

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

STUDENT
INTERNSHIP
MANUAL



2018-19

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Office of Sustainability Overview

The Office of Sustainability acts as a central hub to connect the many sustainability champions and efforts taking place all across campus. The Office of Sustainability strives to create a more sustainable future for Virginia Tech through engaging the entire university community and creating positive change. The Office of Sustainability also works to educate the Virginia Tech community about how to live a more sustainable lifestyle through behavior change and an understanding of the impacts one's personal actions can have on a global scale.

The Office of Sustainability was formed through the Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment (VTCAC), which was affirmed in 2009 and serves as the guiding document to steer the university toward a greener, more sustainable future. Among the 14 goals in the plan, it commits the university to reaching a 50 percent recycling rate by 2020, improving energy efficiency where and whenever possible in campus buildings, achieving a minimum LEED Silver rating for all new construction, and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

The Climate Action Commitment defines sustainability as: *“the simultaneous pursuit of environmental quality, economic prosperity, and social justice and equity, through action, education, and engagement to address current needs without compromising the capacity and needs of future generations.”* The Climate Action Commitment also defines the duties of the Office of Sustainability:

“5. Virginia Tech will maintain a sustainability office to:

- a. Coordinate programs for campus sustainability,*
- b. Oversee implementation of the VTCAC,*
- c. Monitor annual electricity and other energy use and GHG emissions, and*
- d. Working with faculty and departments, manage a campus-wide student internship and undergraduate research program using the campus as a sustainability laboratory, and*
- e. Coordinate communication regarding campus sustainability initiatives and programs to the university community and external audiences.”*

Internship Program Vision & Mission

Our vision extends to both the campus and the surrounding community. Our vision is to create a sustainability network of student and community leaders throughout Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, and the greater New River Valley. To reach this vision, we utilize our campus as a sustainability living-learning laboratory; providing students with experiential learning opportunities to explore real-world problems and lead in the development of innovative solutions. Operations, engagement, and academics are integrated into impactful projects that benefit students and the local community.

The mission of the Student Internship Program is to provide students with valuable opportunities to create lasting, sustainable change at Virginia Tech while developing their professional skills and expanding their knowledge of the inner workings of the university. The program encourages ownership, creativity, and collaboration to solve some of the toughest sustainability problems our world is facing today. Our program blends real-world projects with practical, skills-based professional development workshops to prepare students for an ever-changing career in the sustainability field.

Expectations

What you can expect from the Office of Sustainability:

You can expect to develop your professional skills, work on outcome-driven projects, and have the opportunity to make lasting, sustainable change on campus and in the surrounding community. You can expect communication, support, and resources from the Office of Sustainability. You can also expect career-based opportunities such as conferences, peer networking, and guest speakers from relevant fields.

What the Office of Sustainability expects from you:

- **Commitment:** You are expected to work 8-10 hours per week on internship duties. This includes group meetings, team meetings, individual project work, and planning or attending events. You will be evaluated each semester on your performance and commitment to your team.
- **Participation:** Volunteer for other teams' events; engage and contribute to the group during meetings. Each intern is required to participate in 5 hours of event assistance for a team/organization other than your own.
- **Punctuality:** Show up on time and ready to go at meetings, events, and workshops.
- **Professionalism:** Always conduct yourself in a professional manner. You will be expected to exercise the following skills: time management, strategic decision making, adaptability, and project management. This experience is preparing you for a real-world career in a fast-paced field.
- **Attendance:** You are expected to attend all meetings and workshops, as well as events hosted by your team. Missing 3 or more meetings is subject to dismissal from the program.
- **Authenticity:** Leave your comfort zone, learn something new, listen with an open mind, and connect to something you are passionate about. But most importantly, have fun!

Team Descriptions

Energy

The energy team works to reduce energy use on and off campus and decrease Virginia Tech's carbon footprint. The team will complete projects in partnership with the Office of Energy Management as well as other campus departments and organizations. Members will also engage students, faculty, and staff to educate individuals on energy saving practices.

Water

The water team works to improve a variety of site, infrastructure, and water issues on campus; including stormwater management, grounds maintenance & development, and water conservation practices. The team will work with the Office of University Planning, Site & Infrastructure Development, and other campus departments and organizations. Members will also engage the campus community to promote water conservation practices that can be applied in everyday life.

Food

The food team works to critically assess the sourcing, consumption, and disposal of food on Virginia Tech's campus and within the dining halls. The team will work with Sustainable Dining as well as other campus departments and organizations. Members will also promote locally sourced food and work to decrease food waste on campus through campaigns marketed toward the university community.

Waste

The waste team works to reduce the amount of waste that is produced at Virginia Tech, and to dispose, recycle, or reuse where appropriate. Waste is inclusive of trash, recycling, and compost material. The team will work with Sustainable Dining, the Office of University Planning, and other campus departments and organizations. Members will also engage the campus community to promote proper waste sorting and reuse of items to decrease Virginia Tech's environmental footprint.

Team Leaders

Team leaders will be responsible for ensuring project work is completed, deadlines are met, and promoting cohesive team work. Team leaders will report directly to the Campus Sustainability Planner and project partners, and will be accountable for the team's performance.

Communications Representatives

Communications Representatives (comms reps) will be responsible for social media management, content creation, and photo/video coverage of campus events. Comms reps will also serve as the liaison to the Event Planning office to create reservations for space, a-frames, advertising, etc. Members are expected to meet weekly with the Campus Sustainability Planner to discuss each team's communication needs and schedule social media posts.

Program Components

Work Plans

Each semester, your team will put together a work plan that contains the following components:

- **Team Charter:** This is a document that outlines how your team will function together successfully. It will include team roles, decision-making guidelines, conflict resolution process, work distribution, team expectations, and communication between team members. Over the summer, you will be developing Team Charters with assistance from the Campus Sustainability Planner.
- **Projects, events, & campaigns:** In this portion of the work plan, you will list the projects or campaigns your team will be completing. With each project, you will also need to list the purpose, goals, dates & deadlines, metrics to track for success, and anticipated needs (partner organizations, supplies, communications).

Partner Projects

Each team will be working in partnership with a campus department on a project with measurable sustainability outcomes. Over the summer, the Campus Sustainability Planner will provide each team with their Partner Project Portfolios, outlining important contacts, goals, deadlines, and outcomes.

Major Outreach Events

The Office of Sustainability takes part in many major outreach events around campus, including:

- **GobblerFest:** Gobblerfest is an annual festival intended to engage students in campus activities and connect with the surrounding community while inspiring

curiosity, civility and self-understanding. Gobblerfest was conceived in the fall of 2008 as a welcome festival for students, staff, faculty and members of the Blacksburg community. This free event has become a highlight of the start of the academic year. At this event, you will table along with your fellow teammates to educate the campus community on Office of Sustainability programs.

- **Sustainability Week:** This is a partnership with the Town of Blacksburg and the citizens group Sustainable Blacksburg that began in 2007. It is a week-long event that engages campus and the broader New River Valley community. The goal of Sustainability Week is to celebrate all of the wonderful progress both the Town and the university have made in creating a more sustainable community, educate students and citizens alike about how to make their personal lives more sustainable, and motivate them to take real, tangible actions towards being a model green citizen. Sustainability week usually takes place during the 3rd week of September, and interns are expected to volunteer and attend VT-sponsored events.
- **Green Tailgating:** This event was started by an Office of Sustainability intern, and aims to increase Virginia Tech's recycling practices during home football games. As an intern, you will join our Green Team during tailgate hours to pass out blue recycling bags to football fans and increase our recycling rate for these events.
- **WellFest:** WellFest takes place during the first week of the Spring semester and provides a chance for students to explore their own wellness with exhibitors from on and off campus. Students can learn about many opportunities to assist on their wellness journey. Sustainability is a key aspect of wellness, and as interns, you can expect to table at this event and think creatively about the relationship between sustainability and wellness.

- **Earth Week:** Earth Day 2019 occurs on Monday, April 22nd. Earth Week activities are led by the student organization the Environmental Coalition at Virginia Tech, with the support of the Office of Sustainability. All interns will help plan the week's events, and each team will host one event during Earth Week.
- **Intern Team outreach events:** Each team will host 1 – 2 outreach events per semester (not including Sustainability Week or Earth Week). These events can align with national campaigns such as World Water Day or RecycleMania, holidays such as Halloween or Valentine's Day, or campus initiatives such as the OZZI program or Y-Toss. Outreach events aim to foster peer-to-peer learning and target behavior changes that resonate with the campus community.

Career & Professional Development CEIP

The Office of Sustainability has partnered with Career and Professional Development to participate in their Cooperative Education & Internship Program (CEIP). This not only allows for the Sustainability Internship to be displayed on your transcript, it also allows for further development of skills that will benefit you beyond your college career. Each semester, we will hold two professional development workshops in partnership with Career & Professional Development. You will also complete career-oriented assignments through a zero-credit Canvas course.

Meeting Requirements

There are a series of meetings throughout the year that interns are expected to attend, including:

- **Bi-Weekly Cohort Meetings (everyone):** These meetings occur on Monday evenings and are intended for all 20 interns to come together to discuss team projects and host professional development workshops, guest speakers, etc.
- **Weekly Team Meetings (team specific):** These meetings are an opportunity for each team to come together to work on projects.

- **Weekly Team Leader Meetings (team leaders only):** These meetings are intended for team leaders to check in with the Campus Sustainability and team advisors to ensure deadlines are being met and teams are functioning smoothly.
- **Weekly Communications Representative Meetings (comms reps only):** These meetings are intended for communications representatives to discuss team needs, schedule social media posts, and execute communications campaigns.
- **Partner Organization Meetings:** You will meet with your project partner on an as-needed basis; but setting up weekly or bi-weekly meeting times is recommended.

What Does a Typical Week Look Like?

It is difficult to articulate what a typical week will look like throughout the internship, because sustainability is a varying and complex field that involves all members of campus. Each team works differently to accomplish their goals. However, here is how you can expect to spend some of your time each week:

- 3 - 4 hours in weekly meetings (all-team, team specific, comms, team leaders)
- 1 - 2 hours communicating with project partners
- 2 - 3 hours completing individual project work
- 1 - 2 hours participating in sustainability-related events on campus

Procedures

Internal Communication

Internal communication refers to written, electronic, or face-to-face interactions between your team members, Office of Sustainability staff, and project partners. You are required to respond to internship-related emails within 24 hours. All internal communication should be professional and appropriate in content.

Task Management Tools

Teams will use three primary methods of task management. The first is an application called **Trello** (trello.com), which allows each team to build lists and keep track of tasks, dates, and deadlines. The second tool students will utilize is **Google Team Drive**. This is a place where all important files will be kept, including meeting notes, success metrics, documents, etc. The team drive is intended to be the go-to place to look, should any team members or other teams need to find a document quickly and efficiently. **Google Calendar** is the third tool, which will be used to record important dates; including weekly meetings, events, and other happenings around campus. These tools will not only help your team stay organized, they will also allow Office of Sustainability staff to stay connected to the work you are doing.

External Communication

External communication is comprised of any messaging that is going to be distributed to any university audience outside the internship program. This includes social media messaging, flyers, news stories, listserv emails, website content, and campus notices. The communications representatives on each team are responsible for all external communications, and it is important that each team clearly and concisely relays their needs to the communications representatives. This is to ensure our messaging to the broader university community is appropriate, interesting, and consistent across all channels.

VT Event Planning Office & Table Cards

Each team will likely need to book meeting or event space, advertising slots, or public space at some point throughout the internship. This requires partnering with the Event Planning office to ensure all bookings are done correctly and within the allotted time frame. The communications representative from each team will be solely responsible for communicating with the Event Planning office, and will be the only one with permission to create bookings and reservations. The communications representatives will also be responsible for booking table cards. Table cards can be booked via an online portal. Before booking table cards, the event or news story must be published in GobblerConnect, and you must have your table card proof ready for approval at the time of booking. Each communications representative will be equipped with guidelines, and the Campus Sustainability Planner is happy to assist in any bookings or reservations that require a staff signature.

Team Portfolios from Previous Cohort

Each year, the outgoing cohort of interns will give the incoming cohort team project portfolios, which contain past projects, guidelines, important contacts, success stories, and lessons learned. Should you need any further information about past projects, the previous cohort is willing to discuss or provide any helpful advice. Often times, members from past cohorts are still on campus and happy to sit down with new teams to brainstorm and share information.