

# Majoring in . . . .

## Urban Studies & Geography

### Description of Urban Studies & Geography

#### What is urban studies & geography?

It is the study of social science principles and interrelationships among people, natural resources, and plants and animals as they relate to urban life.

#### What do urban studies & geography majors study?

They study transportation, housing, land use, environmental planning, regional and international development, human-environment interaction, globalization, and socio-economic change. These topics are related to challenges faced in society today, including urban sprawl, traffic congestion, ethnic and racial conflict, pollution, and loss of biodiversity.

#### What skills are important for an urban studies & geography major?

Characteristics associated with success in this field include an interest in solving problems and studying the relationship of people with their surroundings and an interest in improving the quality of life of others.

#### What else do urban studies & geography majors study?

This is considered a liberal arts major. Students take a variety of courses in addition to those required in the major. These courses help develop knowledge and skills that are applied personally and professionally.

Liberal arts courses provide a background to strengthen critical thinking; problem solving; written, oral, and interpersonal communication; quantitative, analytical, and reasoning skills. These skills are considered very important for success in the workplace and provide the foundation of an educated person.

### **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, human behavior, and literature.

**Major courses:** A minimum of 36-37 credit hours of urban studies & geography courses are required. Urban studies & geography majors are required to take the following core courses:

- Computer applications in community analysis
- Design of the city
- Environmental management
- Human geography
- Introduction to the city
- Physical geography
- Urban economic geography
- Urban public policy-making processes
- Urban research and field methods

A 12-13 credit hour concentration is required in urban planning, urban affairs or geography. Sample courses in these concentration areas include:

- Environmental geology
- Housing and community revitalization
- Introduction to planning
- Introduction to public planning
- Policy implementation
- World cities outside of North America

**Electives:** About 24 credit hours are required.

Many urban studies & geography majors choose to use their electives toward a minor (18-21 credit hours) to give them an additional area of specialization.

### **Careers in Urban Studies & Geography**

The urban studies & geography major provides a good background for entry to any number of occupations. Some of these careers include:

- City manager
- Community agency worker
- Facilities planner
- Government relations
- Historic preservation worker
- Housing authority coordinator
- Lobbyist
- Map analyst
- Market research analyst
- Neighborhood revitalization coordinator
- Park ranger
- Real estate agent
- Research analyst
- Soil conservationist
- Survey researcher
- Transportation analyst

Further training, including graduate school, is required in order to work in these areas.

- Attorney
- Elementary teacher
- Librarian
- Urban studies or geography professor

An internship can increase the chances of finding a job in this field. Internships provide students exposure to aspects of public decision-making processes in local legislative bodies, administrative agencies, commissions and boards, and private organizations that have demonstrated interest in local government and politics.

### **Next Steps**

If you are interested in learning more about becoming an urban studies & geography 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 urban studies or geography course.
- Read about the urban studies & geography major in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.
- Review the urban studies & geography major graduation worksheet with an academic advisor.
- Talk to one or more upper-level urban studies & geography students about their major.
- Discuss the major with one or more urban studies & geography professors.
- Go to the Career Center to read about careers in urban studies & geography.
- Go to the VCU bookstore and browse in the urban studies & geography textbook section.
- Explore internship possibilities through the

Career Center and the School of Government  
& Public Affairs.

- ☐ Check out the Urban Studies and Planning website at [www.has.vcu.edu/gov/usp](http://www.has.vcu.edu/gov/usp) for detailed information on topics related to the study of urban studies & geography.

**Virginia Commonwealth University**

**College of  
Humanities & Sciences**

**L. Douglas Wilder  
School of Government  
& Public Affairs**

Scherer Hall  
P.O. Box 842028  
Richmond, VA 23284

Phone: (804) 828-2292

School of Government & Public Affairs website:

[www.has.vcu.edu/gov/index.html](http://www.has.vcu.edu/gov/index.html)



This brochure is published by University College  
in cooperation with the L. Douglas Wilder  
School of Government & Public Affairs

