It is widely acknowledged that universities can play a key role in helping to meet the various challenges posed by climate change. However, the means to do so are not always widely known, nor are there clear mechanisms via which matters related to climate change may be systematically included in university programmes. Part of the problem is due to the complexity which is inherent to climate change, but part of it is also due to the “tunnel vision” of many higher education institutions, which limits the handling of climate matters to a few subjects, without taking into account the whole picture.

Yet much could be gained by giving a proper and broader consideration to climate issues in university degrees, extension courses and projects at universities. No matter if we are speaking about global warming, sea level rise, anthropogenic or naturally induced climate change, there is a pressing need to properly inform and educate university students, so as to allow them to understand not only the direct facts and phenomena which are related to climate change, but also their social, economic and environmental impacts.

Overall, universities may help to foster a broader understanding of the challenges of climate change by:

- providing more adequate teaching programmes vis-à-vis the proper inclusion of matters related to climate change in teaching, beyond the traditional, technical subjects;
- ensuring a stronger emphasis on applied research into climate change which integrates technical issues with social and economic ones, hence opening up the way for a holistic understanding of the problem and its ramifications;
- fostering deeper involvement from students in the process of understanding climate change, from campus-based initiatives to the organization of climate-friendly events so as to allow universities to practice what they preach.

This book fills a long-standing gap in publications specifically focusing on the means via which climate change at university level may become a reality. It does so by listing various initiatives being undertaken at universities all around the world,
as well as by describing practical projects performed by a number of universities. By means of a combination of elements related to curriculum design, research methods, projects and case studies, it provides a unique overview of the subject matter of climate change at universities and describes some of the ongoing efforts to give it a more prominent position in university programmes.

Prepared in the context of the International Climate Change Information Programme (ICCIP), led by the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, this publication will be very useful to all those interested in the handling of matters related to climate change at university level and in fostering a holistic awareness among students and staff about the meaning of and the need for a proper emphasis on climate change at universities.

Hamburg,
Winter 2009/2010

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Universities and Climate Change
Introducing Climate Change to University Programmes
Leal Filho, W. (Ed.)
2010, IX, 283 p. 36 illus., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-3-642-10750-4