**Definition of Sustainability-Related and Focused Courses**

**Oregon Institute of Technology**

**February 24, 2010**

Education and Research Credit #5:  Sustainability Course Identification

**Background**

As part of the Oregon Institute of Technology’s (OIT) participation in the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education’s Sustainability, Tracking, and Rating System (STARS 1.0), OIT needed to complete the following task:

“Institution has developed a definition of sustainability in the curriculum.  The definition was developed by a committee comprised of at least 3 faculty members who teach courses in different departments (the committee may include students, staff, and other stakeholders as well).  The definition does not have to be formally adopted.”

On February 24, 2010, the OIT Sustainability Committee (a formal standing committee comprised of administrative staff and faculty) met to define sustainability related and focused courses at the institution.

**Definitions**

The committee formally adopted the following definitions:

“Sustainability-focused courses concentrate on the concept of sustainability, including its social, economic, and environmental dimensions, or examining an issue or topic using sustainability as a lens.”

“Sustainability-related courses incorporate sustainability as a distinct course component or module, or concentrate on a single sustainability principle or issue.”

In order to determine whether or not a course is sustainability related or focused, it is useful to ask whether or not a given course will help students to achieve one or more of the following:

Awareness

1. Understand and be able to effectively communicate a concept of sustainability.
2. Explore ethics and globalization with respect to a particular discipline.

Understanding

1. Understand the connections between a student’s major and sustainability.
2. Understand whole-systems approaches to problem solving.

Apply

1. Develop technical skills or expertise necessary to implement sustainability solutions.
2. Apply knowledge of sustainability to contribute to practical solutions to real-world health, social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Synthesize

1. Synthesize understanding of the interconnections between health, social, economic, and environmental systems.

If a course addresses one or more of numbers 1-6, then it can be counted as sustainability-related.  If it addresses number 7, then it can be counted as sustainability-focused.

February 24, 2010, DOW 251 Sustainability Committee Meeting

Attendees:

Charles Riley, CIV Jan Abieta, Librarian

Joe Stuart, MMET Hap Wells, Information Technology

Cristina Negoita, MATH Spencer Jones, OIT Student

Carrie Wittmer, ENV

Linda Riley, Energy Analyst