

PhD Dissertation
Department of Environmental Science and Policy
College of Science
George Mason University

Candidate: Nikita Lad

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Title: Measuring and Modeling the Relationships Between Student Sustainability Literacy, Culture, and Behaviors in Higher Education

Dissertation Directors: Dr. Karen Akerlof

Committee: Dr. Daniel P Chen, Dr. Divya Varier, Julian Dautremont

ABSTRACT

Sustainability assessments have garnered increasing attention and importance in higher education in recent years. Through a series of three studies, this dissertation examines the relationship between college students' sustainability literacy, culture, and behavior. It also explores the motivations and challenges for institutions to engage in these assessments, and what can be done within higher education to better assess the factors that influence student sustainability behavior. A theoretically-informed model reveals that time spent on campus and informal program participation influences nature-social connectedness and norms, which in turn affect sustainability behavior. However, the breadth of measurement variability for sustainability literacy and culture between a 4-year "very high research activity" (R1) university, a 2-year community college, and a historically black college and university (HBCU) suggests the need for more generalizable and robust scales.