

Teaching & Learning

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Incorporating Sustainability Across the Curriculum

Dr. Carol Roderick, Centre for Academic and Instructional Development
Dr. Cathy Conrad, Geography

Dr. Cathy Conrad is Saint Mary's Teaching Scholar for the 2010-11 academic year. During her tenure, Dr. Conrad will assist interested faculty to integrate environmental sustainability into their courses.

In achieving its mission, the Saint Mary's community is guided by the core values of academic integrity, the pursuit of knowledge, responsiveness to community needs, openness to change, concerns for a just and civil society, commitment to environmental sustainability, and fiscal responsibility.

The university's academic plan, *Engaging the Vision: Academic Plan 2008–2011* articulates a number of priorities for the university that include environmental responsibility and sustainability. For example, the plan stresses the importance of building on a tradition of community involvement, fostering a culture of civic engagement, and ensuring that social responsibility is recognized as a hallmark of Saint Mary's University. Similarly, the plan calls for the exploration into innovative approaches to curriculum, and the development of ways in which our curriculum supports our vision to be the university of choice for aspiring citizens of the world. The importance of engaging students, faculty and staff in



Photo: Steve Proctor

promoting environmental responsibility on campus and beyond is clear.

Teaching Scholar Project Overview

The primary intent of the *Sustainability Across the Curriculum* initiative is to assist interested faculty to integrate environmental sustainability into a wide array of courses. In this context sustainability is approached as a "...broad, interdisciplinary paradigm, one that cannot be adequately addressed in one program or major and must be approached throughout the curriculum" (Chase and Rowland, 2004, p. 95).

As a result, fourteen faculty members from across campus came together in May 2010 for a one day workshop to discuss sustainability in higher education and to exchange ideas and practices of incorporating sustainability into their courses. The workshop concluded with the commitment by faculty to revise and 'green' one of their courses during the upcoming academic year.

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One University. One World. Yours.



LEAP to Success at Saint Mary's

Dr. Bernadette Gatien, LEAP Coordinator

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Bernadette Gatien is a recent graduate from the Industrial/Organizational Psychology Ph.D. program at Saint Mary's University. She is excited to coordinate this important pilot program. Bernadette's experience both as a faculty member and as a researcher within the departments of Psychology and Management have prepared her well to support the LEAP program.

There are five learning communities for the 2010-2011 academic year including two in Arts, two in Business, and one in Science. Students registered in a learning community complete three courses together: a core course that is limited in enrolment to students in their community, and two linked courses that enrol additional students.

The core course provides a small class experience, the opportunity to get to know at least one professor well, and key elements to enhance student learning and engagement. Faculty members in each community (see table) have been collaborating to deliver an exciting and unique first day of class. In this class, students will meet the three faculty members in their community and learn more about the LEAP program. Students will earn a small portion of their core course grade through the completion of learning strategies sessions related to student success, campus resources, money matters, and developing your career plan. These sessions will be facilitated by student services professionals: Sarah Morris, Donnie Jeffrey, Bobbi Beuree and Shannon Johnston.

LEAP students also have access to a peer mentor. These students have demonstrated success, both academically and socially at university and have an interest in helping first year students succeed. LEAP students will meet with their mentor regularly throughout the term. The mentoring relationship is designed to help students form a network of friends, and to encourage them to participate in the various academic and extra-curricular opportunities available at SMU. Twenty senior students were hired as peer mentors this spring and were trained for their roles this summer.

The transition between high school and university can be overwhelming for first year students. A recent survey indicated that the majority of high school students do not feel prepared for their first year of university (McGraw-Hill Education, 2010). To ease this concern, SMU is piloting an initiative this fall that will help these students to feel confident and to succeed.

In 2009, the Senate Committee on Student Success developed a plan to encourage cross-campus initiatives that enhance students' first year experience. The basis for this plan includes three key success factors: student academic competencies, learning strategies, and social engagement. At an information session held in May 2010, Dr. Terry Murphy, VP Academic, outlined one such initiative: LEAP. LEAP is a pilot program coordinated through the CAID (Centre for Academic and Instructional Development) that adopts a learning community approach to the first year. LEAP stands for Learning, Engagement, Achievement and Peer Mentors.

In just a few short months the LEAP went from vision to reality with the concerted efforts of faculty members, student services, the registrar's office, and many other partners across campus.

Teaching and Learning at Saint Mary's

A forum on teaching and learning sponsored by the Quality of Teaching Committee and edited and produced by the Centre for Academic and Instructional Development. Articles and responses by faculty, students and staff are welcome.

Quality of Teaching Committee Members 2010/11

Faculty Representatives:

Shelagh Crooks, *Arts*
Valerie Creelman, *Commerce*
Zhongmin Dong, *Science*
Anne-Marie Dalton, *Graduate Studies*

Senate Representative: Mark Barr, *English*

Patrick Power Library: Heather Sanderson

Continuing Education: Stefani Woods

Part-Time Faculty Rep: Howard Donohoe, *Geology*

Mature Student Rep: Lisa Verge

SMUSA Rep: Ayesha Mashoodh

Members-At-Large:

Paul Muir, *Mathematics & Computing Science*
Roxanne Richardson, *Biology*
Cathy Conrad, *Geography*
Alec Soucy, *Religious Studies*

Carol Roderick, Margaret-Anne Bennett
Centre for Academic and Instructional Development

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Mary Kendall Brooks
Centre for Academic and Instructional Development

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the Quality of Teaching Committee. The editor reserves the right not to publish a submission.

On September 6th, 2010, LEAP students will attend an interactive orientation session where they will be introduced to and become acquainted with their senior student mentors, fellow LEAP classmates and others within their new university community.

The pilot program will be evaluated through the fall and winter terms to gauge the impact on students' learning experience and success at SMU. Learning community programs similar to LEAP, implemented at other Canadian universities, have proven to be a successful and a worthwhile venture. All those involved in the development and implementation of LEAP are excited about its potential, success to date, and believe that LEAP complements well the various programs and supports for students already offered by the university.

LEAP Faculty

Arts LEAP Community A

Dr. Shelagh Crooks
Dr. Jason Grek-Martin
Dr. Mark Barr

Arts LEAP Community B

Dr. Tim Stretton
Dr. Renee Hulan
Dr. Gene Barrett

Business LEAP Community C

Dr. Sonja Novkovic
Dr. Michael (Xiaoou) Zhang
Ms. Radha Koilpillai

Business LEAP Community D

Dr. Sonja Novkovic
Dr. Paul Dixon
Ms. Radha Koilpillai

Science LEAP Community

Ms. Janet Stalker
Dr. Zhongmin (John) Dong
Dr. Jason Ivanoff

Centre for Academic Technologies



As part of the Centre for Academic and Instructional Development, the Centre for Academic Technologies (CAT) supports the effective use of technology in teaching and learning at Saint Mary's University. Traditionally, our services have been available to faculty members and faculty support staff. With the move to the Atrium, we began also offering our services to students.

Services for Faculty

Blackboard
SMUport
Microsoft Office—Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Access
CPS 'Clickers'
Document scanning
Web 2.0 tools
Video and audio digitization
A/V equipment
Multiple choice exam scanning

Services for Students

Blackboard
SMUport
MS Word
MS Excel
MS PowerPoint
Document scanning
Web 2.0 tools
Photoshop
E-mail
... and More

Contact us for one-on-one consultations, small group training, and in-class presentations.

Location: Atrium 107
Phone: 496.8168
Email: cat@smu.ca
Hours: Mon.-Thurs. 9am-7pm;
Fri. 9am-5pm

Saint Mary's to Participate in 2010-2011 National Survey of Student Engagement



The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an annual survey designed to assess the extent to which students engage in and are exposed to educational practices that correspond to desirable learning outcomes.

During the 2011 winter term (Feb/March), all first year and senior students at Saint Mary's will be invited to participate in the NSSE online survey. Many other universities in the Atlantic region will also be participating in the survey. The NSSE asks students about:

- their exposure to and participation in effective educational practices
- their use of time in and out of class
- what they believe they have gained from their educational experiences

- the quality of the interactions with faculty and other students
- the extent to which they feel the institution provides a supportive environment

Saint Mary's University first participated in the NSSE in 2008. You can read a summary of the results in the Spring 2009 edition of Teaching and Learning at Saint Mary's archived at: www.smu.ca/administration/caid/documents/TL_MAR_2009WEB_002.pdf

The Centre for Academic and Instructional Development (CAID) will be coordinating the survey for the university. More information will be available to faculty and students during the fall term. If you have questions, please contact Margaret-Anne Bennett, Director, CAID, at 420-5087 or margaret-anne.bennett@smu.ca

Generating Student Engagement through Reading and Writing Pre-Class Commentaries

Dr. Larry Haiven, Department of Management

Have you ever walked into a classroom and asked students for their comments on assigned readings only to find out that most students haven't done the reading? Even if they have done the reading, sometimes the students are too shy or too encumbered by inertia to answer.

After running into rooms of tongue-tied students all too often, or having the same two students talking while the rest remain mute, I decided to do something about it. I have found that the following method works best in small or medium-sized classes because it can entail a lot of work for the instructor in large classes. Despite the effort, I think you will agree that the resulting increase in student engagement is worth it.

First, I assign the students a reading exercise for each class. Second, I give them a list of questions that they must consider pertaining to the readings. These questions can be put on Blackboard so that students can retrieve them at any time while preparing for class.

If the list of questions is small, I ask students to answer all of them; if the list is large, I ask students to choose a certain subset to answer.

Here is an example of questions I have used when students were reading a chapter in a book on Labour Markets:

1. *If the labour market is the conceptual space where buyers and sellers of labour seek each other out to make deals, what role do all the institutions (mentioned at the top of page 100) play?*
2. *In light of Marx's distinction between "labour power" and "labour," is the authors' definition of the labour market (page 99-100) a good one?*

3. *The authors (page 101) mention criteria for a "good job." List your own criteria for a "good job" then rank them in order of their importance for you.*
4. *Why do you think that lawyers' average salary is lower than that of dentists (page 103)?*
5. *Can you think of reasons why female university professors make 77% of the earnings of male professors (page 103)?*

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Students are having a rich discussion about what they have read, thought about, and commented on in writing

.....

I ask students to prepare a written response to the questions minding a limit of 100- 200 words per question. I call this a "class blog." By a certain deadline before each class, students are to send me their blogs or post them on Blackboard. They are unable to see what the others have written until after the deadline. Once received, I compile the students' answers into a new summary document that I bring to class with me. The summary document looks like this [to make it simple, assume a class of four students]:

Question 1:

Answer from Dorothy:
Answer from Jason:
Answer from Peggy:
Answer from Alan:

Question 2:

Answer from Dorothy:
Answer from Jason:
Answer from Peggy:
Answer from Alan:
etc. etc.

I associate a small proportion of the course grade with the timely submission of students' answers, sufficient to make it worth their while.

Before coming to class, I write my own comments on the summary document. I will note whether several students strongly disagree with one another, whether students describe different experiences, or whether there is a consensus emerging within the class.

During class, I take each question up in turn. Here is an example of what I might say:

"Okay, let's look at question 1. Dorothy and Alan seem to disagree quite strenuously. Dorothy, give us a summary of what you said in your blog....."
[Dorothy answers.]

"...Alan, your blog disagreed quite a bit with Dorothy's. Give us a summary...."
[Alan answers.]

"Having heard from Dorothy and Alan, what do the rest of you think?"
[By this point, the rest of the students are quite ready to pitch in with their own ideas. Some will have answered the same questions as Dorothy and Alan. But even those who answered different questions tend to be enthusiastic.]

In this way, the class can consist almost entirely of students talking to each other. Students are not talking off the top of their heads about something they have not read. Instead, students are having a rich discussion about what they have read, thought about, and commented on in writing. I have asked students how this pedagogical method works for them and they are very enthusiastic.

Christine Siteman, a graduate of the Certificate in Human Resource Management contributed the following

perspective: “As a student in one of Dr. Haiven’s classes I found the format of ‘blogging’ about our assigned readings to be a very innovative and helpful way to foster thinking about the material to be discussed in class. It gave me an opportunity to prepare some thoughts before class so that I could engage in the discussion fully, as well as to foster discussion between classmates. I found that Dr. Haiven was able to facilitate conversation using the blogs as it gave him prior knowledge of our thoughts, and with that he was able to steer the conversation and make salient points relating to the topics at hand.”

**AAU Teaching Showcase
The University of
Prince Edward Island
September 24-25, 2010**

Each year the Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) Teaching Showcase offers an excellent opportunity to meet faculty members from universities across the region and to exchange ideas and effective teaching practices. The theme of this year’s showcase is Key Changes: Transitions in our Students, our Classrooms, Ourselves. The event will take place with wonderful background music: the PEI Jazz and Blues Fest. To learn more and to register visit:
www.upei.ca/webstercentre/fdo/aaushowcase/

**Registration Deadline:
September 17, 2010**

Teaching Twilight: From Text to Popular Media

Dr. Deborah Kennedy, Department of English



An important goal in teaching today’s wired generation is to help them bring critical thinking skills to bear on materials inside and outside of the classroom. By doing this, one can enable students who are immersed in an electronic world to engage more fully with their academic studies. As I hope to show here, teaching a popular work of fiction like Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight*, which itself has a huge web presence, enables one to explore how to combine traditional teaching methods with today’s multi-media and web-based resources.

Stephenie Meyer’s 2005 novel *Twilight* is the first of four books in the *Twilight* saga, an international publishing phenomenon. The series is enormously popular among university students (see “What They’re Reading on College Campuses,” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 24 Apr. 2009:A6).

Twilight is often described as a star-crossed love story since it is based on the relationship between Bella Swan and a mysterious young man named Edward Cullen, who turns out to be a vampire, albeit a virtuous one. As perhaps the best-known woman writer of the decade, Stephenie Meyer has earned a place in

English literary studies. In my 2009-2010 course Writing by Women (English 2317.0 / Women’s Studies 3317.0), I taught a two-week unit on *Twilight*.

When teaching *Twilight*, one can make use of any number of multi-media resources, including films and websites. For instance, a number of students are familiar with the excellent film version of *Twilight*, starring Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson, and directed by Catherine Hardwicke (Summit 2008). Although I kept the focus on the novel itself, a comparison between it and the film can be instructive.

The paperback edition that we used as our class text was the movie tie-in version, which includes a Discussion Guide (New York: Little, Brown, 2008). One of the questions in the Guide asks readers to compare the story to Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. Moreover, all four of the *Twilight* novels are steeped in allusions to classic works of literature. Meyer sets her story in high school and stresses the importance of reading and learning.

Taking advantage of our wired classrooms at Saint Mary’s, I gave a PowerPoint lecture that explored the literary background of *Twilight*. The

Photo: Deborah Kennedy

PowerPoint slides enabled me to use visual material, including pictures of book jackets and *Twilight* merchandise, and quotations from the text. I reviewed with the class the literary historical perspective, noting earlier works such as Helen Maria Williams’s “Sonnet to Twilight,” the mysterious settings of eighteenth-century gothic novels, Mary Shelley’s story “The Mortal Immortal,” and references to twilight in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.

Many students had read *Twilight* on their own, but they appreciated studying it in an academic setting. It helped them to understand how the tools of literary analysis could be applied to a popular work of fiction. Some of the features of the book that I discussed with the class were patterns of imagery (colors and tactility), plotting and suspense, and the contrasting settings of Arizona and Washington.

Beyond the sphere of the print copy of the book is a whole world of responses to it on the web and in a variety of forms that include fan sites, blogs, and videos that engage with the *Twilight* saga novels, films, and soundtracks. From the time that her first book was published, Stephenie Meyer has connected with her readers online, and they have responded in kind.

Many students had read *Twilight* on their own, but they appreciated studying it in an academic setting. It helped them to understand how the tools of literary analysis could be applied to a popular work of fiction.

My student assistant helped me to compile a list of the best *Twilight* websites, which were then assigned for the class to analyze. Questions were raised about whether websites were up-to-date, easy to navigate, and reliable. This reinforced the need for students to be discerning when they are accessing websites and doing searches on the internet.

The American Hillywood Show is the best example on the web of a creative response to *Twilight*. The talented sisters Hannah Hindi and Hilly Hindi and their cast and crew have produced short lighthearted parodies of the *Twilight* films. Seen by millions of viewers on the internet, the Hillywood Show updates the time-honored tradition of literary parody, and my students found their version of *Twilight* entertaining and educational to watch.

The class also explored other creative responses to Meyer’s work. These auxiliary materials added to our understanding of the text and demonstrated the ongoing engagement that a person can have with a story after reading it. Whether it was amateur art work depicting characters like Bella and Edward or Alice and Jasper, photographs of themed parties, or reports of official *Twilight* conventions, these examples showed students the way that this literary work has made its mark on popular culture and, conversely, the centrality of reading in a wired world.

Quality of Teaching Committee Instructional Development Grants

Do you have an idea for a project that will enhance your instruction, and improve teaching and learning at Saint Mary’s? Are you interested in attending a teaching and learning conference, workshop, or seminar... or perhaps organizing a talk or workshop at Saint Mary’s focused on teaching and learning?

The Quality of Teaching Committee Instructional Development Grants program supports projects that improve upon or develop new and creative approaches to teaching and learning.

Three types of grants are available:

Small Project Grant – valued up to \$1500

Applications accepted on an ongoing basis

Travel Grant – valued up to \$1500

Applications accepted on an ongoing basis

Teaching/Learning Major Project Award – valued up to \$5000

Application Deadline: Feb. 28th, 2011

(one awarded annually)

Amounts awarded are subject to availability of funds.

Saint Mary’s University Teaching Awards

Father William A. Stewart, S.J. Medal for Teaching

This award recognizes a faculty member who has made significant contributions to the education of Saint Mary’s students through excellence in teaching and service. For award guidelines and nomination deadline, please visit the Alumni Association website: www.smu.ca/alumni/window/rec_teach.html

Dr. Geraldine Thomas Educational Leadership Award

This award recognizes a faculty member who has provided leadership among colleagues in developing institutional structures and processes, and in pursuing activities that help create an environment at Saint Mary’s University in which teaching excellence is fostered and appreciated. For award guidelines, please visit the CAID website: www.smu.ca/administration/caiddev_awards.html#smu

Incorporating Sustainability... continued from cover

While some of the participating faculty members already incorporated a focus on sustainability into their courses, it was new territory for others. Examining some of their efforts may help you to generate your own ideas should you wish to introduce sustainability into the curricula of your courses:

Dr. Veronica Stinson, Psychology

Dr. Stinson plans to add a new focus into her Introduction to Psychology (PSY1200) course this fall:

I plan to incorporate sustainability issues as we cover psychological theory and findings related to motivation and emotion as well as attitudes and social influence. Specifically, students will consider the emotional responses they experienced relating to the recent BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and evaluate any changes in their behaviour. We'll also consider the barriers that societies face as governments and NGOs try to change people's behaviour so that it is more environmentally sustainable.

Dr. Jason Grek-Martin, Geography

Students are currently introduced to key issues in environmental geography in Dr. Grek-Martin's course, GEOG 1200: People, Place and Environment:

After discussing key concepts, we explore how people impact and are impacted by their various environments. We pay particular attention to 'real world' environmental issues that students hopefully will be considering in their daily lives. In the winter 2010 semester, I focused on our fossil fuel dependency, explaining how petroleum forms the basis for so many environmental issues: from smog in big cities, to plastics that end up in the oceans, to fertilizers and pesticides that form the foundation for our industrial agriculture and food processing systems. I next addressed climate change, relating it to increased greenhouse gas emissions since the Industrial Revolution and discussing its current and predicted impacts in various parts of the world (including the Canadian Arctic and West Africa). I then discussed how societies cope (or fail to cope) with various natural hazards, before concluding

the course with lectures on alternative energies to demonstrate that our fossil fuel dependency need not define our future energy commitments and to provide some 'good news' environmental stories to balance the environmental concerns documented earlier in the term. My goal is for students to understand that the multiple and complex ways in which people interact with their environment are worth taking seriously and studying carefully, and that geography makes people-environment relations its central focus.

Dr. Anne Marie Dalton, Religious Studies

Dr. Dalton teaches two Religious Studies courses that incorporate ecological issues: Religion and Ecology (RELS 2337) and Religion and Ecological Issues in the Developing World (RELS 3349). She explains:

In Religion and Ecology, we examine traditional religious teachings, both positive and negative, that relate to the natural world. As worldviews, religions have been complicit in the ecological crisis; they have also been powerful positive influences in promoting sustainable ways of life. Most religions are now actively involved in recovering their teachings on the natural world and encouraging their communities to take an active part in confronting the ecological crisis. In Ecological Issues in the Developing World, we investigate the diverse ways in which the ecological crisis compounds problems of poverty, conflict and instability. We also look for religious values, attitudes and actions that are vibrant within poorer communities throughout the world. These courses are highly interactive and relevant to most students. While I provide significant input on the various religions, students participate in discussing the ecological implications of religious teachings. These issues enliven the classroom.

Dr. Cristian Suteanu, Geography and Environmental Studies

Although most of Dr. Suteanu's courses in Geography and Environmental Studies are explicitly environmental, during the upcoming year he plans to incorporate

sustainability into a less obvious context: Statistical Methods for Geographers (GEOG3326):

The main focus of this course is statistics, which can be quite abstract. I will incorporate sustainability by having students apply their statistical knowledge to problems that have an environmental component. For example, I will ask students to assess future electric energy consumption in a region by analyzing past and future patterns of consumption. By processing real energy consumption data, students see that pattern characteristics – even those as simple as the average – depend on the time scale considered in the analysis, as it is often the case with sustainability issues. Trends may be present, fluctuations may be there as well, and students learn how to identify such influences. They also face the fact that the goal people had a decade or two ago – finding the right or 'optimum' scale – may not even make sense. It is rather a spectrum of scales that one should include in the analysis. Thereby, one of the key principles of sustainability – consider the problems not on one, but on many different scales – is experienced first-hand while students gain statistical knowledge.

In August, faculty members involved with the Sustainability across the Curriculum initiative came together a second time to discuss how they are revising their curricula for the upcoming academic year. They will meet in the winter semester to discuss their experiences, as well as the benefits and challenges that come from incorporating sustainability into their courses.

If you are interested in learning more or want to get involved, please contact Dr. Cathy Conrad, cconrad@smu.ca. This initiative is an excellent venue to exchange ideas and to obtain support from like minded faculty members across campus.

Reference

- Chase, G.W. & Rowland, P. (2004) *The Ponderosa Project: Infusing sustainability in the curriculum*. In P.F. Barlett & G. W. Chase (Eds.) *Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies for Change* (pp. 91-105). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Challenge: Give Up Your Garbage Can

Nicole Boudreau, Sustainability Assistant, Summer 2010

Every term since summer 2007, Facilities Management has hired students to fill Sustainability Assistant positions. Nicole Boudreau, who is entering her 3rd year of a Bachelor of Arts in Geography, has been working on a number of sustainability projects this summer. As part of her role, she is working to help improve the waste diversion rates on campus. Our major goal is to get rid of singular garbage cans around the campus and replacing them with four-stream bins (recycling, paper, organics and waste). She has been talking to staff, students and faculty to determine the barriers to success. We hope to implement a change that will be welcomed by our own university community.

Tempted to put that plastic bottle in your office garbage? Think again.

In the 2009-10 academic year, five departments volunteered to give up their office garbage cans as part of a pilot project led by Facilities Management. The aim of the project was to determine whether individuals would sort their waste if they no longer had garbage cans beside their desks. The results speak for themselves: by simply removing these garbage cans, separation increased by 25% – 55%. Waste audits were also performed on individual garbage cans and compared with the blue four-stream sorting bins in the hallways. Garbage cans had an average of 47% contamination (waste that is not in the proper bin), compared with a 14% average in the four-stream sorting bins. The bins in the hallways are making a difference.

Saint Mary's discards a great deal of waste. From January to June 2010, the university disposed of 116,650 kilograms of general waste. Waste diversion and separation is mandatory in the Halifax Regional Municipality and source separation is an important part

of the solid waste by-law. This means that individuals who create waste are responsible for properly separating it. At SMU, the four-stream bins make waste separation easy. When you throw out your trash, you can quickly and effortlessly put it in the right place. You can also feel good: organics, paper,



and recyclables are diverted from our landfills, reducing the impact for future generations.

The university has come a long way. In addition to this pilot project, many of our classrooms have also gone garbage can free, further increasing the amount of waste we divert from landfills. As a student, once I learned why our classrooms did not have garbage bins, it made complete sense. It is not hard for me to take my trash out and put it in the proper bin. If there was a garbage can

at the front of the classroom, I would be easy for me to put my garbage there, regardless of the type of waste and regardless of the recycling bins in the hallway. I assume that it is the same in campus offices - when there is a garbage can, it is tempting to put everything in the trash.

With many schools and universities getting recognized for banning water bottles, we could demonstrate our university's commitment to sustainability by going the extra mile and giving up our garbage cans. Wouldn't it be impressive to start a trend of garbage can free schools? This would take the trend of bottle free schools for sustainability to a whole new level. It would be unique and we could say: "Hey, we started that!"

While we may have good intentions to separate our trash, office garbage cans become a convenient disposal site. They are most often still filled with paper, paper that could be recycled. It doesn't have to be this way. Deciding to give up your garbage can is a good thing to do, and it really isn't a big deal. Every change takes some getting used to, yet eventually becomes routine. It is something we can each do to make a difference.

I hope that you will consider giving up your office can and switching to the four-stream bin system. By choosing to kick your can to the curb, you can show your support to sustainability on campus. This is a small change that can make a big difference.

For more information about the pilot project, waste separation or other sustainable initiatives please contact sustainability@smu.ca.

Produced by the Centre for Academic and Instructional Development
We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and future issues of Teaching & Learning.

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Email: caid@smu.ca

Please visit our offices, Atrium suites 106 and 107
or online at www.smu.ca/administration/caid