

CS Wednesday Lunch Talk

February 14th in the Hampshire College Adele Simmons Hall (ASH) Auditorium at Noon
(a light lunch will be served)

Please join us for this talk, given by a candidate for the Jonathan Lash Endowed Chair of Environmental Education. We will start promptly at noon, so please come early to serve yourself lunch.

Dr. Timothy Zimmerman, Visiting Assistant Professor of Cognition and Education at Hampshire College

Using environmental education design research to tackle environmental problems

When it comes to the environment, we mostly hear about the degradation of our natural world. Rarely do we hear the hopeful narratives coming from environmental education: people increasingly understand environmental problems, believe action should be taken, and adopt pro-environmental behaviors. My research adds to those successes through innovative educational design approaches. In this talk, I present my interdisciplinary environmental education design research trajectory, which leverages educational psychology, cognitive science, the learning sciences, and natural sciences to shift the way people think about, act on, and solve environmental problems. I briefly discuss my prior research on the effectiveness of different educational designs for decision-making about environmental problems. Next, I connect that work to my current research on “citizen science” as an environmental education learning tool. My research team created the Pioneer Valley Citizen Science Collaboratory (PVCS) that teaches citizens about local real-world environmental problems through data collection activities. Unlike most citizen science projects where non-scientists merely collect and submit data, PVCS foregrounds environmental education and backgrounds data collection by incorporating effective, research-based learning scaffolds and involving local community partners. Using PVCS as an example, I demonstrate how I integrate my research into my teaching to create real-world learning opportunities for undergraduate students. Finally, I end by presenting my vision for making Hampshire College a leader in environmental education. This includes an innovative undergraduate educational design for teaching environmental education. My design provides integrated theory-to-practice-to-theory experiences that go beyond, and challenge, the traditional model of environmental educator preparation. I argue this will result in a new generation of change-agents within environmental education who can push beyond traditional boundaries and achieve even greater successes in fostering knowledge of, and abilities to act upon, environmental problems.