

Tagliatela College of Engineering

Sustainability Studies Program Prepares Students for Emerging Job Market

“Sustainability” refers to the ability to recognize inherent limitations of the planet’s resources and take actions that allow us all to continue living within those limits. It is an increasingly important concept for engineers designing and building the vast array of “green” products demanded by a world grappling with the increasing use of polluting energy sources.

An entirely new class of jobs, often crossing multiple disciplines, is being created in the process, and the Tagliatela College of Engineering is now addressing that growing job market by introducing a B.S. degree in sustainability studies.

“It is important that academic institutions ready themselves to address the needs of the new green economy that is slowly shaping up,” says Ali Montazer, interim dean. “We wanted to have a degree program to educate and train a workforce who can jump in and help businesses and organizations seeking help to become more sustainable. Eighteen months ago, we gathered a team of faculty from the four colleges to explore what a degree program for such graduates would look like.”

Working with the Association for Advancement of Sustainability Studies in Higher Education, Amy Thompson, assistant professor of system engineering, surveyed other colleges and universities nationwide that offer sustainability programs. “Many institutions have created minors,” she says, “and they cover almost every field you can imagine. Only a handful offered B.S. and B.A. degrees.”

After comparing those schools’ curricula, the team set about defining a program for UNH.

“It was important to design something that fit with UNH’s existing capabilities and talents,” says Thompson. “Eventually we settled on a set of existing courses, which several professors augmented by creating new courses.” While an emphasis on science, engineering and technology courses would be expected, Thompson says the curriculum is balanced and embraces business and economics and the humanities, as well.

“Graduates of the program will be qualified to work in many

roles, such as corporate or municipal sustainability officer, environmental analyst, renewable and clean energy technology manager or consultant, or sustainable product purchasing agent,” adds Agamemnon Koutsospyros, professor of mechanical, civil and environmental engineering and coordinator of the new degree program. “There is unprecedented demand for sustainability professionals regionally and nationally and the *The New York Times*, *Boston Globe* and *Wall Street Journal* all predict sharp increases in jobs related to ‘green’ industries and markets.”

