



Q&A

About the Decision to End the Partnership between IslandWood and Antioch University Seattle for the Co-Delivery of the Urban Environmental Education Graduate Program

1. What impact will this have on UEE alumni?

The impact on our alumni should be minimal. All UEE alumni hold a Master of Arts in Education from Antioch University Seattle, an accredited university that will continue to offer an M.A.Ed. degree. The degree will remain valid, as will all credits earned during the degree's completion.

Likewise, UEE alumni will remain alumni of IslandWood, and will be included in alumni gatherings, communications, networks, and other opportunities.

2. Does this mean that IslandWood isn't committed to urban environmental education?

IslandWood is deeply committed to urban environmental education. In fact, our Seattle-based school programs now reach more than two times the number of students than we serve on Bainbridge Island. In addition, most schools attending our Bainbridge Island programs are within the greater Seattle area.

Both on and off our campus we are committed to delivering, and training educators to deliver, culturally-responsive environmental education rooted in place through a justice and equity lens that contributes to building resilient, sustainable communities. As part of this commitment, we will be taking the next two years to evolve our Education for Environment and Community Graduate Program to ensure its relevancy and sustainability, incorporate our learnings from the UEE program, and weave our commitments to justice and equity into all aspects of that program.

3. With this decision, is IslandWood backing down from its commitments to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion?

No. The Urban Environmental Education graduate program has advanced our work in meaningful ways, including in the areas of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. We have learned so much from running a program that puts social justice in the center of environmental education, as well as by having our graduate students from both programs advocate for organizational change and change in the field.

This learning and growth will continue at IslandWood. For example, this calendar year we are focused on defining and communicating how racial equity connects to our mission, vision, values, and strategies. And we will be taking the next two years to evolve our Education for Environment and Community Graduate Program to ensure its relevancy and sustainability, incorporate our learnings from the UEE program, and weave our commitments to justice and equity into all aspects of that program.

4. What was UEE's target enrollment, how long has enrollment been down?

To achieve financial sustainability, the UEE program needed a minimum of 18 students per cohort with about half receiving some scholarship support. In the past four recruitment cycles, we have not yet filled a program at the level needed. Our largest cohort had 17 students, the smallest had seven – nearly all students receiving generous scholarship awards. There are currently 13 students enrolled in the 2018-19 cohort.

In addition, to help attract those students to this program, IslandWood hired a recruiter outside the scope of the AUS-IslandWood partnership and provided more than \$350,000 in scholarships over the life of the program out of its operational budget. While scholarships can be an important component to ensuring equitable access, the current balance of enrollment and support is not sustainable for either AUS or IslandWood.

5. What are the reasons for low enrollment?

The reasons we haven't achieved sustainable enrollment levels are multifaceted, but certainly include the growing economy and a general decline in enrollment in graduate schools across the country.

6. What will happen to IslandWood's UEE faculty and staff after the 2018-19 academic year?

We are fully committed to running the UEE program through the completion of this academic year, and to retaining and supporting our current UEE staff during this time. Given that we won't be recruiting for the next cohort, IslandWood's UEE staff will be focused on delivering a high-quality program to our 2018-19 cohort.

UEE staff roles with the program will end at the end of the 2018-19 academic year (September 2019). IslandWood is fully committed to supporting our UEE staff in their career transitions.

7. How will IslandWood stay engaged with UEE alumni?

We are extremely proud of our UEE alumni for pushing the field of environmental education forward and aim to keep them engaged with and close to IslandWood through alumni gatherings, communications, networking events, and other opportunities. We look forward to learning from their work for years to come.

8. What does this decision mean for UEE's community partners?

We are so grateful for the two dozen community partners that have opened their doors to host our UEE graduate students for practicums in their organizations. We look forward to exploring ways to continue growing our partnerships into new areas of collaborative action to achieve shared goals.

9. What will happen with IslandWood's relationship with Antioch University Seattle?

Our partnership with Antioch University Seattle for the co-delivery of the UEE program will end after the completion of the 2018/19 academic year. AUS has been a valued and trusted partner since the program launched four years ago. We have learned a lot from our partnership with AUS and would be open to exploring opportunities to work together in the future.

10. Hasn't EEC been struggling? Why not focus and dedicate resources to UEE instead?

The decision to end our involvement in the UEE program after the 2018-19 academic year was based on the high cost of the model combined with lower than budgeted enrollment which has led to financial losses for both IslandWood and Antioch University Seattle that continue into the program's fourth year.

It is true that enrollment in IslandWood's Education for Environment and Community Graduate Program (EEC) has also been lower than budgeted in recent years. However, unlike the Urban Environmental Education graduate program, EEC is inextricably linked to IslandWood's business model and program delivery as graduate students in that program complete their practicum in our School Overnight Program (SOP).

We will be taking the next two years to evolve EEC to ensure its relevancy and sustainability, incorporate our learnings from the UEE program, and weave our commitments to justice and equity into all aspects of that program.

11. Will the UEE program continue to be offered by Antioch?

Antioch University Seattle is exploring alternate delivery models for the UEE program and will be best positioned to provide more information about that process.

12. If Antioch launches a low-residency model of the UEE program, will IslandWood be involved?

While we will never close door completely, IslandWood does not plan to be involved at this time. Instead, over the next two years we are directing our focus and energy on evolving our Education for Environment and Community Graduate Program to ensure its relevancy and sustainability, incorporate our learnings from the UEE program, and weave our commitments to justice and equity into all aspects of that program.

13. What will happen to the effort to expand the UEE program in other cities?

For the past two years, Antioch received external funding to explore the opportunities for expanding the UEE program in other communities and is best positioned to provide more information about that process.

14. What has IslandWood learned from running the UEE program for four years?

We learned more about environmental education in the built environment and about using a racial equity lens in this work – both areas we are prioritizing for further learning and growth. We learned a great deal about different modes of decision making and collaboration through our partnership with Antioch and through a diverse group of community partners. And we redoubled our belief that urban environmental education is critical to the wellbeing of people and the planet.