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# University students launch new minor

## Architecture School introduces first interdisciplinary minor; program focuses on global sustainability

by [Callie Herod](#) | Feb 15 2011 | 02/15/11 1:04am



A student-initiated interdisciplinary minor in global sustainability is now open to all undergraduate students.

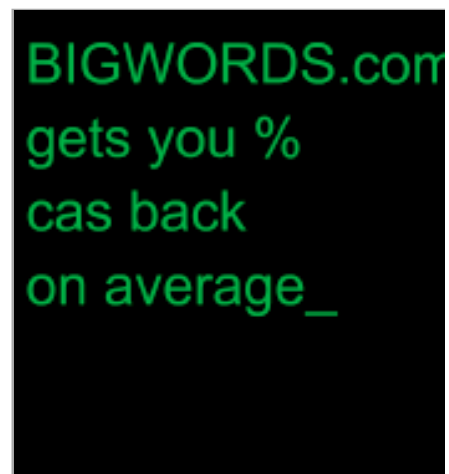
Beginning this May, students can graduate with the new minor if they meet the necessary requirements, which include a global sustainability course and one upper-level class focused on community collaboration in addressing sustainability issues. Furthermore, the minor requires three electives from a range of categories including economy, environment and equity. Fifteen credit hours are required to complete the degree.

The global sustainability minor is the first interdisciplinary minor offered by the University.

"Sustainability is such a broad issue that it can't be addressed by any one discipline," said Prof. Paxton Marshall of the department of electrical and computer engineering.

Marshall, along with Prof. Mark White of the McIntire School of Commerce and Prof. Phoebe Crisman of the School of Architecture instruct a University seminar called "Global Sustainability," which was first offered in the fall of 2009. The proposal for a minor in sustainability stemmed from this initial class as a student initiative.

Carla Jones, who was the teaching assistant for the course in 2009, and seven other students organized a committee to discuss the need for additional courses in sustainability. That discussion eventually developed into a desire for a minor. Jones noted that many students are studying



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sustainability issues but are not receiving course credit.

"I noticed a lot of comments about much more than the course could offer," said Jones, now a first-year architecture graduate student in the department of urban and environmental planning. "Out of about a 120[-person] class there was a lot of excitement about this idea."

The committee determined that the minor should be housed in the School of Architecture.

"We are all really excited about it and I think it really fits the School of Architecture's mission, which is really linked with creating a sustainable future," Architecture School Dean Kim Tanzer said, adding that the new minor will benefit not only students but the University as a whole. "I think it is a great opportunity for the University of Virginia to distinguish itself in providing a global perspective in sustainability."

Marshall noted the importance of the collaboration between students and faculty in launching the minor.

"This is a good example of students and faculty working together, breaking down some of the barriers that exist between disciplines that is necessary to address real world problems that require a multidisciplinary focus. The real lesson for me is the power of the students in making this happen," Marshall said.

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