

## **Sustainability and Behavior**

The missing ingredient in the University of Michigan's sustainability strategy may be the most important key to a successful approach to sustainability -- the human behavioral response. Consumers routinely eschew environmentally sound, money-saving activities, such as the use of energy-efficient fluorescent bulbs, adequate home insulation in the walls and windows, smart thermostats, fresh air filters, and low-flow showerheads. They waste water and energy resources as if there were no future limits and ignore concerns about climate change. If widely adopted, currently available technologies can reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to levels within the capacity of earth systems to process sustainably -- but we know too little about the behavioral aspects of decision-making and human actions to make such a transition.

The human aspect -- specifically through a focus on sustainability and behavior -- will be the focal point of this cluster. This cluster will address the fundamental questions of why people behave the way they do in different socio-economic, organizational/institutional, and structural contexts and what can be done to encourage behavioral changes that lead to more sustainable outcomes. Several disciplinary perspectives on this question have emerged. Policy analysts look to incentives and regulations. Environmental scholars include intrinsic motivations. Urban planners look to the institutions in which individual decisions are framed.

This proposal pulls together three campus academic units deeply concerned about policy, sustainability and behavior: The Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy (FSPP), The School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE), and Urban and Regional Planning Program (URP) in the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. Each of the three units seeks an assistant professor who will work with their established faculty in this area to build an effective team that will be the final jewel in the University of Michigan's initiative to be the world leader in sustainability research and teaching.