Sustainability Science Program (SSP) Joins M-RCBG

M-RCBG is delighted to announce that the Sustainability Science Program (SSP) has joined the center as its newest program. As a global leader in the emerging field of sustainability science, the SSP seeks to facilitate the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective interventions that promote a transition toward sustainable development — development that increases human well-being while conserving the environmental systems that support life on earth. To that end, the SSP works to:

- advance scientific understanding of human-environment systems;
- apply that understanding through improved linkages between research and innovation communities on one hand, and relevant policy and management communities on the other; and
- build capacity for linking knowledge with action to promote sustainability.

SSP is led by program co-directors William Clark, Michael Kremer, and Nancy Dickson and a faculty steering group drawn from across Harvard. A few of the program’s many activities include:

- Governance Innovations for Sustainable Development, led by Professor Rohini Pande, which examines how policy innovations in low-income settings can allow effective environmental regulation that can best support growth and poverty reduction;
- Innovation for Sustainable Development, led by Professor William Clark, which focuses on institutional experimentation in the water, energy, health and agricultural sectors to develop the new technologies essential for sustainability;
- Water and Health, led by Prof. Michael Kremer, which researches which of the many technical interventions designed to improve water quality most benefit the health of communities in developing countries.

The program also awards grants in sustainability science to faculty members and provides financial support to more than twenty student affiliates. “The issues that SSP studies — from the science of complex human-environment interactions to the economics, governance, and sources of innovation necessary to promote sustainable development — are critically important to the creation of public value and are vital to the business-government relationship,” said M-RCBG Co-Director John Haigh. “We’re excited to welcome SSP to the center and anticipate significant synergies between it and our other programs.”

The co-directors of the Sustainability Science Program (SSP) are (from left to right): Nancy Dickson, William Clark, and Michael Kremer.
ARUBAN PRIME MINISTER OUTLINES ECONOMIC STRATEGY AT M-RCBG SEMINAR

Smart growth, sustainability and an optimistic view of the future were all important lynchpins of an Oct. 14 seminar by Michiel Godfried "Mike" Eman, Prime Minister of Aruba. Eman spoke as part of the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business & Government’s (M-RCBG) weekly business and government seminar series. The visit coincided with the island nation’s commemoration of 25 years of autonomy within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The country, with a population of 101,000 residents, supports two major industries—tourism and an oil refinery, which has operated off and on since being established in the 1920s. Tourism has offered a steadily increasing source of employment and revenue for the island since the first hotel opened in 1950, but has done little to directly ensure that social gains keep pace with economic ones.

In an effort to change what he saw as potential future disengagement, the Prime Minister has created a two-fold strategy to move ahead with social-economic progress based on national consensus. First, the country will use its geographic placement and ties to the Netherlands strategically. "We are only a few kilometers away from emerging economies like Brazil...Aruba has cultural access to these markets," Eman said. "We can be the gateway for the European Union and the Kingdom of the Netherlands to access the Caribbean and Latin America."

Second, by harnessing a natural abundance of sun, wind and water, Aruba can become less energy-dependent, and leave future generations with a more sustainable landscape. "This is how we can use the strategic location of Aruba for the benefit of the entire kingdom," he said. "We will feel the benefits of a sustainable society in this generation and the next."

With the establishment of a Renewable Energy Research and Education Institute, Aruba plans to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels and rely to a much higher degree on alternative sources of energy, such as wind, solar and wave. Currently ten wind turbines create 20% of the island’s energy, with an additional ten to follow and solar power expected to be added next year. Eman also urged other nations to consider the advances Aruba has made in terms of green space and urban renewal as a comparatively low-cost way to invest in their communities. Instead of building additional hotels and tourist spots on available land, he said, the focus in Aruba has been on refurbishing existing gathering spaces and creating additional recreation venues for residents. Recent improvements include the renovation of an abandoned courthouse and converting streets from asphalt to stone as well as thinning the streets to install wider sidewalks.

While these advancements are made to improve the lives of Arubans today, tomorrow’s citizens will also benefit, the prime minister argued. "The commitment of younger generations to sustainability is enormous," Eman said. "They are inspiring us and creating the opportunity to make changes that will benefit far into the future."

— John Haigh, M-RCBG Co-Director, with Michiel Godfried "Mike" Eman, Prime Minister of Aruba.

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Students connect business and government across the globe

This year M-RCBG supported summer internships for 20 HKS students. Below are highlights from a few of their experiences:

"With the support of M-RCBG...I had the opportunity to work at the National Economic Council as a White House Intern. My work focused on clean energy finance, air regulations, and fuel economy standards...I gleaned a deep understanding of how energy policy is made at the highest levels." — Sabrina Howell, Ph.D. Candidate, Political Economy and Government Program

"I worked in the White House in the Office of Management and Budget...My big take-away from the summer is that creating efficiencies in government is fraught with difficulties not present in the private sector...I hope to work in education reform after graduating...and now I have a better idea of some of the solutions that can and should be tried." — Miki Litmanovitz, MPP12

"I was able to...delve deeper into negotiation strategies that are typically used in the business world, and to think creatively about how to utilize those strategies in the world of foreign policy and government. I wrote a case on "Negotiating with Iran," which is going to be taught by Professor Brian Mandell." — Sherry Hakimi, MPP12

"I worked as an intern with the U.S. State Department in Shanghai, China...I was gratified to find out that my final report on the East China Municipal solid waste system was forwarded to Secretary of State Clinton’s attention a few weeks after I finished my internship." — Ellie Bertani, MPA13

PROGRAM AND AFFILIATE UPDATES

William Hogan received Adelman-Frankel Award

William Hogan, Raymond Plank Professor of Global Energy Policy, and Research Director of the Harvard Electricity Policy Group (HEPG), recently received the Adelman-Frankel Award from the United States Association for Energy Economics. The organization’s highest award, it was presented during the 30th USAEE/IAEE North American Conference in Washington, DC, and annually recognizes “a single individual or organization for unique and innovative contributions to the field of economics.”

Linda Bilmes awarded major federal grant from the Department of Defense

Linda Bilmes, Daniel Patrick Moynihan Senior Lecturer in Public Policy, has been awarded a major federal grant from the U.S. Department of Defense to study the consolidation of the former Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital and Bethesda Naval Medical Center under the Joint Command, Capitol Medical Region, creating the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Her research will focus on the organizational and resource implications of this effort, and how it may influence future integration of medical delivery in the armed forces.

Robert Stavins delivered featured address at the Institute of International and European Affairs

Robert Stavins, director of the Harvard Environmental Economics Program (HEEP), delivered a featured address at the Institute of International and European Affairs, Ireland’s leading think tank on international affairs, in Dublin in September. As preparations for the next round of crucial climate negotiations in Durban, South Africa commence, Stavins discussed the prospects for the negotiations; the future of climate action beyond the Kyoto Protocol which expires in 2012, and the economics of climate change policy.