

UNIVERSITY *of* NEW ENGLAND

*An Innovative Event Production &
Implementation Model to Advance
Sustained Transdisciplinary
Collaboration in Higher Education*



UNIVERSITY OF
NEW ENGLAND

INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

Introductions



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Learning Objectives

After this presentation, you will be able to:

1. Describe an **innovative event production & implementation model**, in which a commitment to interdisciplinarity is embedded at all stages.
2. Explain how a **Planetary Health framework** can unite diverse disciplines, including the health professions, environmental sciences, & beyond.
3. Recognize the value of short-term interdisciplinary collaborations, between internal experts, to spark **sustained partnerships** into the future.

Planetary Health



- An emerging transdisciplinary field, encompassing the **innumerable interconnections between human health & the natural/physical sciences.**
- Broadly integrating related fields of Public Health, GeoHealth, One Health, Global Health, etc.
- *“Put simply, Planetary Health is the health of human civilization & the state of the natural systems on which it depends.”*

(Lancet Commission on Planetary Health, 2015 Report)

Priming Reflection

To engage people with Planetary Health, we develop interactive events covering a range of timely topics...

What are all the relevant topics that come to mind for you – that involve both human health & environmental elements?

SECTION I.



Planetary Health at UNE



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

International Planetary Health Alliance

- Harvard-led consortium
- 300+ organizational members from 60+ countries
- Funded by the **Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission on Planetary Health**
- **UNE institutional member since 2017**
- *“Committed to understanding & addressing the impacts of global environmental change on human health & wellbeing.”*

(<https://www.planetaryhealthalliance.org/about-the-pha>)



Interdisciplinarity at UNE

- **5 Colleges**
- **6 Centers of Excellence**
 - *Center for Excellence in Collaborative Education*
- **15+ health professions programs**
- **Robust environmental, biological, & marine sciences**

UNE Planetary Health Council



- To promote Planetary Health through: (1) Curriculum, (2) Research, (3) **Events**
- The Planetary Health framework **enhances collaboration** between UNE's health & environmental sciences (and beyond).
- *“Innovation for a Healthier Planet”*

SECTION II.



Planetary Health Events



Planning Process



Interdisciplinary planning team

- Sustainability, Communications, Student Wellness, Marine Affairs, & Public Health

Intentional process

- (1) Determine topic, (2) Recruit diverse internal experts, (3) Schedule meetings & rehearsals, etc.

Planetary Health as central

- Human & environmental health
- Intersectionality with other disciplines

Event Production Model

Three speakers for 10-minute presentations

- Internal university experts
- Interdisciplinary perspectives on central topic

Structure & organization

- Rehearsals, content coordination, script, timeline, slides, etc.
- Allows speakers to focus & prioritize content

Student & audience participation

- Student moderators
- 15 minute discussion/Q&A



Pandemic Reflections (Fall 2020)

Climate Change, Science & Action

- *What can COVID-19 teach us about preparing for climate change impacts on the environment and human communities?*

Protecting Public Health, from COVID to Climate Change

- *What can we learn from COVID-19 to strengthen public health preparedness for climate change?*

People, Planet & Profits

- *How does COVID-19 impact sustainability - globally, locally, and personally?*



Viral Planet: The Infodemic in Environmental & Health Sciences (Spring 2021)

As the World Health Organization declares an ‘Infodemic’, experts discuss how to:

- Navigate a crowded information marketplace,
- Decipher reliable science, and
- Defend essential environmental & health initiatives against the threat of misinformation.



Cracking the Zip Code: Decoding Environmental Injustice (Fall 2021)

Our health and actions are **mediated by our environment**, including the air, water and housing quality we're exposed to, and our ease of access to safe outdoor space, nutritious food, health care, education, and economic opportunity.

Join us to examine issues of **environmental injustice and solutions for cracking the zip code.**

Planetary Health Plate: Eat Like a Climavore (Spring 2022)



Join our panel of UNE experts to:

- Examine how eating habits affect the health of our planet
- Learn about local-to-global food systems
- **Explore solutions for a healthier world**

Collaborations

Rehearsals

- Content alignment
- Flow/sequence
- Resource sharing
- Technology practice

Event

- Discipline perspectives
- Build on each other
- Discussion & participation

Debrief

- Attendee feedback
- What worked
- Evolutions

PROMOTING POSITIVE CHANGE IN TIMES OF COVID:

Exploring strategies for improving planetary and human health

SECTION III.



Impacts of Events Model



Wide Reach

Event	Attendance	Views
Pandemic Reflections I: Climate Change, Science & Action	160+	559
Pandemic Reflections II: Protecting Public Health, From COVID to Climate Change	110+	196
Pandemic Reflections III: People, Planet & Profits	100+	209
Viral Planet: The Infodemic in Environmental & Health Sciences	70+	285
Cracking the Zip Code: Decoding Environmental Injustice	230+	387
The Planetary Health Plate: Eat Like a Climavore	60+	129

- **Virtual attendees**
- **Graduate** (osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, dental, etc.) & **Undergraduate** (environmental, medical biology, exercise science, education, etc.)
 - Health, environmental, & social sciences
- Counts toward earning **Interdisciplinary Honors Distinction**
- **Partnering with faculty** to promote to classes
- *“I liked the viewpoint of the Infodemic from different professions. Each one had something different to bring to the table, but **everything connected**, and I thought that was really interesting.”*

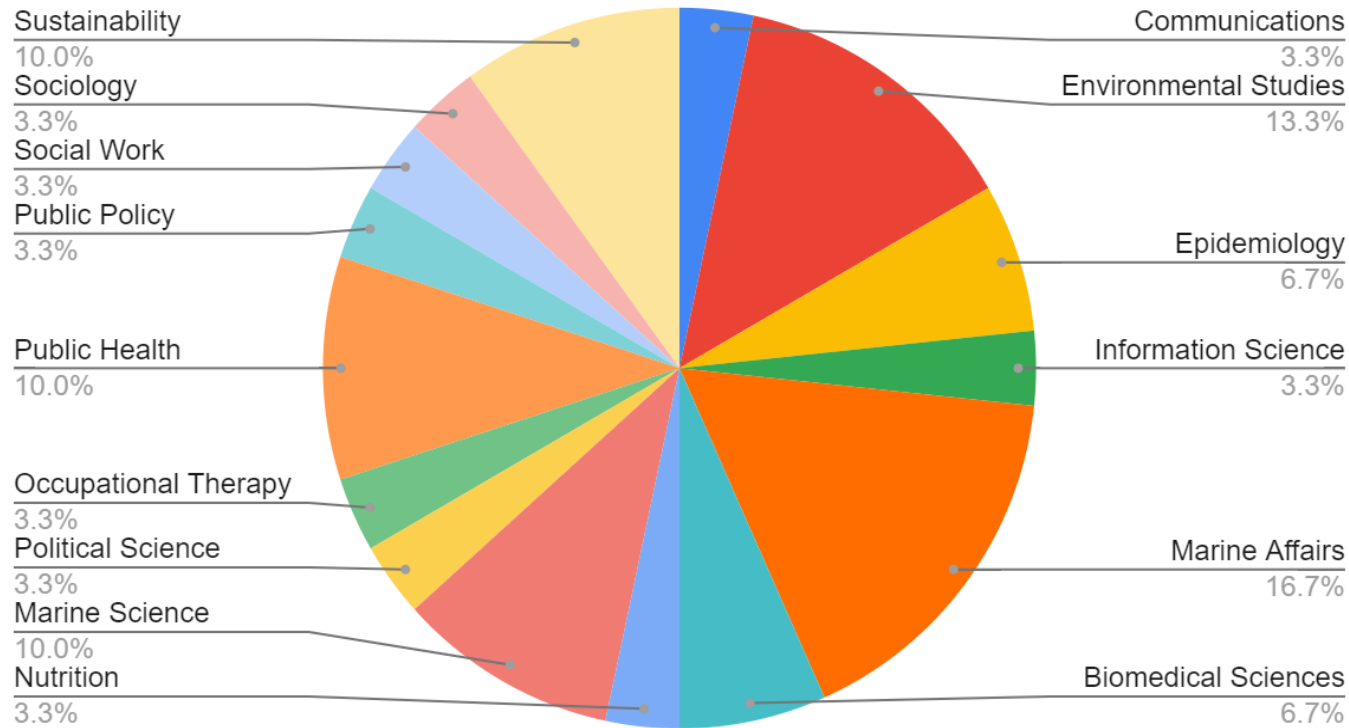
Unexpected Value



- *Internal* speakers were originally chosen for practical reasons.
- However, **increased interdisciplinary collaboration** resulted among the speaker teams.
- Leading to realization of **more value to use of internal speakers** than initially realized.

Interdisciplinary Speaker Teams

Areas of Expertise



Epidemiologist



Librarian



Political Scientist



Public Health Nurse



Environmental Scientist



Sociologist



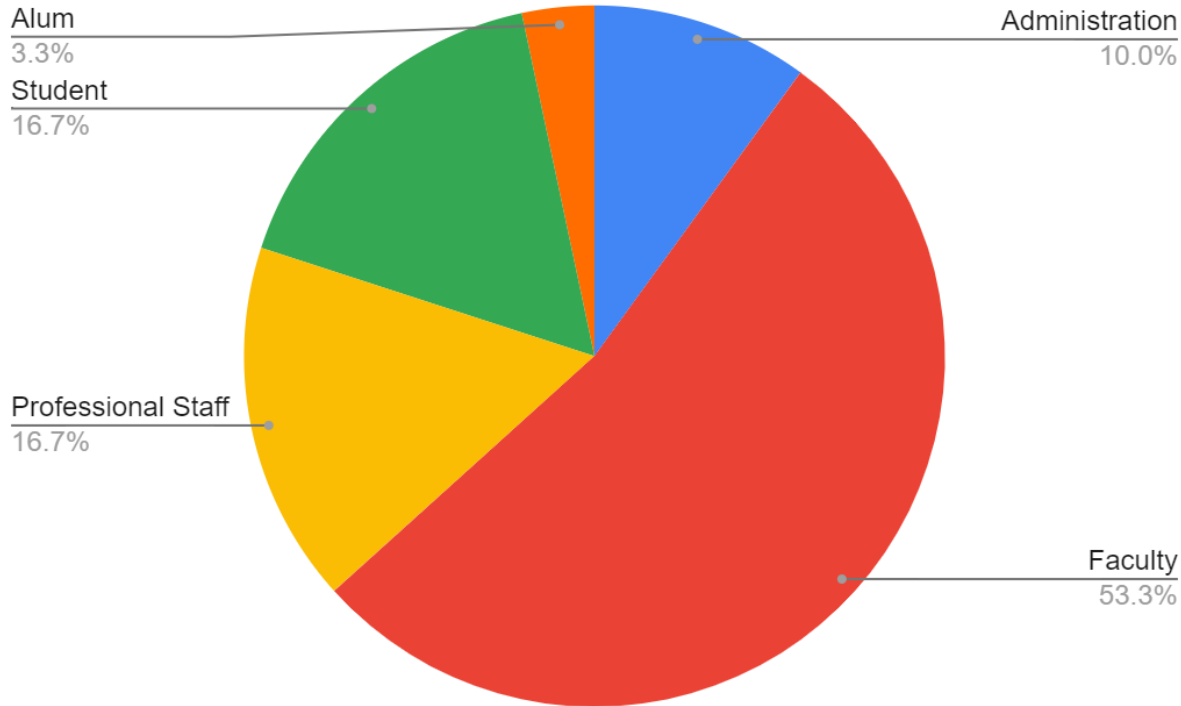
Anecdotal Observations



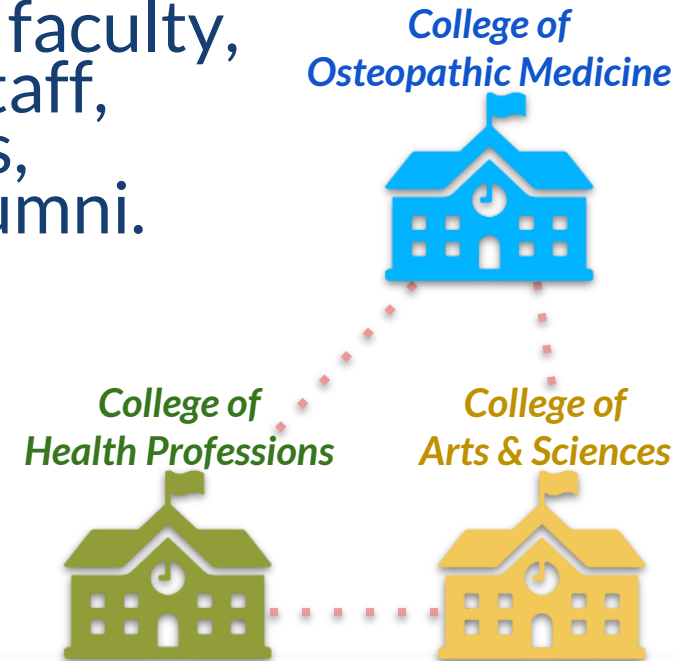
- Group emails to exchange scholarly resources.
- Discussion of guest presentations & co-teaching across classes.
- Remarks of appreciation for each other's expertise & the teamwork experience.
- Expression of desire for continued collaboration in the future.
- Sense of surprise at ease & value of synthesizing varied perspectives.

Strengthening Connections

Speaker Roles



- Across colleges, departments, & centers.
- Between UNE faculty, professional staff, administrators, students, & alumni.
- 30 team members across 6 events



Working Hypothesis



This event model, involving **three university panelists from diverse disciplines**, results in a range of positive impacts, including:

- 1. Heightened awareness** of each others' expertise,
- 2. Increased likelihood** of proactive communication & collaboration going forward, and
- 3. Greater appreciation** for interdisciplinary approaches.

SECTION IV.



Relevance & Significance



Context of Curriculum

UNE's undergraduate core curriculum revision

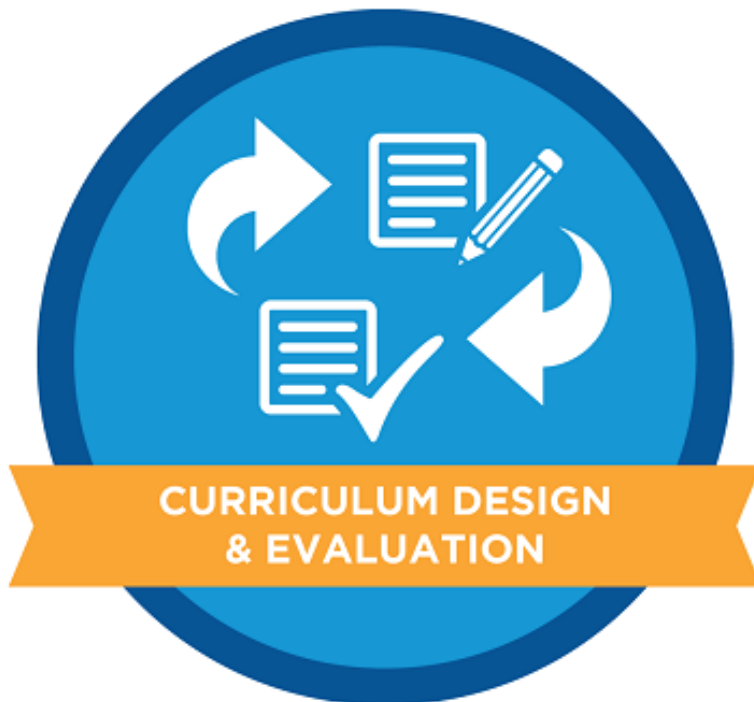
- Inclusion of “Planetary Health” pillar

Extending collaboration across colleges

- Undergraduate arts & sciences and health professions, graduate and professional programs

Key university partnership

- 2010: UNE IPEC established
- 2019: Transition to Center for Excellence in Collaborative Education (CECE)
- UNE CECE only New England institutional member of National Center for IPE



Before, During, & After Pandemic



Teaching as inherently solitary activity

- Typically single instructor, classroom, preferred methods
- Pandemic isolation & disruptions

Valuable teaching process & materials

- Planning, joint presentations, debriefing
- Online/live/video class options

Preparing Students for “Wicked Problems”



“Wicked problems” *

- Unique, interconnected, no complete solution
- Straddle disciplinary & organizational silos

Increasingly interdisciplinary 21st century challenges

- Climate disruption
- Diversity, equity, & inclusion

Higher education needs to prepare students

- Content across disciplines
- Engagement across expertise

SECTION V.



Planetary Health Future at UNE



Next Steps



1. Events - Fall 2022

Grow with the Flow: Resilience & Adaptation for a Changing World

2. Research - Survey speaker teams to formally measure perceived impacts of this model on their:

- Awareness of colleague's work
- Levels of familiarity, interaction, & communication
- Likelihood to initiate contact & to collaborate
- Attitudes toward interdisciplinary collaboration

3. Curriculum - Develop workshop series for faculty development in interdisciplinary approaches

Closing Reflections



- Interdisciplinary success **starts at the beginning** – from the level of our planning team.
- Planetary Health is a **framework that promotes robust collaboration** across divisions (shift to transdisciplinary).
- **Relevance & Urgency** – “Wicked problems” necessitate effective collaboration, interdisciplinarity, & preparation of the next generation.
- Bringing together diverse internal experts for (*even short-term*) collaborative planning & presentations can inspire **lasting partnerships** and reduce disciplinary silos.



Contact Us

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Thank
You

Check out our events!

- une.edu/sustainability/planetary-health