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CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION IN THE US

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The current social and political situation in the US is adversely affecting environmental and climate regulations and policies, as well as cooperation with other governments on climate initiatives. Awareness among the citizens, scientists, and those in leadership roles is essential to form a voting base that will elect leaders who will make important climate and sustainability decisions. Junior and senior level students enrolled in a Global Sustainability class at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia answered a survey on the first day of class regarding their knowledge of climate change and environmental sustainability. The majority of the students answered at least 12 out of 17 questions wrong (71%). Out of seven human activities listed, no students accurately identified all that contribute to climate change. 30% thought that India had higher per capita CO₂ emissions than the US, and less than 1% were aware that living in clustered housing was more environmentally sustainable than our typical suburban sprawl. Conclusions based on this survey and on the outcomes of previous such classes indicate that environmental and climate education is an area currently lacking in US education, and is most likely a limiting factor in implementing environmental and climate initiatives in the country.

Biography

Margaret Reinhart, MS, MT, (ASCP) is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She also directs and teaches in the Medical Laboratory Science program. Though her education and training is primarily in medically relevant areas, she has also published and presented in diverse environmental fields such as earthworm ecology, farming and farm animal disease, and sustainability education. She is also an Advisor for the Environmental Conservation Organization on campus, and is on the Environmental Advisory Council of Radnor Township, Pennsylvania.

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