

Atlanta Global Studies Symposium 2019  
RCE Greater Atlanta Track  
Report

April 26, 2019

RCE Greater Atlanta  
Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain  
Georgia Institute of Technology

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# Introduction

On Friday, April 26, 2019, [RCE Greater Atlanta](#), officially recognized by the United Nations University, hosted a track “Transforming Education and Society through University-Community Partnerships” in conjunction with the Atlanta Global Studies Symposium, held on April 25-27, 2019 at the Georgia Institute of Technology. The symposium aimed to foster collaboration among institutions of higher education, the public and the community, and the K-12 sector in the Atlanta region and beyond through education, research, and outreach about global, regional, and international studies and the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

RCE Greater Atlanta's goal was to facilitate collaboration between university-community partners and engage them in conversation on diverse approaches, successes and challenges in implementing the SDGs through research, teaching, service, and community development. The three sessions brought together a broad range of interdisciplinary and multi-institutional, regional and international faculty, community partners and graduate and undergraduate students.

The track opened with welcoming remarks by Dr. Colin Pots, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education at the Georgia Institute of Technology, followed by an introduction to RCE Greater Atlanta by Dr. Jennifer Hirsch, Director of the Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain at Georgia Tech and co-founder of RCE Greater Atlanta. In the first session, Dr. Kim Smith, co-founder of RCE Greater Portland, educated a community and university audience on and illustrated priorities to achieve UNESCO’s Global Action Programme on ESD and discussed her sustainability work in Portland, Oregon.

The second session, facilitated by RCE Greater Atlanta member Brittany Foutz, a Ph.D. student at Kennesaw State University, provided case studies on addressing sustainability challenges in Mexico, Germany and coastal Southeastern USA, presented by Dr. Carolina Lopez, RCE Borderlands, Mexico-USA; Jennifer Pohlmann, RCE Hamburg; and Michelle La Rocco, UN RCE Georgetown, South Carolina.

The third session, facilitated by CEO and Founder of Collective Wisdom Group Suzanne Burnes, began with a keynote listener address by Cicely Garret, Former Deputy Chief Resilience Officer at City of Atlanta Mayor’s Office, who emphasized the importance of having a dynamic, incremental and inclusive approach to transforming academia into a medium to serve communities in a new way. The session continued with presentations by the panelists: Dr. Michael Black, Senior Lecturer in Neuroscience at Georgia State University, Anne Heard, Executive in Residence at the Atlanta Metropolitan State College, Dr. Britta Kallin, Associate Professor of German at Georgia Institute of Technology, and Dr. Yomi Noibi, Executive Director of Eco-Action, who shared best practices and challenges in implementing the SDGs in their work including teaching in both humanities and sciences, government action, research and mobilization of communities. They discussed the importance of finding common denominators in university-community relationships and their current and future joint efforts to advance the SDGs. The session also provided a venue for a direct exchange of ideas through group discussions facilitated by Dr. Mine Hashas-Degertekin, Associate Professor of Architecture at Kennesaw State University, Garry Harris, President of the Center for Sustainable Communities, Dr. Fatemeh Shafiei, Professor of Political Science and Chair at Spelman College, and Dr. Pegah Zamani, Associate Professor of Architecture at Kennesaw State University. Dr. Bruce Stiftel, Professor Emeritus in the School of City and Regional Planning at Georgia Institute of Technology concluded the track with a summary of key points and

recommendations on the ways to advance the work of RCE Greater Atlanta's Higher Education Learning Community Work Group.

Finally, RCE Greater Atlanta contributed mightily to the Symposium Poster Session with 8 out of 11 featured posters submitted on behalf of the RCE. Poster contributors came from a variety of Metro Atlanta Higher Education Institutions. Poster topics emphasized current and future collaborative faculty-community and faculty-student efforts in implementing the SDGs. These ranged from those discussing strategies and actions to sustain and empower low-income and refugee communities to designing cutting-edge biophilic facilities for underrepresented communities and helping implement climate action plan by reducing waste, as well as discussing RCE Greater Atlanta's role in mobilizing youth and helping young professionals to achieve their goals.

# Lessons Learned

During the third session, participants analyzed and synthesized lessons gleaned from earlier sessions and brainstormed goals and projects for RCE Greater Atlanta and the Higher Education Learning Community Work Group. Some of the most important **takeaways** and **lessons learned** concerned:

a) Developing students' cross-cutting key competencies for achieving the SDGs

With respect to developing students' cross-cutting key competencies for achieving SDGs as defined by UNESCO, participants emphasized that these very competencies are essential in the advancement of students' careers since such competencies are highly valued by employers:

1. Systems thinking
2. Anticipatory competency (evaluate multiple futures, consequences, and risks)
3. Normative competency (norms, values, and actions, in context of conflicts of interest)
4. Strategic competency (innovative actions)
5. Collaboration
6. Critical thinking
7. Self-awareness
8. Integrated problem-solving

Learn more: see UNESCO's [Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives](#))

b) Engaging and mobilizing youth, in both K-12 and higher education sector

Closely related to point (a) was the emphasis on the need to develop broad and compelling language to further engage and mobilize youth including K-12 audience, and especially the elementary schools. This is something to talk to the K-12 Work Group about. There are already lots of existing materials related to K-12 education in this area.

c) Expanding the RCE's constituency and coordinating joint activities

Participants placed particular emphasis on the need investigate, recognize and expand the RCE's constituency, as well as on efforts to bring multiple constituencies together in place-based activities which will reduce fragmentation and build cohesion instead.

d) Prioritizing equity by expanding the pool of community partners and, closely related to this, focusing on *just* rather than transactional relationships

Participants stated that in research, teaching and service, faculty must prioritize Inclusion and equity and strive for *just* as opposed to transactional relationships. At the same time, they noted that despite the fact that "our institutions widely claim the mission triptych of Teaching, Research and Service," the latter remains a foster child and that the reality of the current higher education system is such that service work remains subjugated to research and teaching. One participant said that "making a community issue a research project is 'monetizing' it" and that "faculty currency are high-impact publications." Participants emphasized a need to find solutions to this problem. Finally, participants noted that RCE Greater Atlanta should strive for more exposure outside the Higher Education institutions with information flowing both directions.

e) Supporting the ongoing research, teaching and service of faculty whose work helps advance sustainability - and developing sustainability curriculum and heightening visibility of such curriculum and service

Participants stressed the need to “network across silos” and have an interdisciplinary approach to issues of sustainability. They also stressed the importance of cross-institutional rather than individualized action, especially in the matter of securing funding for projects related to sustainability. Questions were raised as to whether it is more productive to focus on specific projects such as Proctor Creek which brings goals together and is easily evaluated or build resources to support the ongoing work of higher education colleagues whose teaching and research can advance sustainability. In his concluding remarks, Dr. Stiffler stated that the latter model will have a broader impact on our campuses.

Finally, participants stated that focusing on SDGs that support social capital (1, 3, 4, 10, 16) rather than market-based SDGs would empower the workforce and increase total capacity to address sustainability and climate change. Unwana Etuk, a Georgia Tech senior and RCE Greater Atlanta member, who participated in the discussion is currently conducting research on this topic.

f) Connecting with government groups and engaging municipal government

Participants noted the importance of connecting with government groups, helping build government capacity and support government and business in long-term planning around sustainability, resilience and climate change—activities that policy-makers and business people find challenging to do on day-to-day basis. They also stressed the importance of bottom-up approach to change with an emphasis on grass-root action and governance action which places responsibility on all rather than relying solely on government solutions.

g) Promoting Climate Action

Participants noted the immediacy of climate action with 11 years left to accomplish change and emphasized the necessity of grass-root approach, especially in the face of, for instance, common use of plastic containers and cups at the various government, educational and business functions (plastic lunch containers were used at the very Symposium itself). They also stressed the need to engage the business sector in climate action and demonstrate the ways in which climate relates to their operations, as well as engage educators in the K-12 sector to help integrate climate action in their teaching.

h) Promoting food security and sustainable food consumption

The track participants placed special emphasis on food security and sustainable food. They stated that food insecurity on campuses is high and there are high rates of insecurity among university staff whose labor is underpaid. Participants stressed the need to investigate food needs on college campuses, as well as identify and help build local food assets to promote long-term resilience and sustainable food consumption.

# Looking Ahead: Recommended Actions for RCE Greater Atlanta

The following are nine key actions for engaging faculty in RCE Greater Atlanta and advancing the work of the HELC Work Group, recommended by Dr. Bruce Stiftel in his Closing Remarks. Building on RCE Greater Portland guest Kim Smith's emphasis on using the GAP Priority Areas to structure RCE network planning, they are grouped by GAP Priority Areas and expanded to incorporate other suggestions by the track's participants. (See below for more information on GAP Priority Areas.)

## GAP Priority Area 3 - Building Capacities of Educators and Trainers

**Action #1** - Build digital learning platform offering learning tools that can be incorporated by faculty at our institutions and used by others

**Action #2** - Organize speaker series, either face to face, or using virtual tools, that will help faculty meet each other, learn about each other's work, and form partnerships. These might take the form of an Atlanta Education for Sustainable Development Roundtable with perhaps monthly events

**Action #4** - Seek to fund fellowships across the institutions that include events and resources that bring the fellows together to learn from each other

**Action #9** - Prepare an inventory of projects related to sustainability under way on our campuses

Related proposals and recommendations from discussion included: a) developing relationships with community colleges in Metro Atlanta because they offer a more inclusive voice in racial and class diversity; b) maintaining research inventories to ensure data collection and accessibility; c) engaging educators in K-12 sector, especially elementary school teachers and demonstrating the ways in which climate action can be integrated into their teaching and made relevant for each and every subject; d) recommendations for the Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain at Georgia Tech to align Student Learning Objectives with UNESCO's Education 2030 cross-cutting competencies and create online digital learning courses.

## GAP Priority Area 2 -Transforming Learning and Training Environment through Whole-Institution Approaches

## GAP Priority Area 5 - Accelerating Sustainable Solutions at the Local Level

**Action # 3** - Seek to broker internships connecting community partners with higher education programs

**Action #5** - Help researchers design interventions together with community partners

**Action #7** - Develop and deliver an Academy-style training program to aid community leaders to achieve their goals related to sustainability

**Action #8** - Develop a database of community groups and community group interests

Other suggestions included: a) creating initiatives where RCE affiliated organizations begin to identify other organizations that are not yet part of RCE and focus on individualized recruitment; b) facilitating workshops related to consensus-building and setting goals to attract more groups; c) creating a digital hub to make conference activities more accessible economically and environmentally; d) building connections with rural communities to expand RCE constituency; e) partnering and building alliances with a broad range of national and regional and local non-profits, as well as youth-focused societies,

fraternities and sororities and Athletic Departments; f) initiating a food-map lab project to investigate local foodscape and food assets with an aim to promote food security and sustainability (in potential partnership with Georgia Farmer's Market Association and Aglanta)

#### GAP Priority Area 1 - Advancing Policy by Mainstreaming ESD

**Action #6** - Provide staff support to translate research results at our institutions into policy proposals and to advocate for these proposals with government bodies and stakeholders

Other suggestions included: a) supporting government in the long-term planning and decision-making related to sustainability, resilience, climate change and gentrification; b) developing a signature tool to train communities to effectively meet the sustainability challenge similar to MIT Consensus-Building Tool; c) applying for government grants to do community-training in implementing SDGs (e.g. EPA Collaborative Problem-Solving Approach)

#### More Information on GAP Priority Areas

From the [UNESCO Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Programme on ESD](#)

#### **UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD**

UNESCO launched the new Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD, in 2014. Countries and RCEs are asked to help implement the GAP, using the [UNESCO Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Programme on ESD](#), with five Priority Action Areas:

1. Advancing policy by mainstreaming ESD
2. Transforming learning and training environments through whole-institution approaches
3. Building capacities of educators and trainers
4. Empowering and mobilizing youth
5. Accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level

# Appendix A- RCE Track Agenda

Transforming Education and Society through University-Community Partnerships

April 26, 2019

## 9:00 am - 10:30 am: Session 1 Advancing Education for Sustainable Development through RCEs

**Welcome:** Dr. Colin Potts, Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education

### Session Description:

Through multi-sector collaboration and innovative problem-solving, United Nations University has invited regions around the world to form collaborations called Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development – “RCEs.” RCEs harness the power of education to advance the 17 U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Guest speaker Kim Smith, co-founder of [RCE Greater Portland](#), will present foundations in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), illustrate priorities to achieve UNESCO’s Global Action Programme on ESD, and highlight ways that RCEs around the world are advancing ESD in their regions. This session will open with a brief introduction to [RCE Greater Atlanta](#), one of seven RCEs in the U.S. and 171 in the world.

### Speakers:

Kim Smith, Ph.D., is an Instructor in Sociology at Portland Community College, co-founder and board member of [RCE Greater Portland - the Greater Portland Sustainability Education Network](#), and an International Fellow with the U.S. Partnership for ESD. She led the U.S. delegation to the UNESCO World Conference on ESD in 2014.

Jennifer Hirsch, Ph.D., is the inaugural Director of the Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain at the Georgia Institute of Technology and co-founder of [RCE Greater Atlanta](#). She is an applied cultural anthropologist recognized internationally for fostering university and community engagement in sustainability and

## 11:00 am - 12:30 pm: Session 2 Successes and Challenges in Promoting a Sustainable Future: Regional and Global Perspectives

### Session Description:

This session brings perspectives on sustainable development from RCE colleagues across the globe. From the U.S. Atlantic Coastline to Mexico to Hamburg, the participants will share their experiences promoting sustainable development through university-community partnerships focused on education, research, community development, economic revitalization and environmental restoration.

### Speakers:

Carolina Lopez, Ph.D., is the founder of and the project coordinator at [RCE Borderlands México-USA](#). She co-founded five sustainable development research centers, two recognized by the U.N. Dr. Lopez works on projects that promote common welfare and environmental and economic sustainability.

Michelle La Rocco is the Manager of the Georgetown County Environmental Services Division. She was one of the co-founders of [UN RCE Georgetown](#), South Carolina and continues that work today as a local government partner to create a county wide coalition for sustainable development in Georgetown, SC while also overseeing the solid waste and recycling programs for the county.

Jennifer Pohlmann is the Deputy Head of the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences’ Research and Transfer Centre, "Sustainability and Climate Change Management" which chairs and coordinates [RCE Hamburg, Germany](#). She coordinates projects on sustainable mobility and smart specialization in the

Baltic Sea Region and is currently developing online courses on sustainable development goals (SDGs). (participating via Skype)

**Facilitator:**

Brittany Foutz is a Ph.D. student in International Conflict Management and Dispute Resolution at Kennesaw State University and a member of RCE Greater Atlanta. She currently serves as a Graduate Research Assistant for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

**12:30 pm - 2:00 pm: Lunch, Poster Session**

**1:00 pm: Remarks by President G.P. Peterson, Georgia Institute of Technology; Vanessa Ibarra, Director, Mayor's Office of International Affairs, City of Atlanta**

**Poster Session - RCE Participants:**

**The Power of Cross-Industry Collaboration: How the RCE Builds Young Professionals**, Ilesha Baldwin, Environmental Studies, Spelman College

**Economic, Social and Environmental Sustenance of the West End Neighborhood via Participatory and Collaborative Work**, Miné Hashas-Degertekin, College of Architecture and Construction Management, Kennesaw State University

**Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for a World Without Waste**, Katherine Huded, Scheller College of Business, Georgia Institute of Technology

**Sustainable Communities: Providing Sustainable Solutions for Refugee Host Cities**, Marisol Mendez, School of Government and International Affairs, Kennesaw State University

**Community-Engaged Assessment of Soil Heavy Metal Contamination in Atlanta Urban Growing Spaces**, Sam Peters, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University

**Anthropogenic Atlanta: Rules and Remedies of Population Growth and Incompatible Transportation Infrastructure**, Cory D. Reeves, College of Architecture and Construction Management, Kennesaw State University

**The Real and Ethical Risks of Collecting Health Data in Indigent Communities**, Joan Wilson, Emory Urban Health Initiative, Emory University, Brandon Young, Cruz's Fishermen, and William Sexson, Emory Engaged Professionalism Program, Emory University

**A Biophilic Interlace: Healthcare for Under-Represented Community**, Pegah Zamani, Josh Robinson, College of Architecture and Construction Management, Kennesaw State University

**2:00pm – 4:00 pm: Session 3 Bringing it Home: Lessons and Next Steps for Building Partnerships in RCE Greater Atlanta**

**Session Description:**

This facilitated, interactive session will analyze and synthesize best practices in promoting RCE Greater Atlanta's priority SDGs, gleaned from earlier sessions. Priority SDGs include: SDG1-No Poverty, SDG2-Zero Hunger, SDG3-Good Health and Well-Being, SDG4-Quality Education, SDG9-Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG11-Sustainable Cities and Communities, and SDG13-Climate Action. The goal here is to exchange ideas and facilitate collaborations among RCE Greater Atlanta members inside and outside higher education, as well as with our colleagues from regional and global RCEs. The session will conclude by outlining concrete next steps for advancing the SDGs through education, research and action partnerships.

**Keynote Listener:**

Cicely Garrett is former Deputy Chief Resilience Officer at the City of Atlanta Mayor's Office and a member of [RCE Greater Atlanta](#). For the past two years, she spearheaded the transition of the Mayor's Office of Sustainability to Office of Resilience under the 100 Resilient Cities program, which addresses the challenges and opportunities arising in Metro cities as a result of urbanization, globalization, and climate change

**Facilitator:**

Suzanne Burnes is CEO and founder of Collective Wisdom Group and a co-founder and Steering Committee member of [RCE Greater Atlanta](#). She has over 25 years' experience in conservation, system analysis and community development.

**Panelists:**

Michael Black, Senior Lecturer in Neuroscience, Urban Study Institute; Faculty Associate, Office of Sustainability, Georgia State University.

Anne Heard, Executive in Residence, Atlanta Metropolitan State College.

Britta Kallin, Associate Professor of German, Georgia Institute of Technology.

Yomi Noibi, Executive Director, Eco-Action.

**Discussion group leaders:**

Garry Harris, President, Center for Sustainable Communities.

Mine Hashas-Degertekin, Associate Professor of Architecture, Kennesaw State University.

Fatemeh Shafiei, Professor of Political Science and Chair; Director, Environmental Studies, Spelman College.

Pegah Zamani, Associate Professor of Architecture; Chair, KSU Presidential Commission on Sustainability, Kennesaw State University.

# Appendix B – Small Group Discussion Notes from Session 3 and Concluding Remarks

## 1. Ruthie Yow's notes, Garry Harris—Group Facilitator

Outlining goals activities and projects for the RCE Greater Atlanta for the next 3 years:

Sam Peters, Emory, graduate student worked on urban agriculture and heavy metals

Liz Kramer, Natural Resources and Spatial Analysis Lab

Kris Chatfield, RCE Youth Network

Emily Weigel, Bio Science and Urban Ecology

Ruthie Yow, SLS

Garry Harris, CSC

*What are the goals we should undertake as an RCE for the next 3-5 years?*

Sam: from the urban farm perspective, access to fresh food is a critical issue, which doesn't just give access to food; reflects that we have land we can use

Liz: Cities are resource "sinks" and building pipelines to rural communities is important; our RCE isn't about the city of Atlanta solely, but rather than greater Atlanta area

Kris: politically and so forth, we need to have a diverse and broad view of who the RCE's constituencies are-- Kris gives the RCE they visited in Argentina because its based on a watershed;

Emily: deliberate about messaging; she suggests that the network needs to have much more exposure outside our HEIs-- and information needs to flow in both directions

Ruthie: CoP and Certificate Program

*Additional Comments:* Liz: making a community issue a research project is "monetizing" it (she is responding to Emily's question about value systems); Liz points out that our currency is high-impact publications; how do we transform the way that universities do things?;

*Based upon the goals we just identified, what are the activities we should undertake to reach these stated goals?*

Sam: how involved are community members -- not organization leaders, but actual community members-- had gardeners do his talk at the last conference he presented at;

Liz: Something we don't do in academia is listen! She points out that we would want to get at these failures in a certificate program-- cultivating listening and defeating academic hubris; difference between government and governance-- the latter puts the responsibility on everyone! Building the capacity of governance action rather than relying on government solutions;

Kris: an initiative where we have RCE affiliated organizations begin to identify other organizations that aren't yet connected and really focus on individualized recruitment;

Emily: digital hub for getting together-- how do we make conference activities more accessible economically and environmentally;

Liz: Food Shed UGA and Watershed UGA-- there are so many kinds of folks working in "the food space" -- trying to bring people to the common table and uncover needs-- food insecurity on campus is high and has been ignored and on -campus labor is underpaid and high rates of food insecurity among staff; Liz says they are creating on campus coolers so they can provide more produce for food insecure students that is quality in nature

Ruthie: a community of practice case study project-- FOOD?! It could be multi-institution and multi-partner

Bruce (key listener) adds: should we be supporting research and projects or should we be directing projects? Is there any point of a mega-project?

*What are our top three goals for the RCE over the next 3-5 years?*

Liz: Conduct a needs assessment to understand the landscape; database of existing work/initiatives/community research/learning tools?

Emily: Figuring out our messaging to expand membership and participation

Liz: Identify our blind spots;

Garry: Sustainable Food!

Sam: Analysis of foodscape -- Garry: foodscape map that identifies assets in the RCE Greater Atlanta;

Ruthie: community of practice; The community building certificate; the foodmap as a lab project

Partners: HEIs, Aglanta, GFMA,

*Garry offers a summary of our hot button words: Value systems, food, messaging and outreach; authentic connection to community activities and initiatives;*

\*\*\*\*\*

Notes from other groups:

Pegah's group: two categories-- how can the RCE contribute to problem solving at the local level and dividing projects into short and long timeline

Goal 17: Partnerships-- we won't have to reinvent the wheel if we better know what each other is doing (ie KSU and Emory doing the same kinds of projects without realizing); Expo or showcase that is RCE oriented

Mobilizing youth

Anne's Group:

Foster better broader stakeholder representation in the RCE

More engagement on climate change

Emphasis on educational focus -- college, high school youth and younger; working on language that is broadly compelling and legible

Supporting place-based activities that bring multiple constituencies together and that transcend silos and foster cohesion;

Measuring results in such a specific project context;

Bruce:

"A heart of service doesn't exclude world class research"-- Carolina Lopez

Teaching, research and service triptych - service is the red-headed stepchild; Bruce points out that Liz is at a university that is a land grant college and has a mission around service (ag extension);

He points out at GT we "revere work that impacts industry positively" -- Bruce points out that his industry is the community because he is a city planner; despite the fact that we don't have a service mission, GT brags about service activities of students and faculty;

We have to advance service that is supportive of teaching and research; we should not knock our heads against the walls as faculty saying “how can we get greater credit for our research?!”

Bruce points out that the UNESCO Goals brought to mind the city planning community surveys that he’s seen; employers are asked about skills and they talk about conflict resolution, teamwork, communication-- he points out that those statements align with what Kim brought out as the GAP competencies (such as systems thinking and so forth)

Principles: We should co-produce knowledge

We should prioritize equity

We should focus on just relationships, not transactional relationships

We should find a point of entry for ourselves and realize that we must be vulnerable

We have only 11 years to make substantial changes

We must work across silos and interdisciplinarily

In the form of a question: Should we develop signature projects or support individual existing projects?

Are we creating new initiatives or rallying people around a common project?

Actions:

Create a digital learning platform offering courses that the ten partner univs can use or that community partners can use to work with the SDGs

Create an RCE speaker series -- Atlanta Education for SD Roundtable? That would bring in outside experts and local ones

Create transformational research or participatory action research by working with community members to establish goals, methods, and measures of success

Create infrastructure for supporting investigators and create support structures for policy implementation

Create academies to help participants achieve their goals that is based on the EJA model but for SDG leaders

Create a database of community groups and interests through an inventory that faculty could use to create multi institution research teams

Create a project inventory across our network

If almost all these actions could be undertaken by a single university, why should we work together?

--to draw on our diverse expertise across schools

--to make a better case to funders by presenting a united, dynamic front

## 2. Unwana Etuk’s notes, Mine Hashas-Degertekin-Group Facilitator

Q1: What were some lessons learned from today, and how can RCE Atlanta move forward?

- Focus on grassroots efforts rather than top-down policy measures
- Congregate city mayors, especially for expanding public transport
- Engage the youth, even before university. Add a sustainability lens to the existing curriculum
- Bring the silos together
- Recognize the different levels of communities (age, class, occupation, sub-communities, etc.) and have specific foci to minimize fragmentation within the concept of sustainability
- Connect governmental groups... Development is aligned with people not just nature, especially concerning displacement.

- The gov't seems powerless, but they have initiatives. Establish the goals, then we'll move together. The RCE can link economically.

Q2: Based on the SDGs, what should the RCE do in terms of projects and programs?

\*we spoke in relation to Greater Atlanta's priority goals\*

- Note: there are work groups, but they don't necessarily revolve around any particular SDG
- Suggestion: maintain research inventories to ensure data collection and accessibility
- K-12 engagement. Be aware of school scheduling to ensure participation (i.e. no big events during finals season like this Symposium ...).
- Everything cannot start from zero. Support existing STEM programs/stimuli. Connect these together to avoid fragmentation, encourage collaboration, and develop fuller programs.
- Education and training to highlight existing activity. Ex: Resilient Atlanta, Transformative Alliance
- Work groups to use Climate Action lens.
- Engage businesses and show how climate relates to their operations
- Continue this for education. Any subject can have a climate lens. Target elementary schools. Children will tell them parents and also keep these ideas as they grow up. Identify target areas and provide knowledge in those respects.

Q3: Rank the SDGs

- This is a problematic question. SDGs shouldn't be ranked. Think "how do we address SDG #X through SDG #Y."
- If we absolutely had to choose: 4, 9, **11**, 13. These are the most all-encompassing goals.
- could RCE support "Extension Rebellion" type groups? ... probably not officially, but as students it might be something to look into
- Counterargument: What about a focus on SDGs that directly center around supporting social capital (ex: 1,3,4,10,16) rather than environmental or economic/market-based goals (6,7,9,14,15)?
- This would be improving/empowering our workforce and also increasing our total capacity to address sustainability and climate change. (Unwanna is currently researching the idea)

Q4: Potential partners that are critical for RCE to engage

- PSE, Partnership for Southern Equity
- Transformative Alliance
- Southface
- sororities and fraternities
- Midtown Alliance, Streets Alive
- large community events/festivals
- create **activities** for the community, not just propaganda
- the business work group to contact David Eady from Ray C. Anderson Center for Sustainable Business
- **Athletics!** Student athletes do volunteer work; large events have significant effects on consumption and large potential for marketing; reaching populations that are traditionally "uninterested" with sustainability concepts; Mercedes Benz & the Green Sports Alliance; lots of funding is already channeled into athletics

3. Carolina Lopez's notes, Pegah Zamani-Group Facilitator

#### 4. Concluding Remarks by Bruce Stiftel:

I was asked to summarize key points from our track today with emphasis on points that will advance the work of the Higher Education Learning Group of RCE Atlanta. I will begin with two points of privilege, after which I will relay Principles that I heard suggested today for the RCE, and then Recommended Actions.

First, I was taken with Professora Lopez' quote, "A heart of service does not exclude world-class research." Our institutions widely claim the mission triptych of Teaching, Research and Service, but in fact, for most of us who work in universities service is of necessity a weak third. With the exception of those employed by service units such as the Agricultural Extension Service at a land-grant university such as the University of Georgia, the operative parts of the mission are teaching and research only. I remember my first assignment of responsibilities when I began a professor's appointment; under Service, it read, "Zero percent: included under Teaching and Research as necessary." Realistically, if we are to pursue the service work that all of us in this room believe is important, most of us have to do it in ways that also advance our teaching and/or our research. I do believe that community outreach can improve teaching and it can improve research, so this is not a bad constraint, but it is a reality that we must live within.

Second, I was struck by how much the competencies for sustainable development identified by UNICEF and shown to us by Kim Smith, overlap with the so-called soft skills that employers consistently say they value in college graduates. In my profession, city planning, employers consistently say they want their new hires to be capable at communication, conflict resolution, team work, and political sensitivity. Survey results I've seen from colleagues in engineering, business, and public policy, stress the same skill sets. So, if we want to prepare students for the sustainability work that UNICEF is advising, we will also be preparing them with many of the skills their employers will value.

Now, for principles. Today, I heard speakers advise us to:

Be Inclusive and equitable;

Pick an entry point; none of us can do it all.

Recognize that disruption can be necessary.

Seek just relationships; not transactional relationships.

Keep in mind that the clock is ticking; we have only 11 years left.

We must network across silos; team up interdisciplinarily.

And, I heard an important question raised: That we can seek to support faculty work through the RCE, or we can seek to direct faculty work into a few signature projects. It seems to me that while signature projects may get good press more easily, that the way to have broad impact on our campuses is to build resources that support the work of the hundreds of our colleagues whose teaching and research may touch on issues of sustainability and help them to accomplish that work in ways that advance sustainability.

Turning to actions. I heard at least nine suggestions for our RCE:

1. Build digital learning platforms that might offer learning tools that can be incorporated by faculty at our institutions and that might be used more broadly by others.
2. Organize speaker series, either face to face, or using virtual tools, that will help faculty meet each other, learn about each other's work, and form partnerships. This might take the form of an Atlanta Education for Sustainable Development Roundtable with perhaps monthly events.

3. Seek to broker internships connecting community partners with higher education programs.
4. Seek to fund fellowships across the institutions that include events and resources that bring the fellows together to learn from each other.
5. Help researchers to design interventions together with community partners, along the lines of the Transformational Research Christina Lopez described in Chihuahua.
6. Provide staff support to translate research results at our institutions into policy proposals and to advocate for these proposals with government bodies and stakeholders.
7. Develop and deliver an Academy-style training program to aid community leaders to achieve their goals related to sustainability.
8. Develop a database of community groups and community group interests.
9. Prepare an inventory of projects related to sustainability under way on our campuses.

It occurs to me that any of these actions could be undertaken by any of our institutions, or they might be undertaken by our network working together. Which is better? In many ways, I believe we are stronger if we act together. Certainly, there is a bigger pool of potential partners when we reach across the ten institutions in the RCE. Strategically, I also think that the likelihood of securing substantial funding is greater if we go to potential funders together rather than individually.

This has been a remarkable day! I've learned so much, and I believe we have heard so many powerful ideas that might serve to get our Higher Education Learning Community moving in impactful directions. Thank you to the organizers and to the speakers.

# Appendix B – Links to Session Video Recordings

## **Session 1: Advancing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Through RCEs**

Through multi-sector collaboration and innovative problem-solving, United Nations University has invited regions around the world to form collaborations called Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development – “RCEs.” RCEs harness the power of education to advance the 17 U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Guest speaker Kim Smith, co-founder of RCE Greater Portland, will present foundations in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), illustrate priorities to achieve UNESCO’s Global Action Programme on ESD, and highlight ways that RCEs around the world are advancing ESD in their regions. This session will open with a brief introduction to RCE Greater Atlanta, one of seven RCEs in the U.S. and 171 in the world.

[https://smartech.gatech.edu/bitstream/handle/1853/61051/hirsch\\_smith\\_videostream.html?sequence=2&isAllowed=y](https://smartech.gatech.edu/bitstream/handle/1853/61051/hirsch_smith_videostream.html?sequence=2&isAllowed=y)

## **Session 2: Successes and Challenges in Promoting a Sustainable Future: Regional and Global Perspectives from RCEs around the World**

This session brings perspectives on sustainable development from RCE colleagues across the globe. From the U.S. Atlantic Coastline to Mexico to Hamburg, the participants will share their experiences promoting sustainable development through university-community partnerships focused on education, research, community development, economic revitalization and environmental restoration.

[https://smartech.gatech.edu/bitstream/handle/1853/61049/pohlmann\\_larocco\\_lopez\\_videostream.html?sequence=13&isAllowed=y](https://smartech.gatech.edu/bitstream/handle/1853/61049/pohlmann_larocco_lopez_videostream.html?sequence=13&isAllowed=y)

## **Session 3: Bringing it Home: Lessons and Next Steps for Building Partnerships in RCE Greater Atlanta**

This facilitated, interactive session will analyze and synthesize best practices in promoting RCE Greater Atlanta’s priority SDGs, gleaned from earlier sessions. Priority SDGs include: SDG1-No Poverty, SDG2-Zero Hunger, SDG3-Good Health and Well-Being, SDG4-Quality Education, SDG9-Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG11-Sustainable Cities and Communities, and SDG13-Climate Action. The goal here is to exchange ideas and facilitate collaborations among RCE Greater Atlanta members inside and outside higher education, as well as with our colleagues from regional and global RCEs. The session will conclude by outlining concrete next steps for advancing the SDGs through education, research and action partnerships.

[https://smartech.gatech.edu/bitstream/handle/1853/61052/garrett\\_black\\_et\\_al\\_videostream.html?sequence=2&isAllowed=y](https://smartech.gatech.edu/bitstream/handle/1853/61052/garrett_black_et_al_videostream.html?sequence=2&isAllowed=y)