

Partnerships for the Future

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In May 2019, it was my pleasure and honor to attend the Kennesaw State University Faculty Professional Development Program at the European Academy of Otzenhausen, Germany. With a theme of “Partnerships for the Future,” the eight-day program featured a series of seminars, presentations and workshops that explored notions of sustainable development, climate change, and ways to integrate these topics into the curriculum for diverse fields of study.

While these topics are already engaging, two other characteristics of the program rendered it both enjoyable and effective. Firstly, having previously led two study-abroad programs to the European Academy of Otzenhausen, I was already familiar with the facility and its staff, and it was a distinct pleasure to return to the EAO campus. Its picturesque local, clean and comfortable rooms, excellent food, and professional and knowledgeable staff make every sojourn an unparalleled experience. Secondly, the cohort of a dozen Kennesaw State faculty from fields including art, economics, geography, architecture, nursing, and foreign languages offered a unique opportunity to create interdisciplinary connections and explore vital subjects through a variety of lenses.

Of the many subjects explored during the program, the one that has stayed with me the most is that of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These 17 interrelated goals, including an end to poverty, gender equality, and affordable and clean energy, bring the complicated nature of sustainable development into clearer focus, and offer many ways not only to personally relate to sustainable development, but also clear paths for including it in the curriculum, connecting specific ideas like clean water and sanitation or peace, justice and strong institutions to learning objectives.

These linkages may be facilitated by my specific field. Building skills in a foreign language is most effective in a supported learning environment that has a clear theme and student performance

outcomes. Each of the UN SDGs provides a ready-made theme for a unit, with vocabulary to explore, useful grammar for analyzing it, an abundance of primary texts to model the language, along with its associated problems and solutions.

Thus, this professional development program has had a direct effect on both my teaching and service this year at Kennesaw State. This semester, Fall 2019, I have created an entire unit to explore the UN SDGs in my section of FL 2209 World Languages and Cultures. The course focuses on examining interculturality, and the ways our world is connected through the lens of cultural and language studies. In my course, students will explore a goal of their choice and coursework will guide them to identify the interconnectedness of all the goals in relation to specific cultures and countries.

During the program, I also discovered EQUINOX, Kennesaw State's own week-long celebration of sustainable development. In coordination with Pegah Zamani, the event's organizer and fellow attendee, I am working on two contributions for 2020. The first is a world poetry exhibit for the Social Science building atrium. I intend to solicit poems about sustainable development from a variety of language programs with themes like climate change, social equity, and transculturality. The exhibit will display the poems with an English translation and each will include a QR code to an audio recording of the poem in its original language. Secondly, I am integrating modules into my upper-level Spring semester courses that will facilitate student presentations at an EQUINOX symposium focused on local leadership in sustainable development efforts. Students will explore a variety of French-language texts related to UN SDGs, interview native speakers about these topics, and create French-language infographics or video essays intended to raise awareness about both the problems we face on a global scale and the steps we can take as individuals, cultures, and nations to address them.