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UC Santa Barbara professors, researchers and students have a new opportunity to connect and coordinate around all things environmental. An interdisciplinary team of faculty members has launched a digital portal meant to bridge the diverse departments, institutes and programs on campus that are engaged in environmental science.

The new site, environment@UCSB, serves as a resource for people to learn more about the range and depth of environmental activities and research at UC Santa Barbara. With a directory of campus environmental programs and centers, a comprehensive calendar of events and news about environmental scholarship at the university, it's also a launchpad for research connections.

"The website itself is designed as a digital front door, a welcome mat for all the individual organizations that are doing environmental science research and teaching across campus," said Kelly Caylor, director of the Earth Research Institute.

Caylor teamed up on the project with James Salzman, the Donald Bren Distinguished Professor of Environmental Law at the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management, and Peter Alagona, a professor of environmental studies and of history, who together had already begun work on a plan to promote connectivity in environmental research across campus. Realizing they could collaborate on a solution, Salzman even used some of his own funding to hire a web-savvy student to create the website.

Salzman and Caylor, who joined the faculty at UC Santa Barbara in 2015 and 2016, respectively, wanted to increase the exchange between researchers studying different aspects of the environment. Without a comprehensive calendar, researchers and students have to search across different department and institute websites to learn about relevant events. “As a result, it felt like there were powerful synergies left untapped,” said Salzman.

Caylor agreed. “Any organization larger than a department and smaller than a university struggles with the problems of connection and coordination,” he said. This particularly impacts new members of the community. “As we were bringing in younger generations of faculty and researchers, like postdocs and graduate students, we wanted to create a faster on-ramp for them,” said Caylor.

With so many departments, programs, centers, institutes and people on campus studying environmental issues, the combined knowledge base is vast and growing all the time. The new website hopes to serve as a conduit to make it all available to anyone who’s interested. “We want to give it to people for free,” said Caylor.

Caylor, Salzman and Alagona view this website as a starting point, a minimum viable product that they hope to grow over time. The three professors plan to create a steering committee with like-minded colleagues and continue finding ways to expand UC Santa Barbara’s environmental network.

“Building a community takes structure, opportunity and interest,” said Salzman. “The website provides this initial structure. It’s a first step in building a true environmental community across campus.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.