

Expanded Definition of the 2017–2018 Public Affairs Theme

The 2017–2018 Public Affairs theme, *Sustainability in Practice: Consensus and Consequences*, is rich with opportunities to engage the campus community in discussions. It will serve as a vehicle for investigating the benefits, issues, and challenges of sustainability not only in the natural sciences, but also how it encompasses societal components that reach every corner of human behavior: government, business, education, the arts, medicine and human services. The traditional interpretation of “healthy” as relating only to physical health is limited in scope. A more holistic view includes mental health and intellectual engagement, as well as an awareness of the role of spirituality in the well-being of a community.

According to Merriam-Webster, the simple definition of sustainable is “able to be used without being completely used up or destroyed; able to last or continue for a long time.” If we are living in a crucial moment that will impact our very existence, how shall we respond? For example, to what extent have strategies addressing issues of global warming, water scarcity and limited oil reserves been effective? What is the future of medical care in light of our aging population and healthcare management? How do we provide sustainable equality in our schools? What role may the arts play in supporting sustainable practices in society? Given the complexity of sustainability in relation to human socio-environmental behaviors, is it even possible to re-balance the globe and provide a more definitive future for our children and generations to come?

While there are no simple answers to these questions, the 2018 Public Affairs Conference will facilitate vital dialogue on practices for a sustainable future.