



## Learning and Teaching

In Dr. Victoria Campbell-Arvai's class, *The Science and Practice of Social Change*, students learn about how social science methods can be used to study human behavior as it relates to the environment, and how it impacts sustainability efforts. Campbell-Arvai is using the U-M Sustainability Cultural Indicators Program (SCIP) data as a teaching tool to help students understand the use of surveys in environmental social science.

Katie Williams is a second year student in the School for Environment and Sustainability (SEAS) focusing on Behavior, Education, and Communication. She worked with the SCIP data in Campbell-Arvai's class and in another class, *Psychology for Environmental Stewardship*. For Campbell-Arvai's class, Williams worked as part of a group that did a statistical analysis on the relationship between two questions in the student version of the SCIP survey: community service (a proxy for altruistic motive/behavior) and feelings of responsibility for climate change. Through a group's project, "Caring for community, caring for climate change: Is there a connection?," Williams and others examined the possible correlation between general altruistic behavior and values or concerns about climate change.

"It was nice to work with data already being applied," Williams says. The fact that the data was real and actually being used by the university made the assignment more engaging, in her opinion, and it was a useful experiential component to the class. She suggests that university researchers inform students about the sorts of questions they wanted answered/analyzed to encourage real-world application of data collection and analysis.

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“Knowing projects are actually meaningful and will be considered by the university is beneficial” for learning and engagement, she says.

“The data set was interesting because it looked at sustainability from a lot of different angles,” Williams says, and diversity of viewpoints is important for sustainability research, in her opinion. But as a SEAS grad student, she didn’t feel the survey contained any questions that were surprising to her, as might be expected given the survey’s broad target audience—SEAS students are trained in many concepts that might be unfamiliar to other students not focused on sustainability issues day in and day out.

Williams has suggestions for improving the data set. After looking over the data, “I still don’t know a lot about sourcing,” she says, particularly food or waste. As part of the SEAS compost crew, she’s interested in making Dana Building (home to SEAS) the most sustainable building on campus but her team needs to know more about other buildings. Williams also suggested the survey would benefit from including more questions about values in order to better guide university policy.

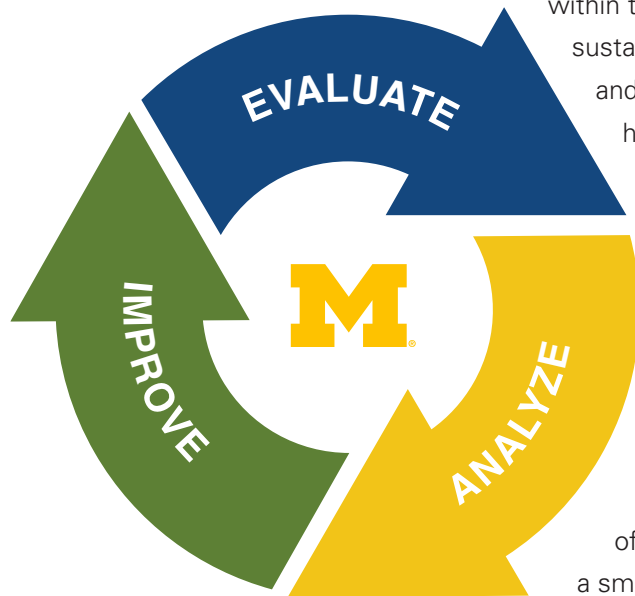
She also used the SCIP data in her environmental psychology class. For the class, Williams worked with a team to create a behavior model for a sustainable food campaign. She and her team used the SCIP data to inform themselves about sustainable food behaviors among students. This gave them a data-driven baseline from which to build their campaign.

The University of Michigan’s (U-M) Institute of Social Research launched the Sustainability and Cultural Indicators Program (SCIP). The program is helping to elucidate the complex relationship between institutional changes aimed at promoting sustainability and the behavior and knowledge of individuals within those institutions.



# SCIP Data In Action Case Study Series

In 2012, the University of Michigan's (U-M) Institute of Social Research launched the Sustainability and Cultural Indicators Program (SCIP). Now in 2018 the program is still going strong and helping to elucidate the complex relationship between institutional changes aimed at promoting sustainability and the behavior and knowledge of individuals



within those institutions. The 15-minute survey covers a swath of sustainability issues, collecting data on the sustainability knowledge and behaviors of the students and faculty and staff. Survey data is helping to continuously improve U-M's sustainability programs, and the survey's design and execution is serving as a model for how institutes of higher learning, and other large institutions, can effectively monitor and adapt their own sustainability programs.

Since SCIP's advent, 138 institutions from around the world have requested the questionnaire, revealing a thirst for change and a way to adaptively manage initiatives. Yet more needs to be done to explore the interplay between sustainability and social science. This exploration is essential to the advancement of sustainability in society more broadly. The SCIP data set is just a small part of that, but it holds a wealth of behavioral knowledge that waiting to be tapped by students and faculty who want to start advancing the social science of sustainability that one step further.

There are already some U-M researchers who have begun to use the SCIP data set, both in their own research and as a teaching tool. For instance, Dr. Jonathan Levine, a U-M professor of urban and regional planning, and his PhD student, Jacob Yan, are using the newest edition of the SCIP survey to figure out ways to better support carpooling behavior on and around campus. Dr. Victoria Campbell-Arvai is using data from the SCIP surveys to teach students about using social science in environmental and sustainability contexts. Students, too, have begun engaging with the SCIP data. Megan Czerwinski, a nursing PhD student, plans to use the data as part of her dissertation, focusing on sustainability education in the nursing profession.

The following case studies take a closer look at how these diverse researchers are advancing our knowledge of the social pillar of sustainability.

