

# Teaching Principles of Sustainability to Non-majors through Community Engagement

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Non-majors often take a science class out of obligation and have varied levels of interest in biological topics. To increase excitement and understanding about ecological concepts, we combined data-heavy footprint calculations with a tangible community-based civic engagement project. We asked students to volunteer at a local organization that would have a positive impact on their environment. Before volunteering, students took a short online “quiz” hosted by the Global Footprint Network ([www.footprintnetwork.org](http://www.footprintnetwork.org)) to calculate their ecological footprint and think about issues of sustainability locally and globally. Armed with this information, students were asked to decide how to collect data during their volunteer experience that would provide information on how their activity affected their local environment. Students chose to work on projects ranging from park clean-ups to salvaging and restoring bicycles for urban youth. They presented what they learned (poster session or powerpoint), with an added benefit of enhancing communication skills. These projects got students interested, engaged, and excited about sustainability and using resources more responsibly. This workshop will describe how to implement this project as well as provide time for participants to explore the Global Footprint Network’s vast set of ecological and sustainability resources.

**Keywords:** sustainability, ecological footprint, Global Footprint Network, community engagement, non-majors

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