

# CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE



## AUBURN UNIVERSITY'S WAR ON HUNGER INITIATIVE

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) selected Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama, to be the lead academic partner in a student-based "War on Hunger" campaign. The WFP is the emergency food-aid arm of the United Nations and is the largest humanitarian organization in the world. Each year the agency provides food to an average 90 million people, including 56 million children. WFP also uses food aid as a tool to encourage long-term economic development and sustainability through programs focused on school feeding and mother/child nutrition.

Leadership for the Auburn/WFP "War on Hunger" is in the hands of Auburn students who are collectively known as the Committee of 19. The group's name is derived from the 19 cents a day it takes the World Food

Program to feed a hungry school child in the developing world. Representing every school, college, and major student organization on the Auburn campus, the Committee of 19 is addressing the pressing issues of world hunger and malnutrition. The committee members are responsible for the organization of hunger task forces within the individual units they represent.

Campus and community leaders, including representatives from the regional food bank, city council, and public school system, comprise the Steering Committee. Its purpose is to lend vision to the "War on Hunger" and advise on specific issues related to the implementation of the model.

## APPLYING THE MODEL

However, the model leads to some serious questions. Can the historical pattern exhibited by Europe and North America be repeated in the less-developed countries of today? Europe, North America, Japan, and Australia passed through this transition period when world population was lower and when energy and natural resources were still abundant. It is doubtful whether these supplies are adequate to allow for the industrialization of the major portion of the world currently classified as less developed.

Furthermore, when the countries of Europe and North America passed through the demographic transition, they had access to large expanses of unexploited lands, either within their boundaries or in their colonies. This provided a safety valve for expanding populations during the early stages of the transition. Without this safety valve, it would have been impossible to deal adequately with the population while simultaneously encouraging economic development. Today, less-developed countries may be unable to accumulate the necessary capital to develop economically, since they do not have uninhabited places to which their people can migrate and an ever-increasing population is a severe economic drain.

A second concern is the time element. With the world population increasing as rapidly as it is, industrialization probably cannot occur fast enough to have a significant impact on population growth. As long as people in less-developed countries are poor, there is a strong incentive to have large numbers of children. Children are a form of social security because they take care of their elderly parents. Only people in developed countries can save money for their old age. They can choose to have children, who are expensive to raise, or to invest money in some other way.

Today, most people feel that this model provides important insight into why some populations stabilize, but that most countries will require assistance in the form of economic development funds, education, and birth control information and technology if they are to be able to make the transition.

## THE U.S. POPULATION PICTURE

In many ways, the U.S. population, which has a total fertility rate that is low (2.1), is similar to those of other developed countries of the world with low birthrates. One might expect the population to be stabilizing under these conditions. However, two factors are operating to cause significant change over the next 50 years. One factor has to do with the age structure of the population, and the other has to do with immigration policy.

The U.S. population includes a postwar baby boom component, which has significantly affected population trends. These baby boomers were born during an approximately 15-year period (1947–61) following World War II, when birthrates were much higher than today, and constitute a bulge in the age distribution profile. (See figure 7.18.) As members of this group have raised families, they have had a significant influence on how the U.S. population has grown. As this population bulge ages and younger people limit their family size, the population will gradually age. By 2030, about 20 percent of the population will be 65 years of age or older.

Both legal and illegal immigration significantly influence future population growth trends. Even with the current total fertility rate of 2.0 children per woman, the population is still growing by about 1.1 percent per year. About 0.6 percent is the result of