Western’s Environment & Sustainability program combines interdisciplinary courses in the natural sciences with writing, ethics and social sciences.

What Is the Western Difference?

Imagine an education in the Rocky Mountains, grounded in local ecologies and communities, yet looking outward to the sustainability challenges of the broader world.

More than 80 percent of Gunnison County is public land, managed by the State of Colorado, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and the National Forest Service. We partner with these agencies to provide unparalleled opportunities for our students to explore their passions and prepare for future careers.

Western is a place for active learners who want to get involved. Students not only identify issues to address but also devise solutions. They take pride in having a meaningful impact on campus.

Some students combine a double major in Business and Environment & Sustainability, giving them a background to help businesses be more environmentally friendly, while supporting their bottom lines.

An interdisciplinary Water Emphasis – one of only a handful of such undergraduate programs in the U.S. – introduces students to increasingly important regional, national and global issues.

EnvironmentalScience.org ranks Western one of the top five universities to study environmental science.

Western students take the lead in campus-based environmental initiatives, with projects ranging from bicycle check-out at the library, to an aquaponics system in the campus greenhouse.

The Environment & Sustainability program hosts three major conferences each year: the Headwaters Conference, the Colorado Water Workshop and the Spring Symposium.

Western has thriving clubs, such as the Sustainability Coalition, Wilderness Pursuits and the Organics Guild.

Environment & Sustainability students can compete for five, program-based scholarships.

More Information: 800.876.5309 | admissions@western.edu

western.edu
What Skills Will I Learn?

Environment & Sustainability students learn to understand ecological systems, analyze the environmental and social impacts of societies, and experiment with sustainable solutions to those impacts.

Central to the program, is the development of interdisciplinary, critical thinking, communication and problem-solving skills by:

- Applying the knowledge and research methods of natural sciences to understand and analyze environmental problems, and formulate solutions.
- Implementing social science findings and frameworks to address local, national and global environmental issues.
- Employing the insights of environmental history, literature and ethics to make better decisions concerning environmental impacts and resources.

What Can I Do With My Degree?

Environment & Sustainability graduates have found jobs in a wide range of fields, including:

- Environmental consultant.
- Land manager.
- Community gardens coordinator.
- Sustainability planning.
- Sustainable food coordinator.
- Farming.
- State park ranger.
- Renewable energy.
- Youth conservation corps.
- Transportation analyst.
- Green builder.
- National Forest Service.
- State wildlife, parks and tourism departments.
- Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory.

The interdisciplinary nature of our program also shows in the wide variety of graduate degrees our students pursue after their bachelor’s degrees, including environmental law, conservation biology, environmental humanities, public administration, plant and soil science, and community and regional planning.

Meet Cody Washka

Cody Washka had never seen Western. He hadn’t even been to Colorado. But he packed his bags and headed west “for the adventure of the Rockies.”

Feeling lost at a big Eastern university, the Granville, Ohio, native had contacted Dr. John Hausdoerffer about Western’s Environment & Sustainability program.

“He put more effort into me than any of my teachers had tried to,” Washka recalls. “And I wasn’t even coming here yet.”

The Environmental Studies major with a minor in Recreation & Outdoor Education found the Mountain West he sought and a lot more.

The student ambassador and campus sustainability coordinator says Western stands out for its student-initiated projects. He worked on a snowpack survey for Monarch Mountain, has helped organize Earth Day events, is helping establish a revolving renewable energy and spent a semester of field study in Patagonia.

“Western was the culmination of who I was trying to be,” Washka says.

After graduation, he plans to work for a year or two, almost certainly outdoors. Then he hopes to attend graduate school – either to focus on research or a teaching career.

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