



MONMOUTH
UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE *for* GLOBAL
UNDERSTANDING

**Assessing Implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals into Monmouth
University's Curriculum**

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Executive Summary

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. The research for this report was conducted to examine the progress of the SDGs at a more localized level by examining potential implementation of the SDGs at Monmouth University and assessing possible barriers in this effort. This research was conducted by distributing a 12-question survey to all of Monmouth University's full-time and part-time faculty. Of the approximately 700 faculty members, 122 responses were received. Of the 12 questions included in the survey, this report takes into account academic school, faculty's familiarity levels with the SDGs, the number of current courses reflective of the SDGs, faculty participation in SDG training, and the barriers in place.

This research is intended to assess SDG implementation across Monmouth University as a whole, and then analyze this data by schools within the university as well. Given the scope of the qualitative data and time restrictions, we analyzed the significant trends found across the schools in terms of SDG familiarity, participation and training, and barriers. For future investigation, the collected data can be studied further to analyze trends within each department rather than just by school. Future researchers also can make more specific recommendations for SDG implementation in curricula by analyzing the data by academic schools and reporting on faculty's feelings surrounding the SDGs.

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed by the United Nations in 2015. These goals establish a blueprint to “achieve a better and more sustainable future for all” (United Nations, 2015). The United Nations created these goals with the intent that they would be fulfilled by 2030. The implementation of SDGs within the education system is a crucial step to accomplishing these goals, as students will soon enter the workforce and contribute to innovation in the world. Therefore, SDGs education is an integral part of the curriculum in all educational institutions. Now is the time to turn this vision of a sustainable future into a mission (Mathbor, 2022).

This report describes the findings from a survey that was conducted on the implementation of the SDGs in Monmouth University's curriculum. This assessment was undertaken through the distribution of a survey to all faculty members at Monmouth University. Full-time and part-time faculty participants were asked 12 questions in the survey. This report evaluates the responses collected from 7 of the survey questions. The remaining survey questions will be evaluated in a follow-up report next semester. From the data collected from the surveys, we were able to assess the implementation of the SDGs at Monmouth University as a whole and then by the academic school. Additionally, we collected data on barriers that prevented SDG education. This report concludes with a brief discussion of possible steps that should be considered to advance the integration into the curriculum and extracurricular activities at Monmouth University.

Distribution of Responses

The method of data collection in this study was a Qualtrics survey. We collected a total of 122 responses from faculty members at Monmouth University. Both programs of study were reflected within our data, as 8% of the participants indicated that they worked in the graduate departments, 62% from the undergraduate departments, and about 30% of respondents indicated that they work in both programs (See Figure 1). Responses were collected from all academic departments (See Figure 2). Most of the respondents worked in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, as almost half of the data came from this school. This did not come as a surprise because the School of Humanities and Social Sciences is the largest academic unit on campus and is comprised of ten academic departments (Monmouth University, 2022). The School of Science accounted for 14.9% of respondents, and the Leon Hess Business School and the School of Education each accounted for 13.2% of responses. The schools with the lowest number of responses are the School of Nursing and Health Studies (9.1%) and the School of Social Work (5%) (See Figure 2). Overall, the representation that was collected from each school or department in this survey parallels the size of the schools and departments at the university.

Results

Trends that were identified within the data are represented using various crosstabs, bar charts, and pie graphs. Additionally, trends with the qualitative data were analyzed using the method of coding (See Figure 5).

Familiarity with the SDGs Trends

The fourth question in the survey asked participants to indicate their familiarity with the SDGs. A bar graph was used to analyze this data (See Figure 3). Familiarity with the SDGs

generated mixed responses. The highest number of responses was the 32 votes that indicated that respondents were “slightly familiar” with the SDGs. This was followed by 30 responses that indicated that faculty members were “not familiar at all” with the SDGs. The lowest number of responses was from participants who indicated that they were “extremely familiar” with the SDGs (See Figure 3). Based on this data, there appears to be a relatively low level of familiarity with the SDGs across all academic departments.

The researchers further examined this finding by considering trends that were reported by academic departments. A crosstab was used to find more specific trends within schools at Monmouth (See Table 1). The largest knowledge gaps regarding the SDGs were identified within the School of Nursing and Health Studies with 40% of participants indicating that they are “not familiar at all” with the SDGs, followed by 33.3% of the School and Education and 31.3% of the School of Science also indicating that they were also “not familiar at all” with the SDGs. However, within the School of Education, 31.3% of respondents also indicated that they were “extremely familiar” with the SDGs. This demonstrates that knowledge about the SDGs in this school may be more evenly spread. Other notable trends include the fact that no faculty members in the School of Science or the School of Nursing and Health Studies marked that they were “extremely familiar” with the SDGs. This may demonstrate a stronger need for SDG training for faculty in these schools. Additionally, in the School of Social Work, 66.7% of respondents indicated that they were “very familiar” with the SDGs. (See Table 1). This may reflect a greater focus on SDGs education in that school as compared to other schools.

Current SDGs Implemented

The seventh question in the survey was “In your academic department, how many existing courses would you say reflect promotion of the SDGs across the curriculum?” This data was evaluated by first using a pie chart to reflect the distribution of this data at Monmouth as a whole. About half of the respondents indicated that there were 1- 4 courses that currently reflected the SDGs in their school. This category was selected the most, which was followed by 20.2% of respondents that indicated that there were 5-7 courses reflecting the SDGs. The category that received the least number of votes was that there are 8 or more courses offered that are reflective of the SDGs; this was followed by 15.6% of responses indicating that there are no courses that are SDG-focused (See Figure 4). From this data, it appears that there are a few courses that reflect the SDGs at Monmouth. These trends were then evaluated using a crosstab to give the researchers a more comprehensive view of the data within each school (See Table 2).

The Business School, 35.3%, and the School of Science, 29.4%, had the largest percentage of votes stating there are no courses that reflect the SDGs. The School of Humanities and Social Sciences had 23.7% of respondents who marked that there are no such courses. On the other hand, the School of Education and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences both had a 30.8% vote that 8 or more courses exist in their department that implements the SDGs (See Table 2).

SDG Training

Survey question number nine, asked participants if they had “participated in training for implementing the SDGs into curriculum development?” The responses from this question were first analyzed using a pie chart to display this data throughout the university (See Figure 5). The

overwhelming majority, 89.7%, of the respondents have not participated in any form of SDG training. Only 10.3% of the faculty surveyed have participated in some form of training. It is evident that there is a lack of SDG training at Monmouth as a whole. Then a crosstab was used to evaluate this data by school, and it was found that the schools with the highest percentages of participation in SDG training were the School of Education, 40%, and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, 30%. Lastly, the School of Social Work and the School of Nursing and Health Studies displayed 0% of faculty participating in SDG training (See Table 3). Based on the data, there is a trend between the School of Education and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences having higher percentages of faculty who have participated in SDG training and a greater number of courses in their academic school.

Barriers

There were 94 responses collected in survey question number ten that asked participants to “please describe any potential barriers you perceive that prohibit the engagement of the SDGs in your department’s curriculum.” This question allowed participants to select multiple options from the list of barriers provided. Additionally, this question asked participants to further explain their responses if they selected logistical barriers and/or other barriers.

In considering the responses as a whole, a significant number, 51.7 percent out of the total of 94 responses, indicated that there was a lack of knowledge at Monmouth which they believed prevented the SDGs from being implemented (See Figure 7). This is consistent with previous 52 respondents indicated that they had little to no familiarity with the SDGs. Next, the second most significant barrier is pre-existing curriculum rules that prevented the implementation of the SDGs, which accounted for 26.3 percent of responses. The logistical and

other barriers options were the smallest portions of the total responses, as logistical barriers received 9.3 percent and others had 12.7 percent.

When breaking this data down by school, it further shows that in each school an overall lack of knowledge is the largest barrier to SDG implementation, followed by pre-existing curriculum rules, and then logistical and other barriers. This pattern is prevalent when looking at the raw count of responses by school. In the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, out of 45 total responses, 35 selected lack of knowledge, 14 chose pre-existing curriculum rules, 9 chose logistical barriers, and 7 selected others. The School of Education accounted for 15 of the responses, with a total of 10 responses for lack of knowledge, 7 for pre-existing curriculum rules, 2 for logistical barriers, and 4 responses choosing others. Out of the 14 responses from the School of Science, lack of knowledge received 8 selections, pre-existing curriculum rules obtained 7, logistical barriers had 2, and others had 4 responses. The Business School had 13 responses, and once again lack of knowledge had the largest number of responses with 11 total, 7 for pre-existing curriculum rules, 3 for logistical barriers and 4 for others. The School of Nursing and Health Studies had 9 total responses, 8 for lack of knowledge, 5 for pre-existing curriculum rules, and 2 for both logistical barriers and other. Lastly, the School of Social Work only had 4 total respondents on this question, and 2 selected lack of knowledge and other, while 1 selected both pre-existing curriculum rules and logistical barriers.

There were 15 individuals that indicated there are logistical barriers that hinder the implementation (See Figure 7). These individuals were asked to provide an explanation for their response. Notable trends were drawn from their type responses (See Table 4). Of these fifteen responses, eight stated the lack of flexibility within the current curriculum standards. The

respondents stated that the set curriculum is already overloaded with courses and learning objectives, is certificate-oriented, lacks flexibility to incorporate new ideas, and has no room to implement interdisciplinary programs. The other responses noted the lack of resources, such as funding and the amount of time it takes to get curriculum changes approved (5 total). Lastly, two responses stated that working to incorporate the SDGs would take focus away from the student's major and feel that many faculty would not buy into their incorporation because of this concern.

Discussion

The data in this study was evaluated by analyzing trends at Monmouth University as a whole and then by academic school. Using this method of data analysis, we were able to target gaps in SDG implementation by academic school.

Based on the data collected, multiple trends have become clear. The general lack of knowledge of the SDGs across all schools seems to be the greatest interference with the promotion of the SDGs in curriculum. This coincides with the data collected about the familiarity of the SDGs by academic school. From interpreting the data produced by this survey question, it is evident that the schools that had the most prevalent knowledge gaps of the SDGs were the School of Science and School of Nursing and Health Studies. The School of Science also had one of the highest rates of having no courses that were SDG-related. It seems that the lack of knowledge of the SDGs can be directly attributed to the lack of SDGs education being implemented into courses.

Monmouth University would benefit from taking a strong stance on the promotion of the SDGs. While it is evident that some schools are better off than others based on the relative knowledge that faculty in some schools have of the SDGs. Overall, the number of SDG-related

courses at Monmouth University remains low. This was evident in the School of Social Work, which had the highest prevalence of the familiarity of the SDGs. While this school has a faculty that was knowledgeable about the SDGs, this did not translate into more SDG-related courses. This likely can be attributed to another barrier that was evaluated within our data, which was the lack of flexibility within the curriculum. With increased knowledge of the SDGs and requiring a plan for integration of the SDGs into the curriculum, these barriers could be overcome.

Limited effort is currently being applied at Monmouth University to implement the SDGs into the curriculum. This is evident by the lack of training of the SDGs for curriculum development. An overwhelming 90% of the participants in this study indicated that there was no training. Without SDG training there should be no expectation that faculty would implement the SDGs into their courses. This lack of training sends a message that Monmouth University is not prioritizing the SDGs.

The final line of Monmouth University's mission statement states that "Monmouth University educates and prepares students to realize their potential as leaders and to become engaged citizens in a diverse and increasingly interdependent world" (Monmouth, 2022). While Monmouth University seems to be keen on the development of future leaders and global citizens, to produce the next generation of effective leaders and global citizens, sustainability needs to be at the forefront of students' education. Otherwise, our next generation of leaders and citizens will only contribute to greater harm to our planet, animals, and vulnerable people.

Recommendations

This research report provides an assessment of how Monmouth University is currently applying the SDGs in curriculum. The report highlights several barriers that currently hinder the

ability for students to access SDGs education in their courses. The findings reported on in this report can be used as a tool to target specific areas of the University as a whole, and by academic schools and departments that need extra attention to make strides in SDGs education.

Monmouth University should provide annual educational training on the SDGs to faculty in all schools and departments. Also, the data collected in this report indicates a high rate of unfamiliarity with the SDGs. The SDG training will provide faculty members education on the SDGs and why they are so critical to the future of our planet. Additionally, there were significant knowledge gaps within the School of Science and the School of Nursing and Health Studies. Therefore, these trainings must be divided by each school and should focus on why the SDGs are relevant to the academic school. If faculty can make connections as to why the SDGs are relevant to their academic school, then they may be more inclined to educate about the SDGs in their courses.

Furthermore, these trainings should also provide faculty members with suggestions and tools on how the education of the SDGs can be implemented into their courses. While it was identified that the limited space within the curriculum was an obstacle to integrating SDGs education within a particular academic school, there are ways that SDGs education can be delivered without changing the entire curriculum. For instance, faculty members should be trained on how to connect their class teaching to the SDGs. It is understandable that there are strict curriculum requirements within some academic schools. However, for this curriculum to be relevant there needs to be application of class teachings to the real world. These real-world applications can be centered around sustainable practices, and thus encompass SDGs education. Educating on the SDGs does not have to be time consuming or a high-cost proposition. It is

simply about making small adjustments to help students draw connections between their studies and the fragile world in which we live today. Finally, trainings should be assessed by follow-up surveys at the end of each academic year. This will give the faculty the opportunity to report on the effectiveness of these SDG trainings.

Limitations

It is important to identify the limitations of this report. This report does not reflect the entire faculty at Monmouth University as we only acquired responses from 122 full-time and part-time faculty members. Monmouth University currently has around 700 full-time and part-time faculty members (Monmouth University, 2022). Furthermore, the open-ended barrier responses were recorded and interpreted by us. There is always the probability of bias when identifying and making sense of qualitative data.

APPENDIX

Figure 1: Programs of Study Represented by the Data (n=122)

Programs of Study Represented by the Data

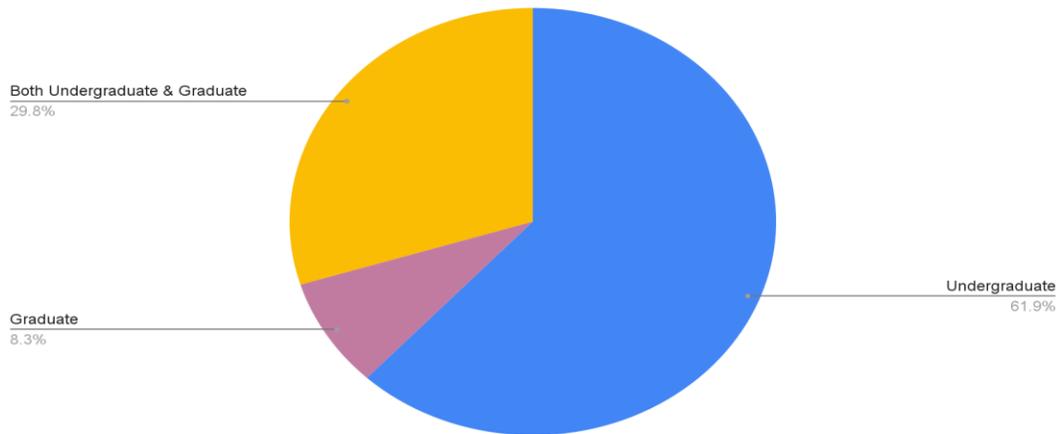


Figure 2: Academic Schools Represented by the Data (n=122)

Academic Schools Represented by the Data

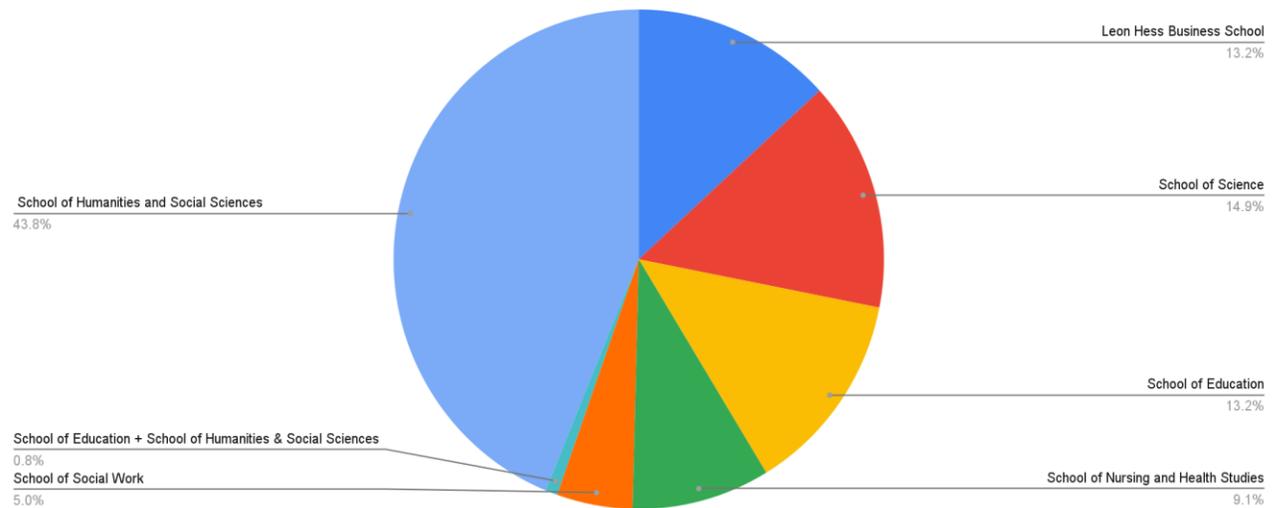


Figure 3: Familiarity of the SDGs at Monmouth University (n= 121)

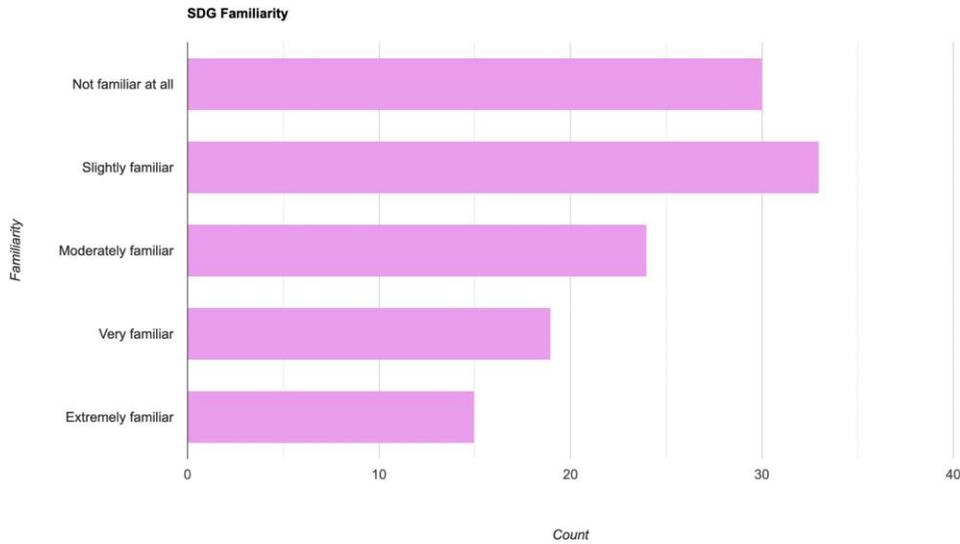


Table 1: Crosstab Depicting Familiarity of the SDGs with Academic School (n = 120)

<u>Academic School</u>	<u>Leon Hess Business School</u>	<u>School of Science</u>	<u>School of Education</u>	<u>School of Nursing and Health Studies</u>	<u>School of Social Work</u>	<u>School of Education & School of Humanities and Social Sciences</u>	<u>School of Humanities and Social Sciences</u>
Not Familiar at All	18.8%	33.3%	31.3%	40%	0%	0%	22.6%
Slightly Familiar	25%	27.8%	6.3%	30%	16.7%	100%	32.1%
Moderately Familiar	12.5%	27.8%	25%	20%	0%	0%	20.8%
Very Familiar	18.8%	11.1%	6.3%	10%	66.7%	0%	15.1%
Extremely Familiar	25%	0%	31.3%	0%	16.7%	0%	9.4%
<i>N=Sample Size</i>	n=16	n=18	n=16	n=10	n=6	n=1	n=53

Figure 4: Number of Existing Courses that Reflect the Promotion of the SDGs at Monmouth University (n=109)

Number of Existing Courses that Reflect the SDGs

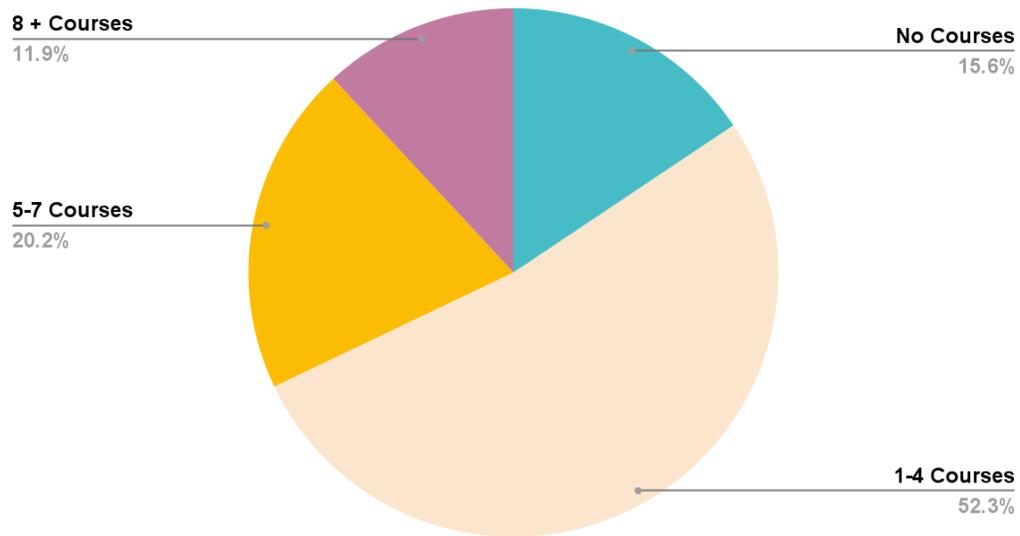


Table 2: Crosstab Depicting Existing Courses within Academic Department that Reflect the Promotion of the SDGs in Curriculum and Academic School (n=108)

<u>Number of Existing Courses</u>	<u>No Courses</u>	<u>1-4 Courses</u>	<u>5-7 Courses</u>	<u>8+ Courses</u>
Leon Hess Business School	35.3%	12.5%	9.1%	7.7%
School of Science	29.4%	8.9%	9.1%	0.0%
School of Education	11.8%	12.5%	9.1%	30.8%
Marjorie K. Unterberg School of Nursing and Health Studies	0.0%	10.7%	4.5%	15.4%
School of Social Work	0.0%	3.6%	9.1%	15.4%
School of Education, Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences	23.7%	50%	59.1%	30.8%
<i>n= Sample Size</i>	<i>n=17</i>	<i>n=56</i>	<i>n=22</i>	<i>n=13</i>

Figure 5: SDGs Training at Monmouth University (n=107)

SDGs Training at Monmouth University

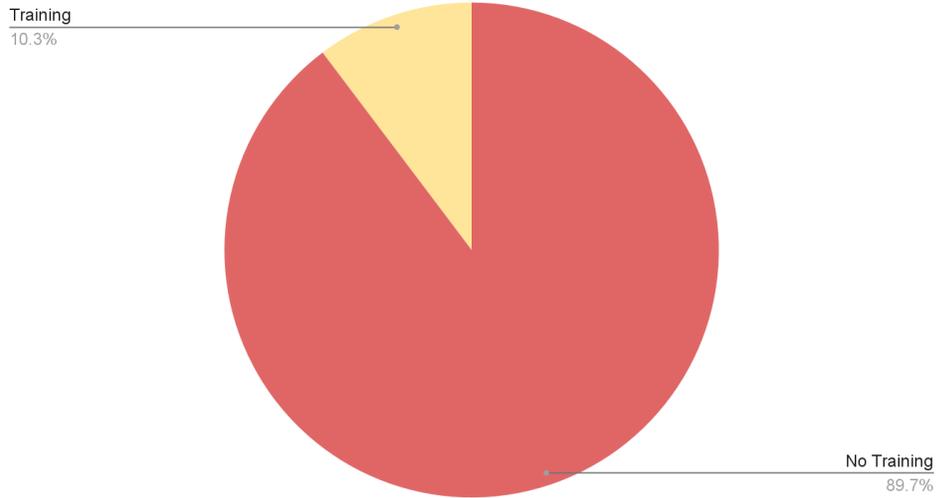


Table 3: Crosstab Depicting SDG Training and Academic School (n=106)

<u>SDG Training</u>	<u>No Training</u>	<u>Training</u>
Leon Hess Business School	13.5%	10%
School of Science	11.5%	20%
School of Education	10.4%	40%
Marjorie K. Unterberg School of Nursing and Health Studies	10.4%	0%
School of Social Work	6.3%	0%
School of Education, Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences	1%	0%
Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences	46.95%	30%
<i>n= Sample Size</i>	<i>n=96</i>	<i>n=10</i>

Figure 6: Barriers (n=94)

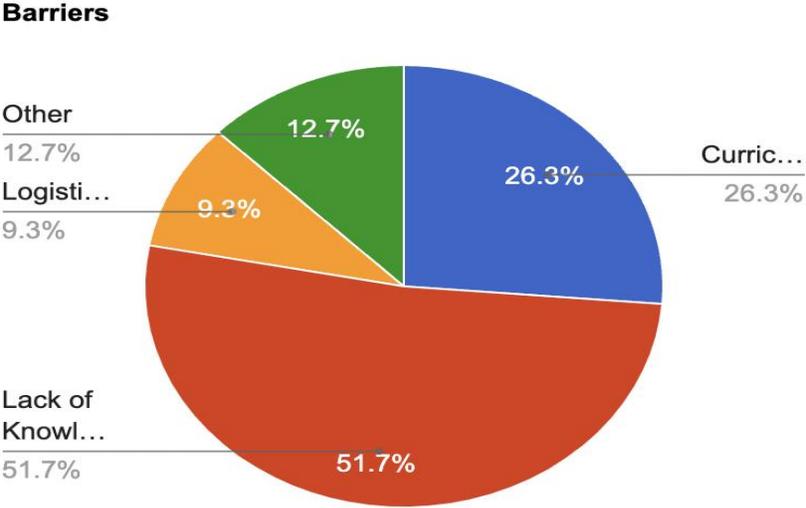


Table 4: Barriers that Prevent SDG Education in Curriculum (n=15)

<u>Trends</u>	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Count</u>
Limited space within the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Taking extra classes when we are over-scheduled and have so many imperatives to consider while teaching writing and literature, which come with their curricular essentials, is hard” - “Too many courses and learning objectives already set for the courses. This does not allow flexibility to incorporate the topics for other courses. These are logistical barriers. The courses are already defined, the objectives are already defined, and changing them takes several months and effort (e.g. we have to change the master syllabus to change learning objectives and that goes through several rounds of meetings)” - “My department's curriculum is certificate oriented and has very little room for elective courses unless the course is necessary for certification or greatly helps to get a teaching job” - “MU's course development system lacks agility in terms of integrating new ideas” - “There are serious barriers to interdisciplinary programming and course development at MU.” - “We address many of these issues in literature, rhetoric, and creative writing, but the degree to which we do so varies widely since course focus and objectives vary widely.” - “The aims of various literature courses are different from those of a social sciences course. But we do introduce such ideas and goals in composition classes.” - “Accreditation focus” 	8
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Time” - “The fact that to get something approved through GEOC or Undergraduate Studies seems to take a lot of time and effort and there is too much oversight and red tape” 	2
Resources/Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Funding” - “Resources and lack of awareness in the US in general and in US higher education about the SDGs” - “Awareness” 	3
Takes focus away from students major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Again, let's focus on the student's major, not this nonsense” - “I fear buy-in would not be universal” 	2

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United Nations. (2015). The 17 Goals. *United Nations*. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>