

SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING, CERTIFICATE IN (GRADUATE CERTIFICATE)

Program mission

The mission of the Certificate in Sustainability Planning is to provide students with a better understanding of society's land use and natural resource systems, with a particular emphasis on the factors that contribute to or constrain their level of sustainability. The program aims to give students the knowledge and skills needed to identify and address barriers to sustainability and to formulate strategies to create more sustainable practices, systems and institutions. Using a holistic and integrated approach, the program emphasizes the interdependence of sociocultural, biophysical and political-economic dimensions of sustainability, especially as they relate to urban or other subnational regions.

An important theme of the program is that sustainability planning is primarily about influencing humans and their activities by modifying organizational structures, economic policies and legislative frameworks. Therefore, of paramount importance are topics normally associated with the social sciences, such as urban and regional planning, economics, political science and human geography. However, sustainability is an interdisciplinary science, and thus students must also examine topics typically linked to the biophysical sciences, such as ecology and geomorphology.

Students will acquire knowledge and skills that complement backgrounds in engineering, environmental and social sciences, business or other fields.

Program goals

1. Provide students with a better understanding of the sociocultural, biophysical and political-economic dimensions of the key problems faced by society with regard to natural resources and the environment – particularly in the context of urban and other subnational regions.
2. Develop students' insights on the underlying causes of these problems and on the political-economic and sociocultural factors that constrain the ability to address them more effectively.
3. Help student acquire the analytical and professional skills needed to identify and address barriers to sustainability and to formulate strategies to develop more sustainable lifestyles, systems and institutions.

Student learning outcomes

1. Students will develop a well-rounded knowledge of environmental planning, in the context of prevailing economic and social conditions, with particular emphasis on multilevel governance approaches to environmental protection; the roles of state and non-state actors in environmental governance; and the ways in which planning tools can be used to address specific environmental challenges.
2. Students will acquire the analytical and research skills needed to investigate environmental problems, in the context of prevailing economic and social conditions, and develop strategies for addressing them.

3. Students will develop a grounded understanding of the values and ideologies that shape approaches to environmental planning, including conservation and preservation, sustainability, resilience, and environmental justice.
4. Students will recognize that low-income and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by environmental challenges and that lived experience and community-driven solutions are critical components to equitably addressing these challenges.

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (<http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/>) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/>)

Graduation requirements

As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements. (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>)

Apply online today. (<https://www.vcu.edu/admissions/apply/graduate/>)

Admission requirements

Degree:	Semester(s) of entry:	Deadline dates:	Test requirements:
Certificate	Fall	Feb 1 (early admission); Apr 1 (priority deadline); May 1 (final deadline)	
	Spring	Oct 1	

Special requirements

- These deadlines are designed to allow sufficient time for application review and admission processing. Applications may be submitted after the deadline; however, there is no guarantee of sufficient time for processing. Any application submitted too late for current semester processing will be considered for the following semester.

In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements/>), the prerequisites and general criteria of eligibility for admission to the sustainability planning certificate program include:

1. Completion of an official application form
2. Three letters of reference
3. Letter of intent describing interest in applying for the Certificate in Sustainability Planning
4. An official transcript showing successful completion of a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent from an accredited college or university with a minimum grade point average of 2.7 (out of 4.0) in the last 60 hours of undergraduate study

All courses in the graduate Certificate in Sustainability Planning may be applied to meet the requirement of the Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree. However, successful completion of the certificate does not guarantee admission into the M.U.R.P. degree program.

Curriculum requirements

The mission of the Certificate in Sustainability Planning is to provide students with a better understanding of society's land use and natural resource systems, with a particular emphasis on the factors that contribute to or constrain their level of sustainability. The two core courses will provide subject matter knowledge on natural resources management and environmental policy and planning. In addition, students must take one course that focuses on socioeconomic sustainability to gain knowledge on the social equity aspect of sustainability planning. The remaining electives will provide an opportunity for more in-depth knowledge and training in specific subfields within sustainability (e.g., energy, land use or food systems) or disciplines to which a sustainability approach can be applied, such as housing policy.

Degree requirements

Course	Title	Hours
Core courses		
URSP 650	Natural Resources and Environmental Planning	6
URSP 655	Environmental Policy and Planning	
Restricted elective (social equity)¹		
URSP 637 or URSP 641	Sustainable Community Development Public Participation and Negotiation	3
Restricted electives (sustainability application)¹		
Select three from:		
URSP 515	Watershed Planning and Governance	
URSP 520	Park Planning	

URSP 521 or URSP 621	Introduction to Geographic Information Systems Introduction to Geographic Information Systems
URSP 526	Design of Sustainable Places
URSP 545	Sustainable Energy Policy and Planning
URSP 591	Special Topics in Urban and Regional Studies and Planning ²
URSP 628	Land Use Planning
URSP 643	Housing Policy
URSP 672	Food Systems, Rural Development and Landscape Conservation
URSP 691	Topics in Urban and Regional Planning ²

Total Hours **18**

1

With approval from the program director, other appropriate graduate courses can fulfill the social equity or sustainability application electives requirements.

2

URSP 591 or URSP 691 may be selected when the topic is related to sustainability.

The minimum number of graduate credit hours required for this certificate is 18.

Students who complete the requirements for this program will receive a Certificate in Sustainability Planning.

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Program website: wilder.vcu.edu/programs/urban-and-regional-studies-planning (<https://wilder.vcu.edu/programs/urban-and-regional-studies-planning/>)