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Sunday, August 10, 2014

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# Green efforts growing stronger at UVA

The 2010-2011 school year has made it easier for students to engage with sustainability.

By: [Sheffield Hale , MNN State Reports](#)

Tue, Apr 26, 2011 at 04:44 PM

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Photo: Andrew Greene

Sustainability has been a part of the University of Virginia's identity since the Academical Village's inception, when the gardens on the Lawn provided food and water for the students and faculty. More recently, grassroots environmental efforts have worked to keep that vision at the university's core. We are learning how to engage with this essential ecological paradigm and understand its implications for our generation. The improved ability to navigate grassroots endeavors in the areas of academics, lifestyle and involvement will allow new students to take advantage of these resources and increase their positive impact.

### **Environmental coursework**

In academics, the Office of the Provost approved the new sustainability minor Jan. 28. This student-led initiative enables students across different schools to learn and explore sustainability in a more formal way. Profs. Phoebe Crisman, Paxton Marshall and Mark White have been at the forefront in offering sustainability-related courses and even created the core class for the new minor, "Global Sustainability," on top of their departmental loads.

With new courses appearing throughout different departments and schools, the university's first interdisciplinary minor offers a structured introduction to sustainability.

### **Green student groups and challenges**

For sustainable living, the UVA Green Challenge was founded in September to answer the question, "But what can I do in my daily routine to make an impact?" This year-long crash course is broken into seven three-week phases and has made it simpler to lead a more sustainable lifestyle at the university for more than 300 participants this year. The Green Challenge is supplemented by successful initiatives such as the Sustainability Pledge and the Do One Thing campaign, both of which encourage students to consider more sustainable choices in their daily lives.

An informal group of student leaders also saw an opportunity to better enable student involvement in sustainability when it noticed that there are more than 50 organizations related to sustainability with which students are involved. This group of student leaders, in order to help reduce redundancy and further sustainability at the University, came together under the brand of SustainaUnity.

These same students created [SustainaUnity.com](http://SustainaUnity.com) Nov. 19, a hub of information about sustainability for students. Complementing the website is a weekly newsletter, which includes the latest events and opportunities related to

sustainability. This newsletter, which launched March 27, makes it easy for someone to hear about the events that occur each week, as well as opportunities with organizations, academics or employment.

In addition, more than 50 student leaders now are connected through a "sustainability\_leaders" listserv. These online connections, while useful, are not enough. These same leaders have been meeting informally during the last semester through potlucks and discussions to explore benefits of collaboration. They have decided that, through collaboration, they can support each other's missions while having a broader impact at the university. The first applications for positions within SustainaUnity, due April 30, will help pass the torch to the next generation of leaders.

But how does this more sophisticated information sharing among students relate to the administration? What communication exists currently?

### **Sustainability in administration**

The President's Committee on Sustainability created a student subcommittee March 3 to get a broader student perspective and to help bridge an already shrinking communication gap between students, faculty and administrators regarding sustainability issues on Grounds. Newly inaugurated Pres. Teresa A. Sullivan soon will receive a comprehensive list of recommendations from the committee, which will set a vision for sustainability at Mr. Jefferson's university in the 21st century.

Are these current initiatives sustainable themselves? It will be up to the next generation of student leaders to ensure that they participate in this larger dialogue and continue successful initiatives, such as Green Initiative Funding Tomorrow, which needs an annual funding source in order to sustain it and the projects it will support. The leaders of SustainaUnity are enabling younger students to engage in sustainability, but perhaps more importantly, they are empowering those students to lead.

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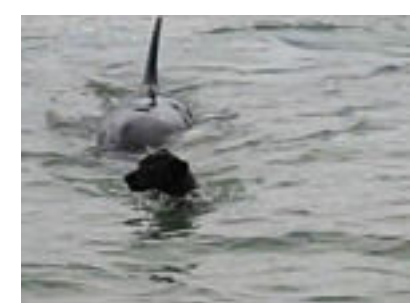
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