

Majoring in

Homeland Security

Description of Homeland Security

What is homeland security?

Homeland security and emergency preparedness (the official name of the major) is the study of international and domestic security and emergency preparedness for both security and non-security related incidents.

What do homeland security majors study?

Homeland security majors study the nature and effects of natural disasters; the nature of the terrorist threat to the U.S. from both foreign and domestic organizations; counterterrorism policies ranging from law enforcement to intelligence to the use of military force; vulnerability assessment of public and private infrastructure and institutions; critical infrastructure protection; and public safety legal issues that arise during governmental responses to natural disaster.

What skills are important for a homeland security major?

Homeland security majors should be able to:

- Conduct thorough research and analysis;
- Express themselves orally and in writing; and
- Think analytically using sound reasoning skills.

What else do homeland security majors study?

Homeland security provides an interdisciplinary background in criminal justice, political science, and urban studies and geography. Homeland security students also gain a liberal arts background to strengthen critical thinking; problem solving; written, oral, and interpersonal communication; quantitative, analytical, and reasoning skills. These skills are also considered very important for success in the workplace.

Course Requirements

General education: About 60 credit hours of general education courses are required. These courses give a broad range of knowledge in foreign languages, science, math, writing, arts, ethics, civilization, literature, human behavior, and urban environment.

Major courses: A minimum of 36 credit hours of homeland security and emergency preparedness core courses are required. Homeland security majors take courses such as:

- Crime scene evidence, law, and trial procedure
- Emergency planning and incident management
- Environmental management
- Forensic criminology
- Homeland security and emergency preparedness
- Institutions and the intelligence process
- Intergovernmental relations
- International organizations and institutions
- International relations
- Introduction to GIS
- Legal and constitutional issues in homeland security and emergency preparedness
- Political terrorism
- Principles of criminal investigation
- Public policy
- Risk and vulnerability assessment
- Strategic planning for homeland security
- Urban transportation systems
- U.S. foreign policy
- U.S. government

Electives: About 24 credit hours are required.

Some homeland security majors use their electives toward a minor (18-21 credits) for an additional specialization.

Careers in Homeland Security

Students with a B.A. in Homeland Security can pursue a number of employment opportunities, including:

- Governmental employment at the local, state, and federal level in homeland security and emergency planning/response (FEMA and its 50 counterparts at the state level)
- Intelligence positions at the CIA, Department of Homeland Security, or National Security Agency
- Law enforcement positions at the Justice Department, FBI, or the Department of Homeland Security
- Private sector employment with any business that require emergency planning to protect critical infrastructure
- Researcher at numerous for-profit consultancy firms on homeland security and emergency preparedness as well as non-profit research organizations

This major and its courses may also be of interest to first responders such as fire fighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and police officers. The demand for graduates with skills and knowledge this major provides is large and expected to increase significantly in the near future. The non-profit organization Partnership for Public Service estimates that 48% of FEMA officials and 36% of Customs officials will be eligible to retire by 2007.

Graduates in this major can also move on to law school or to graduate study in a number of areas, including business, criminal justice, geography, international affairs, political science, public administration, sociology, and urban planning.

Next Steps

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a homeland security major at VCU, consider doing each of the following things. Check them off as you complete each step.

- Check out the VCU School of Government & Public Affairs webpage.
- Take an introductory homeland security course.
- Read about the homeland security major in the

Undergraduate Bulletin.

- Review the homeland security major graduation worksheet with an academic advisor.
- Talk to one or more upper-level homeland security students about their major.
- Discuss the major with one or more homeland security professors.
- Go to the Career Center to read about careers in homeland security.
- Go to the VCU bookstore and browse in the homeland security textbook section.
- Explore internship possibilities through the Career Center and the School of Government & Public Affairs.
- Check out the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's website at www.dhs.gov/dhspublic for information on topics related to the study of homeland security.

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