



Sustainability Policies if Necessary but Not Necessarily Sustainability Policies

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OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

The paper examines the appropriateness and limitations of campus sustainability policies as a tool for advancing campus sustainability. It begins by exploring the case of a mid-sized university in the prairie region of Canada, the University of Regina, along with the co-evolution of the Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Saskatchewan (RCE Saskatchewan), of which the University of Regina is a founding partner. It highlights the challenges implementing sustainability policies in both contexts yet, despite this absence of policy, the respective advances in campus sustainability initiatives through each. To account for this seeming paradox, the paper explores how, while on the surface, sustainability policies might be viewed as central to advancing specific social and political sustainability objectives within an organization along with greater efficiency and effectiveness in resource allocation towards sustainability goals, the nature of policy within an increasingly corporatized university structure and professionalized sustainability management system may potentially impede these objectives. The paper concludes by highlighting the value of a decentralized approach that respects and integrates the traditional scholarly accountability of universities that promote academic freedom along with a current need to create sustainable scholarly livelihoods that advance this freedom in an increasingly restrictive organizational environment.

INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR

Dr. Roger A. Petry is an Associate Professor of Philosophy teaching in the areas of ethics, sustainable development, philosophy of religion, and critical thinking. His research interests include university innovation for sustainable development and strategic dimensions in moving to sustainable production systems. This includes his studies examining historic transitions to new production systems, the role played by disruptive technologies, and the potential role for shared equipment in advancing sustainable communities. Dr. Petry is co-coordinator of RCE Saskatchewan, acknowledged in 2007 by the UN University to advance the UN *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* (DESD: 2005-2014) and now the *UN Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs; 2015-2030) and the UNESCO *Global Action Programme on ESD*.



IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE:

Building a general culture of concern for sustainable development within an academic setting can, it is argued, organically transform the work of scholars across disciplines without administrative policies that constrain traditional academic freedoms or silo sustainability as one further disciplinary specialization among others. Opportunities do exist, however, to advance “*scholar policy*” (akin to “*public policy*”)—policy that takes seriously the academic mission of the university built on investigator driven pursuit of knowledge. By applying the concept of *sustainable livelihood* to that of *scholarly livelihood*, scholar policies can be framed that reduce and share risks in the Academy, build up shared assets for scholarship, and increase the knowledge produced and its applicability to pressing sustainability issues—whether on the campus itself, within the local region, or globally.