

## Sustainability NOW

We ask our students to ‘dream big and dare greatly,’ but threats like climate change, population growth, and technological automation are threatening the realization of those dreams. UCSC’s Educational Partnership Center (EPC) strives to build college-bound communities that increase college-going rates among traditionally non-college-going students and families, but in as few as 22 years, the world will experience food shortages, wildfires and the mass die off of coral reefs (Davenport, 2018). The EPC must maintain its operational viability by altering its service models to address college access and sustainability issues that threaten service regions and constituencies.

Climate change is threatening the viability of the EPC’s service regions and will soon have significant effects on the socioeconomic well-being of Monterey County—affecting critical employment sectors like agriculture. Global population continues to surge and is expected to reach 8.4 billion by 2032 (Basile, 2013). Increasingly, vital resources are dwindling in the face of unfettered population growth. Technological automation also poses a significant threat, with the Global Risks Report of 2017 reporting that “47 percent of US jobs are at risk of automation, affecting over 80 percent of low-income workers” (25). The urgency to address these issues is NOW.

Sustainability NOW is an interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum and organizational strategy that helped the EPC address these threats while simultaneously improving the local educational system. Sustainability NOW required a vision, mission, and a strategic framework. It also required an understanding of relevant audiences and communication plans tailored to highlight the value of the initiative for an array of stakeholders. It was designed to raise the EPC’s sustainable development to another level while simultaneously impacting shared challenges. Sustainability NOW’s strategic framework led to the EPC being certified via UCSC’s Green Office Certification Program and led to the establishment of strategic partnerships that will sustain the project’s momentum in the years ahead. All goals for Sustainability NOW were met or nearly met, with participating students raising their content knowledge and sustainability ambition by 9 percentage points over baseline respectively. At its core, Sustainability NOW is a curricular tool and strategic solution set for the EPC and educational service providers alike as we collectively work toward achieving expanded outcomes that benefit the greater social good.