

**Centre for
Development and the Environment
(SUM)**

University of Oslo

**Strategic Plan
2005–2009**

INTRODUCTION

The UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development begins in 2005. The universities have been assigned a central role as agents for change at local, regional and global levels. Increased commitments to international cooperation, interdisciplinary collaboration and public outreach are major elements of the Research Council of Norway's strategy for 2004–2010. Improved quality of research and teaching, internationalization and outreach are central components of the University of Oslo's (UiO) strategy for 2005 – 2009.

SUM's strategy for 2005–2009 sets out what SUM can do to promote UiO's ability to become a leading international university for sustainable development. The strategy will be implemented through interaction with international partners, other units of UiO, the Research Council of Norway, the public sector, non-governmental organizations and the business community. A strong and unified research environment is important for fulfilling Norway's national and international ambitions of achieving more sustainable development.

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BACKGROUND

The Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) was established at the University of Oslo (UiO) in 1990 in response to the report from the World Commission on Development and the Environment – *Our Common Future*. The report created new challenges for all sections of society, and not least for the academic community.

SUM was established as a multi-disciplinary unit under the University Senate, with Board representatives from the faculties and from external institutions. After evaluations of two periods of operation, the university decided in 2000 to extend SUM's activities for an unlimited time.

SUM's mandate, as stated under Section 1 of the statutes adopted by the University Senate on 26 January 2004, is as follows:

- SUM is an inter-faculty centre focusing on interdisciplinary research, network activities and the coordination of research collaboration within the University of Oslo (UiO) and with external participants. The Centre shall function as a driving force within the University as well as externally towards society and the corporate sector.
- SUM's work is in the fields of research, teaching and communication concerning environmental and development issues, with the main focus on the interface between the environment and development.
- SUM provides teaching at all levels as well as courses for co-operating faculty programmes at Bachelor, Master and Ph.D. levels.

Compared with the statutes of January 2000, the revised statutes place more emphasis on SUM's function as a driving force. This is in line with the increased focus on interdisciplinary activity, public outreach and internationalization at the university as a whole. In other respects the new statutes do not entail any significant changes for the scope of activities.

UiO's strategic plan for 2005–2009 presents new and exciting challenges with consequences for SUM in the fields of research, teaching, communication, and personnel administration. UiO is establishing sustainability-related themes as one of three basic issues on which the university will concentrate its efforts during the plan period. UiO will give priority to society's need for knowledge and expertise, including "knowledge that is important to allow basic human needs and rights to be preserved, to safeguard the environment for future generations, and to meet other global challenges". In this respect SUM, with its interdisciplinary research, educational activities and extensive communication and outreach will play a key role.

SUM is primarily financed externally through projects with a limited timeframe. The Research Council of Norway is the most important external source of funding. ProSus (Programme for Research and Documentation for a Sustainable Society) was affiliated to SUM as a six-year strategic university programme (2000 -2005). With its tripartite mandate including information, evaluation and strategic research, ProSus contributed a more applied, action-oriented and environmental policy-related profile. ProSus now represents an important part of SUM's activities, and the Research Council of Norway has granted funding that can help to make ProSus an integrated part of SUM's total operations during the coming years.

SUM is now the only interdisciplinary university centre in Norway that conducts both nationally- and internationally-oriented research on sustainable development. In 2005, SUM was granted the status of Research School in environmental and development studies at UiO. As an already recognized international centre with a distinct interdisciplinary profile, SUM therefore has a secure basis for establishing itself as a leading international research centre for sustainable development and for supporting UiO's ambition to become a university among the "European elite".

VISION

SUM's aim is to contribute to realising UiO's ambition of distinguishing itself nationally and internationally as a centre of expertise for sustainable development.

The universities are assigned a central role as agents for change at local, national and international levels under the UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development during the period 2005–2014. Sustainable universities will make provisions for:

- Interdisciplinary research, teaching and dissemination of information that may contribute to creating insights into and solutions for local and global problems in the areas of the environment and poverty.
- Collaboration on projects with the corporate sector, non-governmental organizations and public authorities to reduce environmental damage, promote greater welfare and ensure that measures taken do not result in increased poverty and social injustice.
- Extensive cooperation with universities in the South and cooperative agreements on research and education with like-minded universities in all parts of the world in order to maintain a global perspective on local and national challenges and increased interdisciplinary understanding.
- Environmentally-friendly operation of their own activities.

UiO is well equipped to assume this task. UiO's strategy for 2005–2009 places strong emphasis on the university's active participation in societal development and, through research, its contribution to innovation, problem-solving and knowledge that is important to meet the needs of humans and nature. Through its own research and through research collaboration, SUM shall contribute to increasing knowledge of problems related to poverty and the environment, the interrelationship between them, and alternative solutions. SUM shall exert influence in areas of policy-making through a critical and constructive approach to the causes and consequences of environmental and development problems. Teaching, dissemination and networking activities shall be based on research conducted at the Centre and in associated research networks. Geographically, research will cover a wide area, comprising Norway and other European countries as well as countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

As an interdisciplinary, society-oriented research centre for sustainable development, SUM shall:

- **Encourage interaction between different perspectives and conceptual understandings; it is in the overlapping zones between disciplines and thematic areas that creative ideas and solutions emerge, providing the basis for new forms of cooperation.**
- **Enhance quality and innovative thinking by providing an attractive place for researchers who wish to explore themes that lie outside the traditional scope of existing disciplines or sectors.**
- **Be an innovative, creative and academically stimulating research environment that attracts to UiO talented researchers, doctoral and graduate students with diverse perspectives on environmental and development issues.**

MAIN CHALLENGES

Sustainable development is a broad and comprehensive concept that received wide political acceptance after the release of the report of the World Commission on Development and the Environment, *Our Common Future*, in 1987. Nearly twenty years later, environmental and development problems have increased in importance and scope. At the same time, many remedial measures still appear fragmented and somewhat uncoordinated. Implementing a policy for sustainable development requires environmental concerns to be integrated into all political areas. This also entails structural modifications in policy formulation and decision-making. Local measures must be seen in the context of the need to reduce poverty and to improve the state of the global environment.

The UN's Millennium Development Goals have placed greater international focus on the need for poverty reduction. The UN's Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which was completed in 2005, reveals that it will be difficult (if not impossible) to achieve the UN's millennium goals without a change of course that can improve the environment and reduce the harmful effects of today's trends on the natural ecosystem. No universally valid link exists between development and the environment. Simple "win-win" solutions are the exception rather than the rule in practical policy at local, national and international levels. In the UN's progress reports for the millennium goals, it is emphasized that good governance is one of the most important requirements for development and for poverty reduction. Good governance is also a condition for safeguarding the ecosystem for future generations. There is a need for heightened awareness of the interrelationships between economic growth, the environment, democracy, national judicial systems, human rights perspectives and poverty reduction.

Development policy faces a number of new challenges. The Cold War has been replaced by other threats such as international terrorism, regional and local conflicts, and health-threatening epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and Ebola. Political movements based on religious fundamentalism and nationalism have increased in scope in many parts of the world. There are great challenges linked to the need for effective international governing mechanisms that can meet the need for shared solutions to global challenges while at the same time preserving democracy in the decision-making processes.

Environmental policy is also a question of rights, opportunities and control. This applies to 1) the rights to natural resources, information and to economic and legal recourse; 2) the opportunity to develop and realise one's own plans and to take control over one's own life; and 3) the enforcement and follow-up of adopted agreements and rules. Good governance is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for the implementation of local as well as national and international environmental policy.

Many developing countries have shown great interest in the Norwegian welfare state and in Norway's management of natural resources. Very few countries, however, have the economy and infrastructure required to replicate Norwegian resource management policies. Nonetheless, Norway's experience of handling conflicts of interest between the different decision-making levels in the management process, as well as between different sectors, is transferable to other contexts.

Ecosystem approaches are being increasingly used internationally in order to avoid a "one size fits all" approach to environmental policy. At the same time, there is an increasing need to integrate environmental concerns in sectors that create environmental damage that may also be irreversible.

The major problems confronting the world in terms of wealth distribution and the environment cannot be solved without a deeper understanding of the links between people, society and the environment, or between nature and culture in a broad sense. The complexity of the field requires international and interdisciplinary research cooperation and constructive dialogue between researchers, management, business and civil society organizations. Collaborative research across humanist/social-science and medical/natural science traditions, as well as increased cooperation among various sectors and corporate environments at local, national and international levels, are necessary to find solutions for the huge challenges that the international community currently faces.

The Research Council of Norway and other key participants undertook an appraisal of research concerning the link between poverty and the environment in 2002. The main conclusion that emerged from a consensus conference on this field was that the link between environmental research and development research has been more difficult to establish than originally anticipated. UiO's strategic plan indicates that UiO wishes to stimulate and encourage initiatives and creativity through interdisciplinary activity. Through its activities SUM wishes to continue to make a contribution to interdisciplinary efforts and has, to this end, built up solid, relevant expertise for finding solutions to the challenges involved in the link between development and the environment through:

- **conducting interdisciplinary collaborative research and basic research on major environmental and development issues.**
- **strengthening the knowledge base for the formulation and implementation of practical policy, and**
- **analysing the connections between policy and research at local, national and international levels.**

This involves an analysis of key concepts and theories that govern research and policy in the field, new knowledge concerning the opportunities and constraints involved in reducing poverty, social reconstruction following armed conflict, measures to promote more sustainable production and consumption systems etc.

UiO's strategic plan indicates that clearer and more demanding minimum quality standards will be set for research, teaching and dissemination, and that resources will be allocated more systematically based on performance and results. As an interdisciplinary centre, SUM wishes to provide high quality and innovative ideas to a variety of audiences both inside and outside academia. This requires that the Centre both maintains high academic standards and focuses on issues of great relevance to society – two objectives that easily come into conflict and that must therefore be continually weighed against each other. UiO's increased focus on both excellent academic quality and on the development of knowledge with a high degree of applicability to society reflects the challenge facing SUM. This strategic plan seeks to combine and balance these two concerns in a manner that is best for SUM as an interdisciplinary centre and is in line with UiO's strategic priorities for the coming years.

RESEARCH

UiO's primary objective for research is to strengthen its position as a research university of high international standard. This is to be achieved through seven measures: by providing support to researchers, research groups and academic environments to reach a high international level; by recruiting more aggressively; by obtaining more funding for research; by ensuring more continuous time for research; by building strength through cooperation; by strengthening researcher training; and by creating more space for innovation.

GOAL:

In line with this, SUM has set the following main goal for its research:

To promote research of high academic quality so that UiO will become a leading research institution on national and international environmental and development issues.

SUM was granted the status of an inter-faculty Research School in development and environmental studies in 2005, and will utilise the Research School to help to achieve UiO's goal of strengthening researcher training at UiO. A common research platform for SUM as a whole will be anchored in the Research School, and as a further development SUM will submit an application in autumn 2005 to seek status as a Norwegian Centre of Excellence. This platform will also provide the basis for formulating applications for grants to the Research Council of Norway and to alternative funding sources such as the UN, EU, OECD and the business community, as well as for more goal-oriented participation in strategic research bodies.

The Centre's academic profile is based on the competence of permanently employed researchers, associate senior researchers and doctoral fellows, as well as a comprehensive national and international network of researchers. The Centre's combined expertise provides the opportunity to make connections between global, regional and local dynamics of change in rich and poor countries.

The scope of SUM's research is extensive and comprises research on global institutions, governance and the implementation of Norwegian and European environment and development policy, corporate social responsibility, reconstruction following local and regional conflicts, democratization and the alleviation of poverty in developing countries, local issues on sustainability in terms of energy and biodiversity in Norway and in developing countries, cultural values, ethics and aesthetics, and more. The Centre does not, however, cover the entire range of research areas relevant for achieving sustainable development.

In order to reach the primary objective for its research in 2005-2009, SUM will make the following general priorities:

SUM will strengthen its profile as an international centre for sustainable development and will contribute actively to establishing UiO as a key participant in the UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The Research School will provide the basis for increased academic

collaboration across the units of UiO, for the development of several large-scale interdisciplinary project applications to the Research Council of Norway, and for increased international collaboration.

SUM will improve the coordination of research of great importance to sustainable development through greater use of project groups, more intensive project collaboration and closer links between externally financed research projects and theses and dissertations at Master's and Ph.D. levels. At the same time, efforts will be made to promote dialogue with external users as well as activities that can genuinely strengthen the knowledge base for formulating sustainable development policy.

SUM shall be a driving force for interdisciplinary research, dialogue and cooperation in connection with sustainable development, both within the university and towards society and the business community. This places great demands on academic integrity, flexibility and openness at all levels of the organization. Shared problem areas will not necessarily entail shared projects. Different perspectives can also emerge and can be refined through more active dialogue.

SUM shall strengthen international networks, preferably through collaborative research projects and by attracting more guest researchers with the aid of funding from the Research Council of Norway, Fulbright, UiO's internationalization funds, SUM's newly established Arne Næss Chair and other sources.

Long-term funding for research is a prerequisite for enabling the Centre to reach its goals. Applications for grants to finance large-scale, long-term programmes will be given priority. Smaller projects, evaluations and other commissioned research assignments are appropriate only to the extent that they can contribute to strengthening the Centre's ongoing and planned research and teaching activities. The new financing model at UiO places greater emphasis than before on publishing in recognized (accredited) academic periodicals. SUM already has a high level of academic production, and one of the Centre's goals is to increase the number of academic books and articles in refereed journals.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR RESEARCH:

During the course of 2005 SUM will have:

- **prepared an application for status as a Norwegian Centre of Excellence for sustainable development.**

By 2009 SUM will have:

- **strengthened its academic activities through the Research School.**
- **obtained more long-term funding for research.**
- **increased the number of accredited publications from the present level.**
- **expanded and strengthened cooperation and its network in Norway through the establishment of more strategic alliances with organizations and with researchers and institutes within and outside UiO.**
- **expanded and strengthened the international network through increased use of guest researchers and more applications for major projects and collaborative agreements.**

TEACHING

UiO's primary objective is to educate students to a high European standard and to provide them with a sound basis for further development – both as professionals and as citizens of society. This is to be achieved through eight measures: by giving priority to maximising the benefits of education and the candidate's competence; by continuously striving to improve the learning environment; by providing research-based education; by making international exposure an integral part of the study programmes; by further developing courses through dialogue and cooperation; by continually comparing performance with established goals and ambitions; by recruiting talented and motivated students; and by expanding the programme of studies in continuing and further education.

GOAL:

SUM has established the following main goal for its teaching:

To provide research-based teaching of high quality that will contribute to increased recruitment of researchers, internationalization and interdisciplinary collaboration at UiO.

SUM provides teaching at all levels and will further develop cooperation with departments at UiO. Courses offered at the Centre will provide students with a sound basis for work within and outside academia. They will be well trained in interdisciplinary collaboration and in the interrelation between research and policy in relation to sustainable development at national and international levels.

SUM was awarded the status as a cross-faculty Research School at UiO in 2005. Through the Research School, SUM will continue earlier practice of offering specialised Ph.D. courses linked to relevant projects at the Centre. The courses are announced internationally and already represent a major impetus for internationalization and research collaboration. In addition, a Ph.D. course in interdisciplinary collaboration will be developed and permanent meeting places for fellowship holders and researchers associated with the Research School will be established. All fellowship holders with a workplace at the Centre will be included in the Research School. They will be associated with one of the academic research areas and will continue to be appointed normally for four years with a 25 per cent position as teaching assistants or for other duties.

At Master's level, SUM is responsible for the English-language course "Culture, Environment and Sustainability (CES)", which is part of the Faculty of Humanities' Culture Studies programme. CES will be reorganized so as to include a broader range of the Centre's research. More exchange of courses between CES and other Master's programmes at UiO is desirable, as well as more student exchanges with universities abroad, and this is in line with the goal of making international exposure an integral part of the study programmes at UiO. A diversified student group with varying academic and cultural backgrounds is a clear ambition for the CES programme.

At Bachelor's level, SUM offers a 40-credit course in environment and development that forms part of the study programmes at the faculties of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MN), Humanities (HF) and Social Sciences (SV).

SUM will continue to give priority to graduate-level teaching. Teaching at undergraduate level will contribute to greater recruitment of Master's and Ph.D. students, to broader cooperation with researchers at other units of UiO and to increased international collaboration. Another goal is to establish a reciprocal exchange agreement with universities in developing countries for the curriculum area that focuses on sustainable development in rich and poor countries. Teaching at Bachelor's level will be assessed during the plan period in light of evaluations, developments in costs etc.

The students will be assured good learning and working conditions. Ph.D. students will continue to have permanent office space at the Centre. A number of reading-room places are reserved for Master's students who collaborate with or have theses of special interest to researchers at the Centre. In order to ensure broad recruitment of Ph.D. fellowship holders, students from faculty-based Master's programmes will continue to compete for reading-room places at SUM on the same basis as students from the CES programme. As part of UiO's goal for an improved learning environment, SUM will also arrange annual alumni events.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR TEACHING:

By 2009 SUM will have:

- established a cross-faculty Research School in development and the environment with at least 15 Ph.D. fellows.**
- established cooperative agreements for student exchanges in the international CES Master's programme.**
- graduated yearly at least 15 Master's students from the CES programme.**
- graduated yearly at least 20 Master's students from each of the study areas of the CES programme.**

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

UiO's primary objective for dissemination activities is to contribute actively to making research-based knowledge of practical use in society and to work to provide the general public with an insight into academic thinking and with updated knowledge of research results. This is to be achieved through five measures: by promoting quality and impact in dissemination to the general public; by contributing to extracting more from research-based knowledge in innovation and development work; by providing better access to UiO's sources of knowledge; by further developing cooperation with the school system; and by making a more coordinated effort to improve the university's contact with society at large.

GOAL:

In line with this, SUM has established as its main goal:

To disseminate research results and thereby contribute with knowledge of national and international environmental and development issues.

SUM prioritises publishing in internationally recognized journals, and currently publishes far above the average for UiO. The profile will be strengthened by identifying periodicals and publishing companies of relevance to several of the Centre's researchers. Increased collaboration on research and greater emphasis on research-based teaching will pave the way for more co-authorship and better guidance and support for doctoral fellows and students.

Internet-based dissemination will be given priority over publications by SUM. This will increase access to SUM's material. Experience has shown that an updated website in English is important in establishing new international contacts. Mass mailings of information will be done via E-mail group lists, with links to news items on the website. An annual English language brochure will highlight selected research projects and results.

SUM's research is disseminated to, and benefits from dialogue with, other research environments, non-governmental organizations, the business community and the public sector. The network and meeting-place function will continue to be served through the Centre's own events and seminars and through goal-oriented and active participation in relevant events both at home and abroad. Reports on experience gained will improve the Centre's professionalism in carrying out and hosting large academic conferences.

Popularizing research results will continue to be an integral part of all projects in line with UiO's primary objective of making research-based knowledge of practical use in society, and giving priority to disseminating directly to the general public.

The driving force function will be facilitated through SUM's seminars and networks that promote discussion with other researchers, media and the general public. SUM's research will be profiled through

an annual conference on sustainable development at UiO, through regularly arranged seminars at SUM and UiO, including the Developing Countries Seminar (“Ulandsseminar”), as well as through follow-up of SUM graduates at annual alumni gatherings.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR DISSEMINATION:

As of 2006, SUM will have:

- **established the use of the Internet as the channel for the dissemination of information to the general public, supplemented with targeted and focused newsletters.**
- **established an annual SUM conference that will place key environmental and development policy issues on the agenda.**
- **established the Arne Næss Chair.**
- **published an annual English-language brochure profiling the highlights of SUM’s activities.**
- **hosted an annual alumni meeting that will reunite older and more recent graduates of SUM.**

By 2009 SUM will have:

- **become a profiled contributor to selected international periodicals.**
- **strengthened its profile as a university centre for national and international environmental and development research.**

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

UiO has several primary objectives related to management and administration – for co-workers, the organization, finances and the infrastructure. Several of these objectives are directly relevant for SUM.

GOAL:

SUM's main goal for management and administration is:

SUM shall be a creative and academically stimulating research environment that attracts talented researchers, doctoral fellows and students with diverse perspectives on environmental and development issues.

SUM's permanent staff of researchers is productive, but small in terms of the high ambitions set out in this strategic plan. Emphasis will be placed on developing a more distinct profile for the Centre. Exchange of experience and quality assurance, as well as clearly defined leadership and a common research platform, will be key elements of these efforts.

The majority of the research activity is financed externally through time-bound projects. More than 50 per cent of the academic staff are temporary employees funded by external grants.

This represents a challenge for the Centre in the form of research and personnel continuity. An advantage is that SUM as a research institution enjoys a flexibility that is unusual in a university context, in terms of thematic areas, associated researchers and academic perspectives. A disadvantage is that it is difficult to retain key personnel over a long period of time. It is important to maintain the combination of continuity and renewal, and this demands a larger critical mass of associate researchers, doctoral fellows and students. UiO has indicated a willingness to employ a broader range of instruments in order to resolve such constraints. Among these is a greater possibility for joint appointments. This may be a very relevant measure for SUM, and the Centre will work actively to explore this possibility in the period 2005–2009 in order to both assure continuity and to develop interdisciplinary activities – in line with the aims set out in UiO's strategy.

SUM's research activity is organized in groups, divided on the basis of shared perspectives on problem areas, and coordinated by the respective research coordinators. The areas of research at SUM are diverse in terms of size, theme and scope. This division into areas is dynamic and changes in accordance with funding opportunities and the expertise of associated researchers. Clearly defined responsibilities and good routines for quality assurance at all levels are important for better job satisfaction and increased efficiency.

ProSus provides a valuable contribution to SUM's activity. The Research Council of Norway has decided to gradually phase out funding to ProSus over a three-year period (2006–2008). During the course of 2005, a plan will be devised for further academic and administrative integration of ProSus with SUM.

The internal fora at SUM are important for stimulating collaboration at the Centre. They will be further developed in order to create the best possible conditions for collaborative research. Administrative support for coordinating and prioritizing application deadlines and objectives will be further strengthened.

Administrative support functions in connection with the development of project applications, teaching, publishing and other forms of dissemination will be further developed. SUM opted to increase teaching activities after the Quality Reform made it easier for students to combine courses from several faculties. Teaching is an effective measure for increasing internationalization, the recruitment of researchers and collaborative research. The challenge remains, however, to ensure a good balance between research, teaching and dissemination, while at the same time ensuring continual research time for the Centre's academic staff. The use of doctoral fellows and newly educated Master's students as teaching assistants is one strategy to relieve researchers as well as to involve students in SUM's research activities.

Welcoming, hospitable and centrally-located premises are a prerequisite to enable SUM to profile the university as a whole and to serve its function as a driving force through increased collaboration with other units in the areas of research, teaching and dissemination for sustainable development. It is therefore a goal for SUM to obtain premises that are closer to the Blindern campus. One aim of UiO's strategy is to reduce the extent of rented premises and to devise a comprehensive plan for future land and building use. SUM will therefore continue its efforts to obtain alternative premises during the period 2005–2009 and regards UiO's signal concerning upgrading of the PO building as an interesting possibility.

As a centre for sustainable development, SUM wishes to behave in a sustainable manner in its own practice towards both co-workers and the environment. SUM will therefore continue to work actively to create a beneficial work environment and to implement health, environment and safety measures in order to meet the obligations stated in the Norwegian IA agreement. SUM will continue its commitment to SUM's Green Profile and is positive towards the fact that in its strategy UiO uses the intentions of Green State as a basis for its activities.

Realization of the strategy requires ample, long-term research grants that can assure a good balance between renewal and continuity. The strategy shall be a "living document" that remains open to changes based on suggestions from the staff and the Board during the plan period. All changes must be approved by the Board.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION:

By 2009 SUM will have:

- at least six senior researchers in permanent positions, six post-doctoral fellows with five-year appointments with two years of obligatory duties for SUM, fifteen Ph.D fellows with four-year appointments with a one-year obligatory teaching assistantship for SUM.**
- five associate senior researchers in permanent positions at other units of UiO or associated institutes.**
- a well functioning organization and administration.**
- premises that promote improve contact with researchers on campus.**