

## **Climate Change and Sustainability in the Curriculum and Educational Experience at William and Mary: An Initial Plan of Implementation**

In response to President Gene Nichol's request for further information in regards to the curriculum aspects of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, this proposal outlines a simple and effective way to integrate sustainability into William & Mary's education system. The Presidents Climate Commitment asks signatory institutions to integrate sustainability into the educational experience of all students. Specifically, it states that

*"Within two years of signing this document, develop an institutional action plan for ...Actions to make climate neutrality and sustainability a part of the curriculum and other educational experience for all students."*

Several possibilities exist for bringing climate change and sustainability to students at William and Mary:

1. A freshman seminar on sustainability required for all incoming students
2. A one-credit climate change and sustainability seminar required of all students
3. A climate and sustainability GER 8
4. A segment of freshman orientation on sustainability
5. A sustainability proficiency requirement like computing and writing requirements

While there are advantages to each of these, our recommended option is #5 – a sustainability proficiency requirement.

### **Proposal: Sustainability Proficiency Requirement**

Currently, all majors require students to be proficient with computers under the *Major Computing Requirement*, in which each department, program or school describes how it is fulfilled. The *Sustainability Proficiency Requirement* would be implemented in the **same way** as the computing requirement. The requirement would include core information on climate change and sustainability while allowing departments to add their disciplinary perspective to this issue.

### **How the sustainability proficiency requirement will work:**

- This requirement would be **major specific** much the same way the computing requirement is for different majors. It would be based on **general principles** agreed upon by the College while specifics of the requirement could be worked out on a per-department basis.
- Certain **classes** could fulfill the Sustainability Proficiency Requirement based on the content of the material.
- Students would thus complete their Sustainability Proficiency Requirement the same way that they complete the Computing Proficiency Requirement as they fulfill courses for their selected major.
- If departments do not wish to develop a sustainability element in an existing course or to add a new course, their students could take a one-credit sustainability proficiency seminar administered by the Environmental Science and Policy program.

### **Why the sustainability proficiency requirement will work:**

- **Unobtrusive:** The structure of this requirement already exists based on the Computing Requirement. It would thus require only minor changes in departmental operations and specific faculty support.
- **Flexible:** In being major specific, the Sustainability Requirement allows flexibility in introducing sustainable teachings to the College. This will lead to **easy implementation** and **department-specific solutions**.
- **Inclusive:** Departments will learn more about sustainability over time by developing their own teaching methods and approval processes for sustainability proficiency.
- **Adaptable:** By using this approach, the College allows for adaptability to specific departmental and student needs when implementing this plan, which will ensure easy adoption and institutional sustainability over the long-term.