

University of Arkansas
Undergraduate Sustainability Minor Capstone Experience

Summary

The Sustainability Capstone Experience is the final component of the UA Foundations of Sustainability Minor. It provides students with practical experience through community service, an internship, and/or research in sustainability. Engagement in this kind of hands-on program offers a student the opportunity to integrate and synthesize sustainability principles learned from prior coursework toward advancing sustainability across society.

Requirements

A student may achieve their capstone experience in either of three ways: service learning, internship learning, or research learning. All will require enrollment in one of two courses: SUST 390V (1 hour) or SUST 4103.

Service Learning

A service learning project brings together community service and focused academic learning development. The student will perform community service in the field while meeting with their advisor to discuss, assess, and reflect on their experience within a well-defined learning framework. Service learning offers the opportunity to critically address a wide range of theoretical frameworks presented in class.

Using Service Learning to satisfy the Capstone Experience can take at least two forms.

1. Students enrolled in an organized, University service learning course of at least three hours may petition the Coordinator of Academic Sustainability to use that experience to satisfy the Capstone requirement. Students approved will enroll for one-hour credit in SUST 390V and will complete a separate paper and poster.
2. Students may enroll in SUST 4103 to satisfy the Capstone Experience with service learning. In this class, students will work together as a team on projects either developed by the instructor or self-proposed. A team report and poster on the project are required.

Internship Learning

An internship experience is a work-integrated learning program. Through field-based experiences, students have the opportunity to strengthen their qualifications and gain a valuable learning experience in the sustainability field. A qualified on-site mentor or supervisor will supervise internships. The instructor will also provide structure and parameters to the field experience for specific learning outcomes.

Students satisfying the Capstone Experience with an internship would normally complete it within the framework of SUST 4103. Instructor consent is required.

Research & Curriculum Learning

With research & curriculum learning, the student develops a project with direction from a mentor or instructor. This enables a student to cultivate their own approach to learning about a particular issue of sustainability. Students may choose to conduct work that is wholly literature based or the

result of field experiments, surveys, observations, and a variety of acceptable standard research protocols, or work such as Engineering or Architecture senior design project. Students may need to obtain institutional approval of their project if it involves human or animal subjects.

Using Research & Curriculum Learning to satisfy the Capstone Experience can take several forms:

1. **Honors Thesis:** Students enrolled in an organized University honors thesis class may petition the Coordinator of Academic Sustainability to use that experience to satisfy the Capstone requirement. At a minimum, the thesis must be related to sustainability themes enough to lend itself to a separate report and analysis. Students approved will enroll for one-hour credit in SUST 390V and will complete a separate paper. A poster will be required unless already done for the thesis.
2. **Senior Capstone/Design:** Students enrolled in an organized University senior design project class may petition the Coordinator of Academic Sustainability to use that experience to satisfy the Capstone requirement. At a minimum, the design project must be related to sustainability themes enough to lend itself to a separate report and analysis. Students approved will enroll for one-hour credit in SUST 390V and will complete a separate paper. A poster will be required unless already done for the thesis
3. Alternately, students may enroll in SUST 4103 or a special topics class in their own department to satisfy the Capstone Experience with research learning. Students are expected to secure a separate faculty advisor to supervise the work and work with the Coordinator of Academic Sustainability to ensure the project meets Capstone requirements. A report and poster are required.

Prerequisites

Students must complete SUST 1103, SUST 2103 and at least 6 hours of elective coursework in sustainability to enroll in SUST 4103 or SUST 390V.

Preparation

The Capstone Experience in sustainability is intended to be an intensive project resulting in a final, written report documenting the project results as well as a poster describing the overall outcomes of the project with intent for public presentation as part of Earth Day observances on the University of Arkansas campus.

If students aim to use internship, thesis, or senior design projects to satisfy the Capstone Experience, they should begin brainstorming ideas for projects or searching for internships as early in their academic program as possible and should discuss ideas for these experiences with the Coordinator of Academic Sustainability or other suitable faculty mentors in order to guide project development. During the fall semester, students should decide what the project will be and outline the work necessary to complete it, with emphasis on methods to be used, specialized equipment or resources needed to complete the project, expected outcomes and relevance of the project to sustainability, and a timeline for project management. If you are conducting a research project that will involve human or animal parameters, you must obtain approval from appropriate university governing bodies to ensure compliance with federal protocols for research integrity and ethics prior to initiation of the project. If you are seeking an internship, adhere to the application timeline and begin developing a relationship with the host organization. Continue to discuss your progress regularly with your mentor(s). Doing this preliminary work will ensure that you have adequate time to complete your

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project in the spring semester by anticipating obstacles, planning your activities, and setting goals for yourself.

Expectations for SUST 4103 and SUST 390V

You will be expected to enroll in SUST 4103 Capstone Experience in Sustainability or equivalent in the spring semester of your junior or senior year in order to complete the written report and poster presentation.

SUST 4103

During SUST 4103, unless approved for a separate activity, you will normally work in teams on a service learning project and will complete the project consistent with expectations of the service learning partner. These will be set early in the course. The outcomes will include proposals for the partner. You and your team will also prepare a 20-page project report on the service learning project articulating your experience, establishing its connections to sustainability, and integrating proposals made as part of the project. This report should be of a publishable format and quality. The report must be original work consistent with University Guidelines on Academic Integrity.

You and your team will also produce a poster presentation based on your report to be displayed in the Arkansas Union for Earth Day. While enrolled in SUST 4103, you must attend weekly class meetings as directed by the instructor and are expected to work collegially and collaboratively with your team.

Based on the project domain, students may also seek mentorship from other faculty in addition to help from the course instructor. A mentor is someone with experience in your area of interest who can help you develop professionally, plan your Sustainability Capstone, and connect you with unique resources.

SUST 360V

SUST 360V is the one-hour course for students that are using other organized university classes (theses, design projects, etc.) to satisfy the Capstone Experience. Students in this class will work with the instructor to prepare a 10-page paper that connects the other activity to the overall learning objectives of the minor and will prepare a poster if one was not specifically required by the other activity.

Students must petition, in advance, the Coordinator of Academic Sustainability to use sustainability-oriented senior design projects, Honors College research theses, other service learning courses, or equivalent internship courses to satisfy the capstone requirement. This option still requires that you enroll in SUST 390V for course credit, as you will need to tailor your experience into the separate paper specifically exploring its applications to the field of sustainability. Additional research may also be required by the instructor.