

Virginia Food System Leadership Institute

June 3-29, 2018

Conducted by 4-VA: GMU, JMU, VT, UVA

Hosted by: George Mason University
Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute
Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation

CONS 497 & CONS 597: Virginia Food Systems Leadership Institute (VFSLI)

The Virginia Food Systems Leadership Institute (VFSLI) fosters rising leaders in the area of sustainable food systems by combining pertinent content knowledge in food systems, competency development in leadership, and a means for students to gain practical skills and hands-on experience related to job opportunities and infrastructure improvement in local and regional food systems. The course is aimed at graduate students, advanced undergraduate students, and food system practitioners looking for a professional development opportunity.

VFSLI is an interdisciplinary program delivered by a faculty team representing four public universities in Virginia: George Mason, James Madison, the University of Virginia, and Virginia Tech. The course is a project of the Virginia Sustainable Food Coalition (VSFC), whose mission is to harness the intellectual, human, and economic capital of colleges and universities to foster the emerging local food economy in the Commonwealth.

VFSLI's month-long experiential learning program integrates two sets of learning objectives. The first set of learning objectives is foundational. The second set focuses specifically on university dining systems.

Foundational Learning Objectives: VFSLI participants will. . .

- Learn the components of food systems and understand how these components interact
- Understand environmental, economic, and social characteristics of sustainable food systems
- Learn the history of the Virginia food system
- Understand how the Virginia food system currently functions and analyze current efforts to make it more sustainable
- Learn leadership best practices and how to apply these in food system settings

Dining Systems-Oriented Learning Objectives: VFSLI participants will also:

- Build familiarity with structure of university dining operations, including how dining services are provided at the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation and at each of the four universities' main campuses
- Understand issues related to university dining and sustainability, including procurement, third-party certification, food safety, and composting and waste-related issues
- Build familiarity with evaluation metrics such as AASHE STARS and Real Food Challenge, and with food tracking tools

Limited Enrollment:

Each university is limited to enrolling six students. Let Dr. Mike Ellerbrock know ASAP if you are interested in applying from VT: mebrock@vt.edu; 540-231-7722 VT, 540-239-9996 Cell.

Dates and Venues:

VFSLI has a three-part program structure that involves intensive course work, action research project work, and a participant reconvening and project sharing session over four weeks, **June 3-29, 2018**.

Part One: Intensive Course Work (June 3-15, 2018) at Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation (SMSC), Front Royal, Virginia

Students will stay in residence at the SMSC to complete intensive course work on food systems and leadership development. Core instructors and guest lecturers will include VSFC university personnel and professionals from various collaborator organizations. Classroom work will be combined with field trips to farms, food hubs, professional kitchens, and other relevant food system sites. During the last few days in residence, student teams will work with faculty and dining services mentors to design action research projects focused on expanding sourcing of Virginia-grown foods for dining halls at their home institutions.

Part Two: Action Research Project (June 18-28, 2018) at students' home institutions

Students will spend two weeks at their home institutions to carry out group action research projects. Guided by faculty and dining services mentors, student teams will use this time to do research, collaborate on solutions, put together a proposal/set of recommendations, and prepare a presentation to be given to VFSLI instructors and relevant stakeholders.

Part Three: Participant Reconvening & Project Sharing (June 29, 2018)

Part three of VFSLI is a one-day participant reconvening session and group project results sharing session, held among the four university campuses via videoconference. During this session, each group will share its project results in a "mini-symposium" format and work with the VFSLI faculty team to critically evaluate outcomes and strategize about implementation.

Application Procedure

Applications are not yet being accepted for the June 2018 offering of this course, but we expect to start accepting applications very soon. Please check back here—go to this webpage:

<https://smconservation.gmu.edu/programs/graduate-and-professional/graduate-courses/6778-2/>

Virginia Food Systems Leadership Institute is offered through the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation as:

- an undergraduate course (CONS 497) for 4 undergraduate credits from George Mason University,
- a graduate course (CONS 597) for 4 graduate credits from George Mason University,
- and as a professional training course for continuing education units (CEUs).

Once we have opened the course for applications, these will be submitted using our new online application system. If it is your first time using that system, you'll be asked to first register and create a "student profile". You'll need to upload an updated CV/Resume to create your profile. Undergraduate and graduate students (enrolled at George Mason or at any other university) with questions about credit transfer should refer to our [FAQs](#) for more information.

For first consideration, apply before March 26, 2018

Course Costs

Payment Deadline: April 9, 2018.

Note that your acceptance to the course does not guarantee you a seat in the course. Seats are allocated as registration payments are received, and early registration is strongly encouraged to ensure your space in the course.

The total costs for this course are:

Undergraduate: \$2675.50 for Virginia ("in-state") resident; \$6221.50 out-of-state

Graduate: \$3079.50 for Virginia ("in-state") resident; \$4097.50 out-of-state

This cost *includes* a two-week Housing and Dining Package at SMSC (\$825.50) and also covers:

- Tuition for 4 credits through George Mason University
- Instruction, course manual, and other course materials
- Transportation for course activities
- Daily full-service buffet at the [SMSC Dining Commons](#) starting with dinner on Sunday, June 3, ending with breakfast on Saturday, June 16
- Housing at the [SMSC Residential Facility](#), including a shared room with bathroom (single rooms available at extra cost). Lodging provided Sunday June 3-morning of Saturday, June 16