Purpose and Educational Goals

Human and ecosystem challenges require sustainable solutions that recognize the interconnection between environmental limits and human well-being. In order to achieve a healthy, equitable society while maintaining earth's basic systems, we must cross disciplinary divides and infuse sustainability principles into every discipline. Students must learn to approach problems holistically and integrate social, economic, and environmental concerns as they apply their knowledge.

Leadership in sustainability research, education, and service is a “hallmark” of The University of Georgia’s 2020 Strategic Plan. Strategic Direction I emphasizes “knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world” through “integrative and applied learning.” Strategic Direction II calls for graduate programs that “meet increasingly complex societal needs with cutting-edge, interdisciplinary offerings.” Strategic Direction III foresees enhanced interdisciplinary research to address “immediate issues as well as ‘grand challenge’ problems” such as “safe and sufficient supplies of food and water, poverty and social justice, education, global health, environmental degradation, world financial stability, national security, and sustainable energy.” Strategic Direction VII states that “sustainability should be infused into formal and informal educational opportunities throughout the university.”

The Certificate in Sustainability responds to Strategic Plan priorities explicitly by preparing students for effective leadership on campus and beyond. It supplements existing majors with knowledge of the complex interactions between human and environmental systems. Students will be introduced to a breadth of sustainability issues, systemic limits, and the triple bottom line (equity, environment, economy), to support their professional development. Students across campus will benefit from an understanding of the framework of sustainability and an opportunity to apply skills and learning to real world solutions.

Sustainability inherently embraces many disciplines, methodologies, and institutional practices. Students enrolled in the certificate program will gain knowledge that addresses both human and ecological systems by requiring courses from different spheres of sustainability (social, economic, environmental) and providing them with opportunities to develop inter- and trans-disciplinary projects and solutions. To achieve this, the program involves multiple schools and colleges at UGA and has the potential to include any discipline on campus. Both the anchor course and the seminar draw from faculty expertise in many colleges and schools. The certificate spheres allow students to explore sustainability
through multiple lenses, enabling them to view sustainability problems holistically.

Broad Objectives
As a result of this certificate, students of any discipline will be able to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of foundational sustainability concepts.
   • Met by: Anchor course, spheres, seminar, capstone course
2. Apply systems thinking and interdisciplinary education to sustainability challenges.
   • Met by: Anchor course, seminar, and capstone course
3. Apply academic knowledge to real world problems inside and outside of the classroom.
   • Met by: Capstone course
4. Earn a credential that supports their existing discipline.
   • Met by: Spheres
5. Facilitate service learning and community partnership.
   • Met by: Capstone course and seminar
6. Initiate interdisciplinary communication between fellow students, faculty, and staff.
   • Met by: Anchor course, seminar, spheres, capstone course

Specific Objectives
As a result of this certificate, students of any discipline will be able to:

1. Analyze the interdependence of social, economic, and ecological systems.
   • Met by: Anchor course, spheres, seminar, and capstone course
2. Through community engagement, develop an understanding of the relationships between various cultures and the ways they interact with surrounding environments.
   • Met by: Spheres, capstone course
3. Understand the interconnected nature of sustainability challenges by harnessing knowledge across disciplines.
   • Met by: Seminar, spheres, capstone course
4. Create and maintain real-world solutions to sustainability challenges using problem-solving skills gained in the program.
   • Met by: Capstone course

5. Gain a local and global perspective that promotes and nurtures empathy, awareness, and a scholarly sense of responsibility.
   • Met by: Anchor course, seminar, spheres, capstone course