We seek five hundred-word abstracts for papers on the broadly defined theme “Sustainable Jobs, Sustainable Workplaces.” Our concept of sustainable work is evolving, but changes in the workplace and the reorganization of work are at its center, with society and environment interwoven. Thus we want to look not only at occupational and industry shifts, job security, and pay, but at work’s impact on workers – workload, staffing cuts, deskilling, hours, stress, contingency, and socialization in the workplace.

We seek papers that address at least one of the following:

1. What is a sustainable job?
2. What changes are occurring in applied technologies and the organization of work, and how are these changes making jobs more or less sustainable?
3. What trends and institutions are shaping these changes?
4. What are the implications of these changes for the sustainability of communities and the environment?
5. How would community and environmental sustainability be affected if jobs and workplaces were to become more sustainable?
6. What initiatives or approaches could lead to more sustainable jobs and workplaces?

Note: Labor and community researchers and organizers are encouraged to submit abstracts. Writing collaborations are encouraged.

The conference is organized by the Committee on Industrial Theory and Assessment (CITA) and the Labor Extension Program at UMass Lowell. For information on these programs visit http://www.uml.edu/com/CITA/ and http://www.uml.edu/laborextension/.

Background

In today’s rapidly restructuring economy, no question is more urgent than the question of jobs. Some dimensions of this question – wage stagnation, the shift from industrial to service jobs – are well documented. Now we want to discuss what the new jobs look like, how they affect the people in them, and how they are reshaping the social and economic sustainability of our cities, families, unions and community organizations – indeed, our whole human infrastructure.

UMass Lowell is devoting significant resources to the Merrimack Valley’s economic and environmental future. Its engineering and applied sciences departments develop new technologies which could create new jobs in the Valley. Research in areas like “green chemistry” seek to improve the environmental quality of life in our communities. “Sustainable development” is a core phrase in the University’s mission statement.
Over the past several years faculty members at UMass Lowell have engaged in four conferences and many other endeavors defining regional sustainability and the role of the university in promoting it. We have examined sustainability from local and global perspectives. Two edited volumes of work have been published and another is forthcoming: Forrant and Silka, eds., *Educating for Sustainability*, Baywood, 2005 forthcoming; Pyle and Forrant, eds., *Globalization, Universities and Issues of Sustainable Human Development*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2002; Forrant, Pyle, Lazonick and Levenstein, eds., *Approaches to Sustainable Regional Development: The Public University in the Regional Economy*, University of Massachusetts Press, 2001. We hope to publish another volume after this conference.

**Conference Themes**

We seek to mix theory and application in this conference. We want examples of sustainability strategies that could resolve the challenges we’ve identified, especially strategies that have been tried. Finally, while not all of our themes are new topics of discussion, this conference will look at them through a new lens – changes in the workplace and their effects on workers.

**New Technologies and the Reorganization of Work.** What's happening to workers as employers introduce new technologies, broaden job descriptions and classifications, and restructure work processes? What's happening to stress, job satisfaction, power relations, unions, and social capital in the workplace and the community?

**The New Economy Business Model.** How are changes in financial markets and business strategies reshaping work? Can corporate culture and managers’ incentives themselves be reshaped by taking up the issue of corporate governance?

**The Political Economy of Job Creation.** Externalization, social dumping, and the elevation of property rights are allowing employers to change labor contracts and increase contingent work in its many forms. What would a sustainable-work political agenda look like?

**Regions and the Global Economy.** What infrastructures, clusters, and links can create a regional economy that is viable in its global context? What are a region’s companies doing in the global economy and how does the region figure in their global strategies? What can we learn from industrial technology policies throughout New England or in other regions?

**The University’s Role in Sustainable Jobs and Workplaces.** What are the strengths and limits of a focus on emerging technologies? What else can the university do to support sustainable work?

**Green and Blue.** Can there be a viable environmental movement without a strong labor movement? Can there be a viable labor movement without a strong environmental movement?

**Globalization, Technology, and Worker Health and Safety.** How is the work environment shaped? What are the separate or combined impacts of weakened government protections and safety nets, globalization and export-oriented production, a service economy, and the introduction of new technologies? What is happening to workers’ health and safety, here in the U.S. and in the countries where U.S. industries move to get cheaper labor and freedom from government regulations?