President, Central
Washington University

My journey into and through a values-based leadership philosophy will be shared in this presentation, a philosophy founded on the “imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.” Beginning with my origins in a small college town, and then through my foundational time at Florida Gulf Coast University, I will trace my journey into the presidency at Central Washington University where we are in the process of creating a whole-person, place-based “model learning community of equity and belonging.” Because the Earth Charter has been integral to my journey, this story will be told partly through the way in which my leadership philosophy has emerged from the new epistemology and the new ontology that the Earth Charter demands.

“Ecological Civilization” and Transformative Education



Mary Evelyn Tucker

Yale Forum on Religion
and Ecology

Creating “ecological civilization” is an idea that originated in China and is spreading beyond it. In 2017 it was enshrined in the Chinese constitution and promoted by the highest levels of government, both national and provincial. It is now discussed at Chinese universities by administrators, faculty, and students. It is also present on the ground in organic farms.

The term indicates that something broader, namely cultural values and ethics are needed in the great transformation for a flourishing Earth community. This idea is being picked up in the west with discussion circles (such as “Ecociv”) and ecological practices (such as ecoeconomics and ecoeducation). This talk will illustrate why “ecological civilization” is a critical new path for education for our current challenges.

Envisioning Education in an Ecological Civilization



Jeremy Lent

Author

An ecological civilization envisages a deep transformation of our current civilization, from one based on extraction and exploitation to one based on life-affirming principles, leading to profoundly beneficial changes in virtually every aspect of society—including education. This talk explores how education might be transformed accordingly. Our current education system is designed to deaden the intrinsic creativity of young people and mold them into effective producers and consumers of the global economic machine. We explore the possibilities of an education system which, instead, encourages youngsters to follow their unique aspirations and provides them the tools to cultivate their own deep fulfilment as prosocial members of a thriving society.

Pedagogical Implications of Framing Sustainability, Inclusion, and Global Citizenship through the Principles of the Earth Charter



Namrata Sharma

Faculty at SUNY, Consultant

This featured presentation is centered around the key question: how do we address teaching about sustainability, inclusion, and global citizenship based on alternative paradigms? Value-creating global citizenship education is developed as a pedagogical approach from a study of diverse perspectives, ecological worldviews, and Indigenous knowledge such as reflected in the drafting of the Earth Charter. This approach is aimed to enhance the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, and beyond. The key focus is to build resilience and hope through engaged relationships between learners and their natural, social, and educational environments.

Imagining an Ecological Civilization Through the Lens of the Earth Charter: A Holistic Perspective of Ethics, Voices From the Global South, and Creating a New Educational Story for the Future



Sam M. Crowell Jr.

Senior Researcher and
Faculty, Earth Charter
Center for ESD

Using the Earth Charter becomes most powerful when we act in harmony with its worldview. An ecological civilization not only requires a shift in consciousness and values if it is to be achievable, but we must engage in creating multiple stories of a regenerative future and an education that sustains it. This presentation begins by exploring some key characteristics that unite imagination with action. It considers ethics in terms of alignment rather than solely an intellectual process. It urges us to be receptive to possibilities of using ancient perspectives such as Buen Vivir in today's context and listening to the voices from the Global South. Finally, it encourages us to use storytelling as we imagine a pluriverse of ecological futures using the Earth Charter.

Enhancing our connection with the Community of Life



In this workshop, I will provide theoretical and practical insights into the eco-pedagogical strategy of creative visualization to promote a sense of unity, compassion, and belonging to the planet's community of life.

María Vilches Norat

Faculty, Earth Charter
Center for ESD

Cultivating Wisdom for Ecological Civilizations



Mark Hathaway

Professor, University of
Toronto. Faculty, Earth
Charter Center for ESD

Ecological wisdom emerges from an intimate experience of life's interconnectedness and inherent value. It encompasses various ways of perceiving and understanding, along with knowledge, skills, and emotional intelligence. This wisdom enables humans to listen to Earth, embrace the sacred, and engage in actions fostering harmony among species. Rooted in justice and equity, it seeks the well-being of future generations and goes beyond material pursuits. Building on my ecological wisdom research and insights from O'Sullivan's (1999) transformative learning, this presentation explores implications for reimagining education within O'Sullivan's survive, critique, and create framework. Key themes include attending to, imagining, and co-creating with nature, as well as developing practical skills for a fulfilling life.

Pedagogies of Interbeing for a Regenerative Peace Education



Stephanie Knox Steiner

Professor, University
for Peace

In this presentation, I will weave together themes from my doctoral dissertation on (re)orienting education towards learning life with experiences, learnings, and practices from the Peace Education masters programme at the University for Peace to trace pedagogies for interbeing. Education has the potential to be liberatory and transformative, peace can be learned, and if we want to see a more peaceful, just, regenerative world where all beings can thrive, we must create educational spaces where we can learn towards this world. In this presentation I will outline pedagogies supportive of unlearning and relearning to remember our interbeing with all of life, and explore the possibilities within current structures and institutions while also reaching beyond them towards more generative possibilities.

Radical Hope: Shaping an Alternative Future Out of Narrative and Myths



Grian Cutanda

Avalon Project and
Earth Stories Collection

Adopting an eminently transdisciplinary approach encompassing epistemology, psychology, worldview education, comparative mythology, narrative therapy, futures studies, system dynamics, and sociology, this presentation shares preliminary results of ongoing research building on The Earth Stories Collection. Addressing the imperative to tackle eco-anxiety, particularly among the youth, and fostering hope for a transformative future, the paper proposes creative development for an alternative narrative. Exploring self-organizing mechanisms in complex systems and studying civil society actions, a hypothesis is presented suggesting that diverse world cultures harbor cultural narratives – future myths – arising from the collective unconscious. Aligning these with narratives of the 'dissident minority' may generate a positive systemic attractor, facilitating a civilizational leap towards a more intricate global society, grounded in the Earth Charter's complex worldview.

The relationship of climate event and crisis, forced migration and displacement, and resulting trauma and resiliencies.



Rose Cardarelli

The Education for All
Coalition

This session will serve to inform an audience of educators, care givers, practitioners, government officials, policymakers and more about the relationship of climate event and crisis, forced migration and displacement, and resulting trauma and resiliencies. A focus on the impact of education, social emotional learning, mental and physical well-being as it 1.) relates to climate mitigation decisions so informed policies and investments can be made; 2.) examines the importance of climate education in empowering children to understand, adapt to, and mitigate the impacts of climate change; and 3.) emphasizes the importance of collaboration among stakeholders to provide comprehensive responses and support and to identify ways to leverage partnerships at the local and international levels to work collaboratively.

Retaining Ecological Consciousness and Pathways to Ecological Awakening: Keys for Education for All Ages



Brian Stafford

MD, MPH, Animas Valley
Institute, Pacifica
Graduate Institute

In this presentation, I'll introduce Ecological Consciousness and Ecological Awakening. Ecological consciousness, inherent at birth, is often lost in Westernized societies due to ego- and anthropo-centric influences in parenting, education, and religion. Ecological awakening marks a psychospiritual passage, where individuals, raised in egocentric societies, consciously embrace their primary belonging to the Earth community. I'll discuss necessary changes in child-rearing to preserve innate eco-centric consciousness, exploring pathways to ecological awakening. Drawing from extensive research, I will also highlight eco-awakening moments in the lives of ecological movement leaders and ordinary individuals.

Moving forward with Sustainability in big and small ways



Tim Echols

Commissioner,
Founder, Clean Energy
Roadshow

Long-time energy regulator and clean energy experts talks about how sustainability is more like a jigsaw puzzle and less like a gear box. Echols explores ways that individuals, neighborhoods, schools, cities and even states can live more sustainable lives. He will unpack energy efficiency, recycling, composting, alt-fuel vehicles, solar, RNG, and even hydrogen and how these can be implemented in the right situation. He'll talk about "energy burden" and helping those with less money who would like to participate in the clean energy economy.

Cultural Dimension as the Fourth Pillar of ESD: Interpreting China's Ecological Civilization Education from a Cultural Perspective



Yichen Wang

PhD student at IOE,
University College London

While the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is widely recognized as being underpinned by three pillars: society, environment, and economy—the importance of a fourth pillar, culture, is increasingly recognized yet remains insufficiently explored. This presentation highlights the significance of cultural values in "Ecological Civilization Education (ECE)," a distinctive ESD model in China. Through qualitative analysis of policy documents and teaching practice cases, the presentation reveals how cultural underpinnings are not only encouraged by Chinese policies but are also actively integrated into educational practice. By understanding the cultural dimensions that influence ESD in China, the presentation calls for a culturally enriched global ESD framework, aiming to foster adaptable, culturally responsive strategies suitable for diverse educational settings.



Panel: Teaching for Community, Compassion, and Democracy


Florida Gulf Coast University and Central Washington University, USA

I. Building Strength Through Community

Susan Kaspari and Sasha Wohlpert (Central Washington University)

Students interested in environmental, economic, and social sustainability and who pursue related academic courses or co-curricular activities also often experience anxiety, and even hopelessness, around worsening environmental and societal crises. We explore how The Earth Charter principles can serve as keystones, supporting students as they co-create the knowledge and skills to be sustainability leaders on campus, in their communities, and in their future endeavors.





II. Four Pillars for Change: Transforming Education Through Compassion and The Earth Charter

Andrea Fortin and Maria F. Loffredo Roca (Florida Gulf Coast University)

Teaching the four pillars of the Earth Charter through the lens of compassion offers a transformative perspective. The concept of compassion brings the suffering of others into focus as a catalyst for action to promote positive change. Teaching compassion not only for other people, but also for the environment, can inspire acts of kindness rooted in The Earth Charter's 16 principles.

III: Modelling Democratic Engagement Through Scenario-Based Learning

Miles Mancini, Eric Otto, and Sam Walch (Florida Gulf Coast University)

Civility; peaceful assembly, association, and dissent; mutual understanding, solidarity, and cooperation —these are core Earth Charter values and hallmarks of democratic engagement. But the increasing polarization of public discourse makes it difficult for students to find models for how to practice such engagement. We employ “scenario-based” pedagogy in our team-taught Introduction to Humanities class, allowing students to exercise democratic participation. Role-playing disparate perspectives, students debate ethical questions that arise during weekly fictional scenarios.



Incorporating Sustainability Across the College Curriculum—A Library of Open-Access Content Designed to Facilitate Adoption of SDGs into Course Curricula

Richard Plate, Devon Bazata, Martha Hubertz, Sharon Woodill, Jim Paradiso, Ryan Chabot University of Central Florida

Our team from the University of Central Florida (UCF) has been part of an effort to increase UCF student and faculty awareness of sustainability-related challenges. Anecdotally, when we present or discuss sustainability to people not focused on the topic, they tend to view sustainability narrowly, for example, as recycling or protecting the trees. As a result, while sympathetic to the concept of sustainability, they do not feel particularly connected to it. To address this misperception, we are developing an open-source, online textbook of content designed for adoption by faculty who teach courses that, while not focused on sustainability, cover some overlapping concepts. While this will exist as a textbook, it is more accurate to view it as a library of class resources designed within the framework of the United Nations sustainable development goals. Faculty using our content will be able to adopt single, free-standing activities/exercises that introduce individual SDGs, build skills for addressing SDGs, and show examples of organizations from UCF and Central Florida that are addressing SDGs.

