

CAREER
LINKS



Career Development
Center

Conversations about Career Success...with Faculty



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Sustainable Agriculture and Sociology

What was your college major?

B.A. in English and Environmental Studies, Secondary Teaching Certificates in Michigan and Kansas.
Masters (ABD) in Sociology.

Did this major lead you to your current career?

Yes, in all three cases. English prepared me with communication skills as well as substantive knowledge of language and linguistics that have been helpful in my work as a professor of sociology. Environmental Studies also prepared me for a later commitment to a secondary career as an organic farmer, which in turn prepared me to teach in and coordinate a sustainable agriculture program.

What are the characteristics that your most successful students possess?

- Number one would be self-discipline, the ability to set practical goals and do the work necessary to accomplish them.
- Number two would be self-confidence, which I see as a balance between self-awareness and self-centeredness. Students who are too self-centered are often unable to be open-minded and cooperative, which are qualities and attitudes necessary to successful learning, which, in my view, is necessarily a social process.

- The final characteristic I would mention would be that successful students are well socialized and therefore have good social interaction skills.

Name three things a student should know when exploring this career.

Sociology

1. It is a very broad and deep field that is useful in almost any occupation.
2. It is also rewarding in terms of insights into one's own personal and social life.
3. It requires a strong commitment to reading and discussing abstract concepts and theories, as well as grounding conclusions with empirical knowledge.

Sustainable Agriculture

1. It is a rapidly growing field with almost unlimited opportunities.
2. It is not a way to get rich quickly. The rewards are more often moral while still allowing a comfortable and healthy lifestyle.
3. The work is physically demanding.

What skills will a student learn when pursuing this career?

Critical thinking, connection of theory and observation/practice, data analysis, and social interaction.

For a student needing part-time employment while in college, what types of jobs provide the best experiential learning opportunities?

Sustainable Agriculture: For work in this area, one could consider farming, working in a nursery or garden center. Also, working in a greenhouse environment would be a good option.

Sociology: Volunteering for a social service agency, food banks and soup kitchens, and shelters that provide assistance to women and also families in need. This allows students to get out into the community and become familiar with resources and situations they perhaps know little about.

If a college student is unable to find related work experience in this career field, how do you suggest he/she prepare for the workplace?

Any job that provides a student with opportunities for interaction is the best. This is a key skill for this field and is transferable to other fields they might find themselves in as their career path advances.

Is there a selection process for entering this program?

No.

Note: Students do NOT have to be enrolled in HORT 272 – Sustainable Agriculture Fall Practicum to take HORT 245 – Commercial Crop Production.