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### Anthropology Museum's "Earth Day at 50" Exhibit Shifts to Fall

Loretta MacAlpine

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April 29, 2020

## Anthropology Museum's "Earth Day at 50" Exhibit Shifts to Fall

The [WCU Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology's](#) newest exhibition, Earth Day at 50: Lessons for a Sustainable Future, was scheduled to open on April 22, the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day. Instead, five students in museum director Michael Di Giovine's class on museum exhibit curation presented the April 22 Lunchtime Sustainability Research and Practice Seminar via Zoom, the best alternative during COVID-19 restrictions.

Student co-curators Natalie Fenner, Tyler C. Haney, Foster W. Krupp, Benjamin Popp, and Melina Schauerman spoke to and answered questions from about 48 individuals who attended remotely. They shared their roles in planning the exhibit, researching the first Earth Day, acquisitioning and cataloging artifacts for display, creating dioramas, and developing activities that will engage museum visitors when the campus reopens later this year.

With the opening postponed, students now have the opportunity to pursue additional artifacts and interactive elements and contributions from regional resources. Engaging aspects of the exhibit already include an ecological footprint calculator and a stationary bike (on loan from the West Chester Green Team/Sierra Club) that, when pedaled at various speeds, will light up bulbs from LED to halogen, demonstrating which bulbs require the most energy to power. Currently, the students are exploring the possibility of acquiring a solar panel.



Closures during the pandemic also give Di Giovine and the students additional time to enhance website content, a digital archive, and the peer-reviewed catalog. Extra time is a real boon, says the associate professor of anthropology: "Normally, in just two semesters, my students create what many museums take two or more years to create."

The 50th anniversary of Earth Day presented a unique opportunity to solicit input from faculty members on the Sustainability Advisory Council who contributed ideas and historical background. In addition, students in a theatre practicum class taught by Tom Haughey, assistant professor of theatre and dance, will create a two-story Tree of Life using reclaimed and reused materials, as the exhibit's central feature.

Di Giovine says the 15 students in the class (all of whom contributed to the exhibit) shared positive feedback when he proposed delaying the opening until campus could reopen. "Some told me, 'It's something to look forward to,' so it's great psychologically for students." Only three class members are graduating this spring and they have been working on putting up a digital exhibit on the website.

The rescheduled opening reception is slated for Friday, Sept. 25, 2020. Museum visitors will find a positive experience that features global aspects of the environmental movement as well as hyper-local impact, including the 1970 effort by students to save the [Gordon Natural Area](#) on South Campus. They'll be able to explore various dioramas to closely examine a peregrine falcon and other taxidermy specimens of suburban wildlife on loan from the Delaware Museum of Natural History.

Overall, the exhibition demonstrates that the 50th anniversary of Earth Day is an empowering reminder that positive actions in daily life can combat the ongoing environmental crisis that humans have created.

The exhibition is funded by the [College of the Sciences and Mathematics and the Department of Anthropology and Sociology](#), and supported by the WCU [Office of Sustainability](#), the Delaware Museum of Natural History, the West Chester Green Team/Sierra Club, and many community members.

[The April 22 presentation is archived here.](#) Recordings of the other sustainability presentations from this academic year are available on the [Digital Commons Sustainability Research and Creative Activities site](#).

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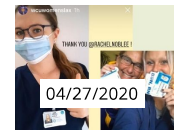


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