In Iowa, challenges associated with water quality, habitat diversity, air quality, a changing climate, and struggling rural communities have been recognized for many years. At the same time, there are significant opportunities to have a positive impact on social, economic, and environmental goals through renewable energy, reconnection of the farm with the community, and the development of more sustainable urban infrastructure, among other ways. A knowledgeable workforce is needed to address such challenges as well as to capitalize on these related opportunities.

Sustainability science provides a solid foundation for careers in fields related to sustainability while giving students the needed preparation to continue their studies in professional or graduate programs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment opportunities for individuals with training in the environmental area are projected to grow by 11% between the years 2014 and 2024, faster than the national average. Sustainability science provides entry into these and related careers, such as planning and public affairs (projected growth of 6%, as fast as average); conservation (projected growth of 7%, as fast as average); and geospatial technologies (projected growth of 29%, much faster than the national average).