

From doctor to sustainability leader, ASU Online grad moves into new position to merge sustainability with health care

By Laura Randall, ASU News
December 12, 2025

Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [fall 2025 graduates](#).

From air pollution to water contamination, climate and human health are inextricably linked.

However, few medical physicians have been trained in areas like sustainability to understand how a changing climate is impacting everyone's health, especially the most vulnerable.

"Physicians are taught about social determinants of health, but not specifically how those who are contributing the least to climate change can be the most impacted," said Dr. Michele Domico, a 2025 [ASU Online](#) graduate of the Master of Sustainability Leadership program at Arizona State University's [School of Sustainability](#), a unit in the [Rob Walton College of Global Futures](#).

Domico is a pediatric critical care physician who believes environmental health is directly connected to human health.

After 20 years as a pediatric critical care physician, Domico made the decision to pursue a sustainability graduate degree because she saw an opportunity to unite her passions while advancing her career.

With the goal of becoming the first Medical Director of Environmental Sustainability at Rady Children's Health, a children's hospital in Orange County, California, Domico enrolled at ASU.

“To gain credibility, a deeper understanding and the ability to strategically approach sustainability issues from an economic and efficiency perspective, receiving formal education was a must for me, and truly transformative,” Domico said.

With the support of her family and supervisors, Domico chose to attend ASU because of the School of Sustainability's reputation, ASU Online's flexibility and the university's affordability.

“The asynchronous and flexible nature of the [ASU MSL program](#) was perfect for me as I navigated busier periods at my job. I could take the second portion of a semester off and not feel the cadence disrupted or that I was 'behind' my fellow classmates,” Domico said.

Balancing her responsibilities as a full-time physician, student and mother wasn't easy, but Domico had the support to make it possible. For the Domicos, commitment to environmental sustainability became a family affair.

“(I) was sleep deprived the better part of the past two years, but I wouldn't change a thing,” Domico said. “My 6-year-old watched me do this work, she saw the effort and it inspired her. She even set up a recycling booth at her school festival!”

While pursuing her degree, [Domico continued to advocate for environmental sustainability in the health care industry](#).

She was a co-chair on the Society of Critical Care Medicine's Sustainability Task Force. Together, the task force published their first article, titled “[Environmental Sustainability in ICUs: A Report From the Society of Critical Care Medicine Sustainability Task Force](#).”

Less than one month after graduating in the summer, Domico accomplished her goal. She was offered the job of Medical Director of Environmental Sustainability.

ASU News spoke with Domico about her experience going back to school.

Question: What's the best piece of advice you'd give to those considering going back to school?

Answer: Imagine your dream job and then ask yourself if pursuing further education can get you one step closer. Don't let fear hold you back. I was concerned that I would not be able to keep up with the education technology, the class platforms, the online format and all of those worries that go along with someone who finished medical school a long time ago (in 1999). Going back to school was slightly terrifying at first, but I have now verified, old dogs can learn new tricks.

Q: What do you hope to accomplish in your new role as the Medical Director of Environmental Sustainability?

A: I have been a pediatric critical care physician at the same hospital for 20 years and have been fortunate to develop relationships with different physicians and departments across the organization. Having this baseline knowledge of institutional culture is central to the transformational change I am championing. My initial goals are awareness (through education), partnership (with health care providers and executive leadership) and actionable plans. There are many things we can do as health care clinicians to decrease the carbon footprint of our daily clinical practice while maintaining excellent patient care, quality and safety.

Q: If someone gave you \$40 million to solve one problem on our planet, what would you tackle?

A: This may not qualify as one planetary problem, and I am not sure if \$40 million is enough, but if I were to have an obscene amount of money, I would create a net zero hospital running on clean energy with sustainability embedded into their operational infrastructure. A place where patients could come and be assured that while we are treating their health conditions, we are not contributing to the demise of their air quality, not sending microplastics into the ocean and not contributing to the very health conditions we are trying to cure.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Dr. Michele Domico (far left) at the Society of Critical Care Medicine Congress. Courtesy photo

Text image(s)



Dr. Michele Domico, courtesy photo