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[Home \(/\)](#) ▶ Sustainability Minor Continues to Attract Student Interest

# Sustainability Minor Continues to Attract Student Interest

*Biology faculty member Tara Scully is the new director of the minor.*



Students celebrate the installation of a new solar table on Kogan Plaza in October 2017. (William Atkins/GW Today)

April 30, 2018

Since it [launched \(https://gwtoday.gwu.edu/sustainable-minor\)](https://gwtoday.gwu.edu/sustainable-minor) in 2012, the undergraduate sustainability minor has attracted hundreds of George Washington University students interested in

"The beauty of the minor is it really starts to highlight the other subjects that are vital for all of these issues to be resolved," said [Tara Scully](https://biology.columbian.gwu.edu/tara-scully), biology teaching assistant professor in the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences. "It's about social justice, law, business—and I think the program really binds all of that together for students to see. Sustainability is a collaborative effort."

Dr. Scully, who has been involved in the minor since it launched and is part of sustainability initiatives in many ways outside of GW, as well, will now be the director of the program.

"Dr. Scully has been an active partner and leader for sustainability at GW, and we are so happy that she will lead the sustainability minor and continue to support students, faculty and staff in their progress in this critical area," Deputy Provost Terry Murphy said.

Lisa Benton-Short, associate professor of geography, launched the minor in 2012 and shaped it over its first several years. In 2015, Michael Svoboda, assistant professor of writing, took the helm and, together with Ariel Kagan at the [Sustainability Collaborative](https://sustainabilitycollaborative.gwu.edu/), they doubled enrollment and provided new services for students, including a weekly newsletter featuring sustainability events and job postings.

Sustainability is now embedded across GW in 781 courses and there are more than 230 students in the minor.

"Tara takes over a strong program," said Kathleen Merrigan, executive director of sustainability. "I'm excited to see the innovations she will bring."

In her role, Dr. Scully is responsible for administratively overseeing the minor and will also continue to assist with and teach courses within it—including the popular "[Food, Nutrition and Service](http://bulletin.gwu.edu/search/?P=BISC+1007)"—and help grow student interest.

"I feel like this generation really is empowered that they can and want to work together to find ways that we can build up sustainability," Dr. Scully said.

The [minor](https://sustainabilitycollaborative.gwu.edu/sustainability-minor) begins with a mandatory introductory course that examines issues such as climate change, ecosystems, water, energy and sustainable cities and is co-taught by faculty in various disciplines.

Students are then required to take at least three credits in three separate tracks: environment and earth systems; society and sustainability; and policy, organization and leadership. Students also are required to complete a culminating experience, such as an internship, community service or research project.

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Ms. Molinar said she has valued the “vast number” of fields integrated into the minor.

“My sustainable cities class is taught by seven professors, ranging from real estate developers to public health professionals,” she said.

While the options in the minor are diverse, unifying students’ experience is a sense of optimism, Dr. Scully said.

“It isn’t about being depressing and saying, ‘Hey, the future doesn’t look great,’ ” she said. “There are ways we can go about changing it and helping each other in our path to change.”

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Learn more about declaring the minor [here](https://sustainabilitycollaborative.gwu.edu/sustainability-minor)  
(<https://sustainabilitycollaborative.gwu.edu/sustainability-minor>).

## News

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April 20, 2018

Annual fair brought together campus groups and community partners.

### [Taking Stock of Sustainability at GW \(/taking-stock-sustainability-gw\)](#)

October 23, 2017

New report charts the university’s progress toward various sustainability goals, looks ahead to continued opportunities for GW as model of urban sustainability.



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