

2015 NAGPS Leadership Summit Abstracts

Keynote Address

Dr. Mary Ellen Mallia (Director of Environmental Sustainability, UAlbany)

What does sustainability mean and why does it matter? In this keynote, Dr. Mallia will explore the different elements of sustainability and identify ways in which the impacts of unsustainable choices will affect lifestyles and career choices. In addition, examples of global conflicts and current challenges with climate change at their core will be highlighted. The session will conclude with attendees developing a personal mission statement with regards to sustainability and explore ways this can be incorporated into their leadership roles on campus to advocate for sustainable changes.

Community Networking Panel

Joseph Citek (Tierra Farm)

Tierra Farm is a privately owned Certified Organic manufacturer and distributor of nuts and dried fruits, located 20 miles south of Albany NY. What started as a diversified organic vegetable farm in the Finger Lakes region of NY, blossomed into a multifaceted organic food business. Tierra's has built its success on sourcing the highest quality organic products available, through cultivating honest and open relationships with the best organic farmers from around the globe. Tierra sells its products directly to the customer, eliminating the need for a middle man, which enables the business to provide full transparency throughout the supply chain. Through continually sustainable reinvestments in the business, the company has met and exceeded the demands of the ever expanding organic industry.

Food Access: More than just an Oasis in a Desert

Will Malcom (Capital Roots Veggie Mobile)

Through a series of innovative programs, Capital Roots strives to provide access to fresh food and green spaces for all residents of the Capital Region. However, providing access to fresh food is not only about making healthy options available in so called "food deserts". Creating these opportunities is truly about public health, education, environmental sustainability, and perhaps most importantly- justice. Food is the foundation of our lives; it is essential to make this resource available to all of our neighbors so that they may live with the highest quality of life possible.

Carmen Rau (Holding our Own, Inc.)

Holding Our Own, Inc. (HOO), the women's foundation of New York State's Capital Region, was established in 1982 to create and advance feminist social and economic change. As a multiracial, multicultural foundation led by women of color, HOO occupies a unique position among New York's Capital Region's philanthropic, advocacy, and social justice organizations. HOO forms a bridge linking many directions: connecting the various communities of color, the philanthropic community and social change work; between heterosexual and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, and predominantly white led and predominantly people of color led organizations. We plan to discuss our orientation towards social justice organizing and feminism, as well as touching on some ways in which graduate students can advance feminist issues on their campuses.

Outreach Panel

Laura Ten Eyck (American Farmland Trust)

American Farmland Trust is a national non-profit organization focused on protecting farmland from residential and commercial development, helping farmers farm in an environmentally sustainable manner and keeping farmers on the land. The organization has field offices around the country ranging from California and the Pacific Northwest to the mid-West, mid-Atlantic and New York and New England. Issues facing farmers and threats to farmland vary tremendously between regions of the country as well in the various parts of New York State. In order to achieve its mission American Farmland Trust must work with a wide range of factions ranging from large-scale conventional agriculture and its supporting organizations and lobbying groups to small organic farms, environmentalists, consumers and more. American Farmland Trust serves as a bridge between these various factions which are often at odds with one another to create policy at the national, state and local level that will protect the agricultural land required by all.

Dan Crowley (Printz and Patternz)

Printz & Patternz "P&P" is a Schenectady-based custom apparel, graphic and web design retailer. They are also a branding agency focused on stitching together high quality custom materials with a focus on community involvement and pride.

In 2008 P&P was founded, since then they have grown the business from a sole proprietorship to now include a production facility, a retail store, and a great team serving customers not only here in New York's Capital District, but across the United States and worldwide. The P&P team, has invested numerous hours on community projects that seek to improve the quality of life around Schenectady and beyond. "From hosting fundraisers to lending support wherever they can, P&P focuses on customer service that goes beyond making the sale.

P&P customers have included, The Galesi Group, Villa Italia, the Altamont Fair, the University at Albany, Union College, Schenectady PBA, KAPL, Berkshire Hathaway, and several hundred small and medium businesses and organizations. P&P's mission statement is "to stitch together communities, to raise awareness of important causes, no matter how big or small, and to proudly support local schools, sports teams, and organizations by providing excellent customer service and quality clothing. Our customers always come first. Our standards are unparalleled. Our prices are affordable. And our commitment to excellence has no bounds. We work around the clock to ensure that your ideas and designs can be worn with confidence, pride, and envy."

The Intersection of Market Forces and Sustainability

Dr. Mary Ellen Mallia (UAlbany) and Dr. John Gowdy (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute)

This session will look at how traditional economic theory collides with the principles embedded in sustainability. Ecological economics is a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary field of academic research that aims to address the interdependence and coevolution of human economies and natural ecosystems over time and space. The dichotomy created by capitalism emphasizing individualism and competition while sustainability stresses community and cooperative approaches will be examined. Examples of how capitalistic theory has been applied and the resulting impacts will be discussed. The session will conclude with an exercise in creating groups for effective outcomes.

Inequality, Exploitation, and Sustainability: A Case for Unions

Dr. Aaron Major (UAlbany, UUP) and Dr. Bret Benjamin (UAlbany, UUP)

Aaron Major, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University at Albany, SUNY, will present on equity and fair compensation, tied to the question of sustainability. He will discuss equity in compensation for different kinds of work in the context of an increasingly polarized labor market and connect it to the question of economic sustainability. Contrary to some who argue that economic justice is necessary because, without it, capitalism implodes, Major argues that inequality is really an issue of fairness and justice, not some inherent economic logic, which, as unionists, tells us that we need to keep fighting over this issue since it will not resolve itself of its own accord.

Bret Benjamin, Associate Professor of English at the University at Albany, SUNY, and President of the Albany Chapter of United University Professions, will offer a gentle critique of sustainability as a concept, raising concerns that many sustainability initiatives are designed to sustain the profitability of capital while making modest concessions to labor, the environment, or other ends. Within this context, however, Benjamin will echo Major's remarks about the need for renewed and sustained Labor/Left struggle. In particular, he will discuss some of the pressing challenges for academic unions and public sector unions.

Fifty-four Men in a Room and Other Stories of Determined Underdogs

Dr. Gary Kleppel (UAlbany, Longfield Farm)

On July 4th, 1776, fifty-four delegates to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – all well-off, educated men – voted to declare their independence from their mother country, England, one of the greatest military powers on Earth. Why, knowing the consequences (the gallows), would they would they attempt something so brazen? How in the world could they succeed? But they did.

This talk will examine the stories of several movements spearheaded by small groups of individuals who would not be expected to succeed in their cause. We will consider the organization of these groups, their passion for their cause, the communication networks and how they generated the support they needed to get “a place at the table” and ultimately succeed. We will look for commonalities in the approaches taken to launch successful campaigns. We will end by describing the continuing effort to by students, faculty and staff at the University at Albany to increase the sourcing of local food on campus and to make the university's food system a model of sustainability in higher education.

The Challenges of an Activist Leader

Sandy Steubing (People of Albany United for Safe Energy)

What does it mean to be an Activist Leader fighting for sustainability in a climate changed world? Who are you going to threaten by taking on this role? How do you work toward sustainability if our economy is based on consumption?

This session will cover a range of difficulties that activist leaders commonly meet from the personal to the abstract. Along the way we will cover a multitude of subjects from how to plan for an outdoor event to legal issues. We will spend time on media outreach, and how to facilitate a productive meeting. You will leave with concrete suggestions and at least one model of activism that works.