Cultivating the Globally Sustainable Self Summit Series

Goals, Outcomes and Rationale

Cultivating the Globally Sustainable Self will bring together key stakeholders – researchers, educators, students, advocates, administrators, and policymakers – to participate in a series of research and practice summits at James Madison University annually over a three year period, with the possibility of additional summit sponsorship thereafter. In this way, we hope to provide sufficient stability and continuity to develop, implement, and disseminate outcomes (e.g., research programs, theory and data, applications and recommendations for teacher education / training) that are of maximum relevance to a wide range of stakeholders. Consequently, in year one, we will focus on the following two interrelated goals.

Goal I: Understanding the Content and Process of Transformation

For this summit goal, we are asking representatives from major traditions that seek to promote human transformation to offer examples of their "best" interventions for review and discussion by participants. By interventions, we seek any method or approach that is designed to promote learning, change, or growth across five overarching thematic areas – conflict resolution, human rights, sustainability, global education, and religious and cultural understanding – in a manner that is 1) measurable (e.g., qualitatively and/or quantitatively) and 2) values-based (e.g., consistent with the fundamental goals or principles of the change-oriented movement). Examples of such interventions might include programs of study, specific courses, educational workshops, service learning, training programs, community projects, advocacy efforts, marketing campaigns, immersion experiences, and so forth. In other words, we are seeking exemplars that – from the perspective of their designers, implementers, evaluators, promoters, and/or recipients – seem to be especially powerful in terms of achieving means and ends that are at the heart of what the movement is striving to achieve. But as the above criteria indicate, the intervention must not only be congruent with the values of the change-oriented movement; qualitative and/or quantitative data also must be provided to support the contention that the intervention is demonstrably effective, for at least a subset of those who experience it.

At a deeper level, summit participants then are asked to offer their best understanding – theoretically – of *how* and *why* the intervention is in fact effective. In other words, from the perspective of the summit, it is necessary but not sufficient to identify effective interventions. We also must strive to understand how and why our interventions are – or are not – having the impact we intend them to have. In contemplating such matters, we are not seeking definitive or absolute conclusions, but rather a deeper, more substantive, and collective understanding of what actually is – or it not – being "impacted" (e.g., affectively, behaviorally, cognitively, socioculturally) as a result of our interventions. We want participants to delve inside the hearts and minds of those they are seeking to transform in order to understand better why their interventions appear to have the impact that they do. In this way, it is our hope that we will emerge with a much deeper appreciation of the complex interactions within and among human beings that ultimately mediate and moderate the effectiveness of our interventions. Such

information should help us imagine, design, implement, and evaluate more meaningful, relevant, and effective interventions in the future, which is the basic purpose of Goal II described next.

Goal II: Transforming Understanding into Research and Practice

Once we are clearer on the relationship between content (e.g., what we attempt to convey through various transformative movements) and process (e.g., the complex affective, attributional, and developmental interactions that influence who learns what and why, and under what circumstances), it becomes much more possible to develop theoretically robust and empirically grounded studies that actually can inform what we can and should do in practice. If we go about developing and implementing interventions without sufficient attention to such fundamental matters (e.g., regarding the basis for concluding that what we do actually has an impact), we risk wasting a lot of time, energy, and resources on activities that "should work" but may or may not. In this regard, Kurt Lewin's maxim that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory" is deeply relevant to the goals of social change movements, as is the inextricable linkage between theoretical models and applied methods (e.g., Greenwald, 2012). Not knowing, or not caring, that robust theoretical models and defensible empirical methods may in fact be essential for the development and evaluation of effective social change interventions simply is not acceptable, either from the standpoint of time and resource expenditure, or in terms of demonstrating the value of what we do to the many stakeholders who are the recipients and/or funders of our efforts. In short, we do not have luxury of "just doing stuff" because it seems like it makes sense or should work. We can and must do better as we hope to illustrate through the case study of ESD teacher training and education (see http://www.jmu.edu/summitseries/ESD-case-study-and-research-to-practice.pdf).

Summit Outcomes

In the context of the above overview and goals, we anticipate the following outcomes from *Cultivating the Globally Sustainable Self:*

1. Bring together scholars, educators, students, practitioners, and leaders from a range of transformation-oriented global movements across five thematic areas – conflict resolution, human rights, sustainability, global education, and religious and cultural understanding – in order to learn from and contribute to each other's missions, methods, goals, and activities (Goal I).
2. Develop a draft agenda for a global program of research-to-practice on the basis of summit presentations and deliberations (e.g., regarding theory, data, models, methods) (Goal II).
3. Develop a plan for furthering and monitoring progress regarding the ongoing pursuit of Goals I and II.
4. Provide an opportunity for interdisciplinary stakeholders to showcase, describe, and discuss their interests, activities, and plans.
5. Identify the means and methods by which participants may participate in and propose future activities and pursue / develop further collaboration as part of the planning and preparatory process for the next two research-to-practice summits.

6. Pursue identified scholarly, professional, and organizational venues through which the outcomes, activities, and plans of *Cultivating the Globally Sustainable Self* may be disseminated and furthered over at least the three years of this series of summits.

Summit Rationale: Two Observations

In order to pursue these laudable goals in a maximally efficient and effective manner, this summit series is informed by two fundamental observations:

1. Although substantive and comprehensive, ESD is neither the first nor only attempt to promote global transformation of the educational system. Therefore, much could be gained by encountering the methods, goals, and activities of allied individuals, groups, organizations, and movements that also are attempting to promote wide-spread local and global change across five overarching thematic areas: 1) conflict resolution, 2) human rights, 3) sustainability, 4) global education, and 5) religious and cultural understanding.
2. From the standpoint of research and practice over the short- and long-term, it would be helpful to engage in a comprehensive review and discussion not only of *what* we are doing in order to create change (e.g., the content or approach of our interventions) but *why* we have a basis for concluding that our work is effective (e.g., specifying the theory, data, models, and methods that support such conclusions).

Because they are foundational to the summit series, each of these observations warrants further explication.

Observation 1
ESD Is Not Alone: What We Can Learn from Allied Transformative Movements

Many global movements across the "big five" areas of conflict resolution, human rights, sustainability, global education, and religious and cultural understanding focus on similar if not identical themes to those of [Education for Sustainable Development](#). To take just a few exemplars of many, consider the missions and goals of related movements such as International Education, Conflict Resolution Education, and Interfaith Education.

The field of **international education** has existed for decades, and essentially aims to infuse curricula, programs, institutions, organizations, and societies with diverse perspectives and experiences from other nations and cultures in order to facilitate many of the same values and goals that ESD champions. Consider, for example, the extraordinary research and practice that occurs from an interdisciplinary perspective under the auspices of organizations such as the [Forum on Education Abroad](#), [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#), or [European Association for International Education](#). Moreover, within specific disciplinary fields, international education also has become a key focus, designed to transform fields of inquiry and practice to become more internationally minded (examples from [psychology](#) and [sociology](#)).

Likewise, as a global field of inquiry and practice, **conflict resolution education** aims to promote non-violent, dialogue-based means and methods for understanding and addressing conflict in its many forms, both locally and globally. Moreover, this approach deliberately seeks

to influence how educational content is introduced within multiple contexts and settings, including K-20 as well as community-based interventions. Many organizations and entities contribute to such goals, which again are highly aligned with the ESD movement. For example, in addition to the Conflict Resolution Education – which serves as a central hub and facilitator of such activity globally – other key organizations, such as the Peace and Justice Studies Association, also further a wide range of initiatives that are designed to educate and transform societies, both locally and globally.

As a third and final exemplar, consider the **interfaith education** movement, which is designed to promote tolerance, understanding, and engagement across individuals from different faith traditions. There is no "one" interfaith education organization, but rather a range of systems and perspective with related goals and objectives. For example, Interfaith Education Ministries was founded in 1965, and is part of the UNESCO Higher Education Institutions Registry. Its mission is to provide "certificates of measurement and evaluation of educational and professional credentials and practices of traditional, nontraditional, religious and other online and distance education programs" (see http://www.interfaitheduministries.org/).

Moreover, aligned with all of the above movements, including ESD, the United Religions Initiative also has strong commitments to education and social transformation. With over 500 member groups and organizations, the purpose of the URI is to "promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings." Closely related to such goals, the "Interfaith Dialogue" movement also seeks to bring together peoples of different faith (or non-faith) in order to facilitate greater communication, understanding, and tolerance among individuals and groups who have different beliefs and values vis-à-vis "religion," broadly defined. Finally, in terms of scholarship, "inter-religious education" also provides a research basis for these broad sociocultural goals.

So, the challenge and opportunity here is not just for the proponents of ESD. From the perspective of this summit series, scholars, educators, practitioners, leaders, and others who are affiliated with these and related movements too often 1) do not encounter one another at the level of research or practice, 2) may not even know of the existence of such movements, and 3) do not realize that much of what is thought to be "unique" to their movement actually overlaps considerably with related initiatives at the level of mission, values, and activities. Why does this lack of awareness matter? Because it is not an efficient use of resources to be engaged in activities that are thought to be unique when in fact many other individuals, groups, and organizations are engaged in similar activities that are known by different names. Moreover, at the level of interprofessional collaboration, there is simple logic to the proposition that we may accomplish more by working toward common means and ends rather than pursuing objectives on our "own," particularly if we are doing so under the mistaken assumption that "our movement" is the only or primary initiative that is charged with pursuit of a particular set of values or goals (e.g., D'Amour, Ferrada-Videla, San Martin Rodriguez, Beaulieu, 2005; Johnson, Stewart Brabeck, Huber, & Rubin, 2004). By coming together and learning from each other's models, means, and methods, we may discover a great deal about how to approach our respective activities in ways that are not only more effective, but how we might find synergy and partner together in order to magnify our impact beyond that which we could accomplish alone

Observation 2
Understanding and Demonstrating Transformation: The Crucial Role of Research

From the perspective of this summit, many of the above movements – including but not limited to ESD – are much more similar than different in terms of their most fundamental goal: transforming human beings at all levels of education (K-20+), both locally and globally, and across cultures and contexts to be more open, aware, caring, and responsive to self, others, and the larger world (e.g., Cranton, 2006; Dirkx, 1998; Mezirow & Taylor, 2009; Shealy, Bhuyan, & Sternberger, 2012; see also the Center for Green Schools, 2014, *A National Plan for Education for Sustainability*, at http://www.centerforgreenschools.org/nationalactionplan as well as the work of the American Psychological Association's "Society for Environmental, Population and Conservation Psychology" a thttp://www.apadivisions.org/division-34/interests/ecopsychology/index.aspx).

Such goals not only are laudable, but perhaps essential, if we are to create a world of sustainable visions and values, rather than actions, policies, and practices that ultimately lead to the diminishment and destruction of each other and the living world. The problem is such movements tend to focus much more on matters of content than process. That is, the emphasis often is on *what* educational content should be developed and implemented. Far less attention is devoted to *why* human beings are inclined toward, or against, such content in the first place, which may be as, if not more important, in understanding who learns what and why, and under what circumstances – that is to say, who is and is not "transformed" by exposure to such content, and why (e.g., Baltenspberger et al., 2013).

To be clear, these matters of content and process are interdependent, which illustrates why this summit series seeks to identify exemplary curricula, programs, organizations, systems, and policies that are in the business of developing and disseminating such content for purposes of transformation across five overarching areas of emphasis: 1) conflict resolution, 2) human rights, 3) sustainability, 4) global education, and 5) religious and cultural understanding (www.ibavi.org). As important, we want to understand – through an examination of seminal and cutting edge theory, research, assessment, and application – why, for whom, and under what circumstances such transformative content is, and is not, effective, and what the practical implications of such findings might be across a range of applied sectors and settings (e.g., education, nonprofit, scholarly, policy).

Thus, in the context of the above two observations, *Cultivating the Globally Sustainable Self* will bring together key stakeholders – researchers, educators, students, advocates, administrators, and policymakers – to participate in a series of research and practice summits at James Madison University annually over a three year period, with the possibility of additional summit sponsorship thereafter. In this way, we hope to provide sufficient stability and continuity to develop, implement, and disseminate outcomes (e.g., research programs, theory and data, applications and recommendations for teacher education / training) that are of maximum relevance to a wide range of stakeholders. Consequently, in year one, we will focus on the following two interrelated goals.