











to force the state to change the way funds for schools were allocated that had awarded billions to growing new suburban districts with a good tax base and left poorer districts with no funds. Neither green building groups nor smart growth groups took on this issue until recently.

Fortunately for an integrated movement, the public sees these issues as interconnected and is seeking common solutions. Polls conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) during 2000-2002 show most Californians are very concerned about the environment and our resource depletion, and also about traffic, lack of affordable housing, and bad land use planning. They believe global warming is a real phenomenon, although they lack familiarity with such terms as “sustainability” and “smart growth” and are even less familiar with the term “sprawl”.

They strongly feel we need to address our interrelated environmental challenges while also strongly sensing no leadership at the state or federal level on these issues. Poll participants expressed surprising agreement that lower income communities are environmentally degraded and should be helped, showing a suburban awareness and concern for urban residents. Conversely there was surprising support from urban minority groups, particular Latinos, for saving rural habitat and open space permanently, as our responsibility for future generations to inherit a preserved ecology.

While mostly living now in single family detached suburban homes, many polled in the series would choose to live in different kinds of communities and between 30% to 45% of Californians would choose a smaller home on a smaller lot, or a townhouse, or an apartment, if located near transit, parks, and walkable services. Since the poll, many articles in both professional journals and mainstream press have noted a major “back to the cities” movement that seems to be attracting a broad range of family types, generations, and social groups.

To see if the 376 entering students in my class in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design mirrored the opinions of California adults, I used the Blackboard system to give a similar poll. The results confirmed my speculation that our students have the interest and potential to be in real professional and civic leadership of the sustainability movement, and fulfill our mission to train and equip this generation to help improve our future.

When asked if finding a house that was affordable for a family like your own was a problem in their community, 82% said it was either a big problem or somewhat a problem. About 79% find population growth and development in their region a big problem or somewhat a problem, and 96% said the same about the world. They share with adult Californians a similar belief in the seriousness of global warming at 73%, and they support a variety of smart growth measures to improve land use planning and economic

development patterns and prioritize spending for social programs over roads during budgetary shortfalls by a wide margin.

Significantly, in a series of questions about the quality of parks, schools, and economic revitalizations, the majority agreed that low-income and minority neighborhoods are in greater need and get less attention than they should.

Perhaps most heartening, 36% indicated that the environment will be a major focus for them in their future profession, and another 47% agreed it is going to be important to their professions, while not necessarily being their major personal focus. Two thirds also rank environmental issues as either an important measure or the most important measure by which they look at candidates for elected office.

The environmental concerns of our own citizens and the attitudes of our students inform us that we have the responsibility and the capability here at Cal Poly to produce the next generation of technical and professional leadership that will be planning, designing, and constructing more healthy communities, which will feature a sound economy, healthy environment, and social equity.

And our graduates will be instrumental in the creation of places and spaces that are aesthetically and emotionally compelling as well. Art, design, and culture are integral to the development of sustainable communities. "We are sensuous creatures," according to E. C. Wilson as quoted by David Orr, "and we develop an emotional attachment to particular landscapes and communities." People and businesses want to participate in life and work in communities that are aesthetically attractive, culturally diverse, and socially invigorating, as Richard Florida has shown in his *Rise of the Creative Class*. There is a remarkable similarity between the models of green, smart, and equitable communities that sustainability advocates seek, and the wondrous and compelling towns and countryside that nurture creative thought and attract entrepreneurs and innovative industry. It appears from my read of Florida's work that the conditions of a sustainable community also constitute the most fertile place for a sound economy to constantly revitalize itself.

David Orr reminded us that, "the problem is not how to produce ecologically benign products for consumer society, but how to make decent communities of people who do not confuse what they have with who they are." Ultimately, this infant but vigorously growing sustainability movement is at its core a health and livability movement, and as so has the potential to provide a unified vision in a highly divided world. It simply must succeed. Enormous as this charge may be, I believe Cal Poly by virtue of its history and mission, its physical and intellectual assets, and its extraordinary students, may play a seminal role in the evolution of this world-wide sustainability movement. We cannot afford to believe otherwise. 