

The University of Massachusetts Lowell is engaged in several exciting initiatives aimed at changing consumption patterns at the local, regional, and international levels. These initiatives share the common goal of encouraging individuals, businesses, institutions, or governments to reduce their impact on the environment and society by changing how they consume materials and resources. Two campus centers, the **Lowell Center for Sustainable Production** and the **Toxics Use Reduction Institute**, are leading these initiatives.

What is Sustainable Production?

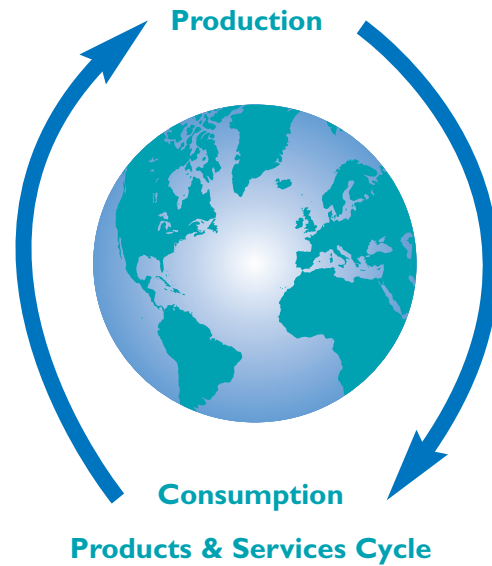
Sustainable Production is the creation of goods and services using processes and systems that are: non-polluting; conserving of energy and natural resources; economically efficient; safe and healthful for workers, communities, and consumers; and socially and creatively rewarding for all working people.

What is Sustainable Consumption?

Sustainable consumption is the selection, use, and disposal of products and services in a way that conserves energy and materials, minimizes the depletion of natural resources, avoids toxic and hazardous substances, and optimizes the quality of life of consumers and workers throughout the life cycle of the products or services. Like sustainable production, sustainable consumption involves meeting present needs without compromising the capacity of future generations to do the same.

How are Sustainable Production and Consumption connected?

It is common to think of production and consumption as discrete stages in a product's life cycle chain, with production (an industrial activity) preceding consumption (a domestic activity). But production and consumption are interconnected and interdependent. The production of products requires that products be consumed, and the consumption of products requires that they be produced.



Production and Consumption comprise a single integrated system focused on products. In this system, products and services serve as the natural nexus between production and consumption. A systems approach allows for the exploration of comprehensive strategies to address the sustainability of products and services at all stages of their life cycle.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Sustainable Production and Consumption
Lowell Center for Sustainable Production
University of Massachusetts
One University Avenue
Lowell, MA 01854
Telephone: 978-934-3262 / 3124
Fax: 978-934-3050
Email: spsc@uml.edu

<http://www.uml.edu/centers/LCSP/>
<http://www.turi.org>

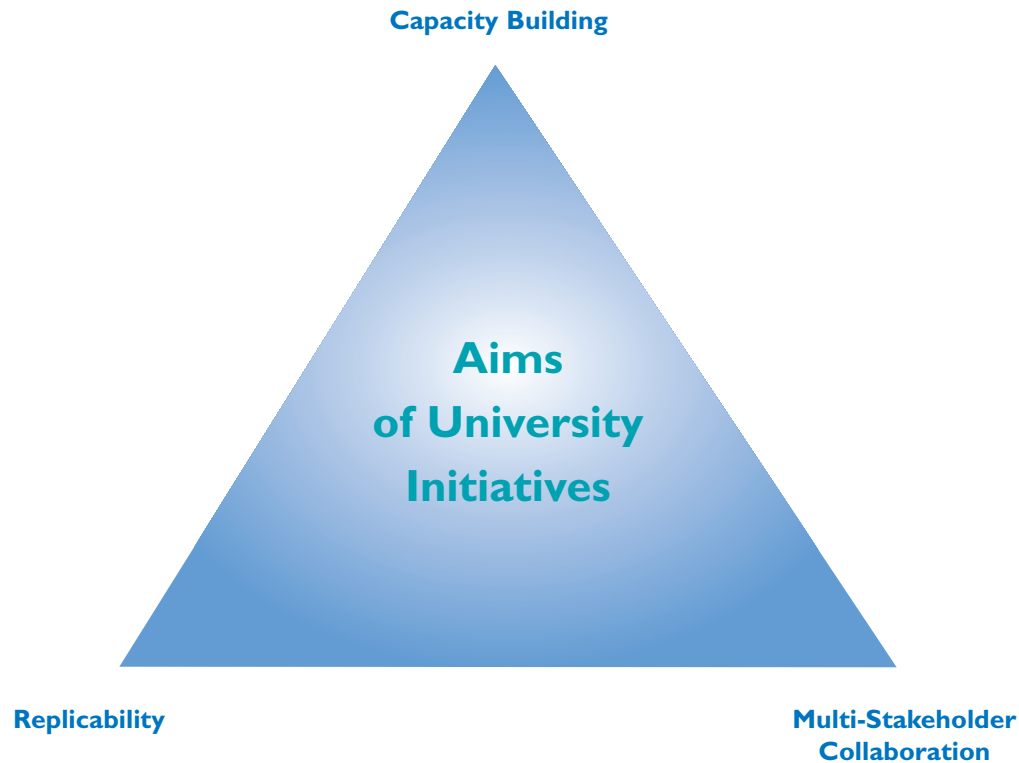
INTEGRATING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION



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Sustainable Consumption Initiatives at the University of Massachusetts Lowell

Sustainable economies must be built around sustainable products, through environmentally sound systems of production and consumption. The goal of the University's work in Sustainable Production and Consumption is to promote sustainability in all phases of a product's life cycle - purchase, use, manufacture, and disposal.



In its Sustainable Production and Consumption projects, the University works with businesses, organizations, governments, and communities. As the diagram above illustrates, the University aims to build capacity within partner organizations, catalyze multi-stakeholder collaboration, and help generate problem-solving models that are applicable and replicable elsewhere. The University provides technical expertise and comprehensive training on a variety of topics, ranging from Environmental Management Systems to toxics in household products.

Current Projects

North American Sustainable Consumption Alliance

The Lowell Center for Sustainable Production participates in the North American Sustainable Consumption Alliance, a strategic partnership of people and organizations who are working to promote more sustainable consumption patterns in Mexico, Canada, and the United States. The Alliance's mission is to facilitate information exchange, communication and outreach, and collaborative action around sustainable consumption. The Lowell Center catalyzed the formation of the Alliance and hosted its inaugural meeting in October 2001.

Safer Products in Neighborhoods (SPIN)

The Toxics Use Reduction Institute is collaborating with community and environmental groups in Worcester, Massachusetts, to improve the health of children through reduced exposure to toxic chemicals in the home. With training and support from the Institute, public health outreach workers are raising consumers' awareness about toxics in household products and educating them about less-toxic or non-toxic alternatives.

Publications and Resources

- o Overview of sustainable consumption initiatives in the U.S. (<http://www.turi.org/PDF/PSC.pdf>)
- o Paper published as part of OECD experts' workshop on information and consumer decision-making for sustainable consumption. [http://www.ois.oecd.org/olis/2001/doc.nsf/LinkTo/env-epoc-wpnep\(2001\)16-final](http://www.ois.oecd.org/olis/2001/doc.nsf/LinkTo/env-epoc-wpnep(2001)16-final)
- o Training curriculum on integrating sustainable consumption and production (available in CD-ROM version).
- o *Materials Matter* (MIT Press, 2001) by the Institute's director, Dr. Ken Geiser. <http://www.turi.org/overview/ken.htm>
- o Information and training to enable hospitals to reduce and eliminate their use of potentially harmful materials (Sustainable Hospitals project). <http://www.uml.edu/centers/LCSP/projects.html#sustainhospital>
- o Models and materials to help community groups and municipalities educate communities about toxics use reduction. <http://www.turi.org/community>