

# Sustainable Communities



The mission of SUS is to provide interdisciplinary face to face graduate education on the complex issues of sustainability and social justice, encouraging students to pursue important social and environmental issues concurrently. The program seeks to educate students as critical thinkers for community leadership and to enable its graduates to contribute to the well being of communities. The program pushes students intellectually, looking to produce thoughtful and critical graduates who can think theoretically. Students test their ideas by participating in the Action Learning Teams where they engage in community collaborations and develop community organizing skills. The SUS curriculum is student and learner centered; students bring their intellectual, ethical, and practical concerns to bear on their particular academic inquiry.



Deadlines: Rolling admissions, priority given to students applying in the spring

For more information, check out <http://nau.edu/sbs/sus/>, additional questions can be sent to [Sustainable.Communities@nau.edu](mailto:Sustainable.Communities@nau.edu)

## Advantages of Sustainable Communities Degree at Northern Arizona University:

- Broad-based theoretical & critical engagement of complex environmental and social issues in creating thriving sustainable communities
- Practical application of skills in the community to utilize class-based knowledge and create connections towards the goal of creating sustainable communities. Many Sustainable Communities graduates have found employment in these organizations after completing the program.
- Interdisciplinary in nature, allowing students to take half of their course requirements in other graduate programs based on their personal interests.
- Flexible thesis requirements, allowing students to fully explore their interests & passions in creative and innovative ways
- Smaller class sizes allow for personal attention from faculty
- The Sustainable Communities program attracts a diversity of students with interests ranging in the environment, social justice, art, education, and bringing a range of experiences and backgrounds for lively and engaging class discussions
- No GRE requirements to apply to the Sustainable Communities program at this time.
- Voted “one of the best values in the nation”, the faculty and staff work hard to provide full funding to Sustainable Communities students

## *SUS is built around the following six concepts:*

1. **Sustainable Communities** : encompasses the interactions between human and natural systems and emphasizes the necessity for people to live in communities. Students explore what makes communities economically, environmentally, socially resilient and equitable, and how to ensure that communities have a direct say in building their future. They also examine the interactions and networks that form between different communities at the local, bioregional, national, and international levels.
2. **Civic Engagement** : students envision themselves as interconnected to the fabric and leadership of the university through both their work on the university campus as well as their meaningful participation in the larger Flagstaff community. This includes examination and use of various models of activism and organizing, historical analysis of movements for social change, and other scholarship on democratic practice and civic engagement.
3. **Inquiry based Research** : recognizes the interdependence between theory, modes of inquiry, and practice. Students explore models and understandings of action research and community based research.
4. **Scholar Activism** : scholarship and praxis acknowledges and speaks directly to the needs of communities and offers theoretically and empirically pragmatic solutions. Approaches are inherently interdisciplinary and take into account the social, cultural, economic, and ecological dimensions of issues.
5. **Social Justice** : considers issues of environmental and community sustainability as deeply interrelated. Students examine relationship between intersectionality of multiple identities (e.g. race, ethnicity, social class, gender identity, language) with issues of power, access to resources, place, climate change, and ecological impact.
6. **Social Transformation** : recognizing that individual transformation in terms of knowledge, understanding, and skills are deeply connected to collective transformation, students critically reflect and demonstrate elements of individual transformation as well as the implications of their work towards collective transformation.

## *Hands on Learning with the Action Learning Teams*

The ALTs create dynamic intergenerational hands on learning communities, bringing first year seminar students, returning undergraduates, masters students in the sustainable communities program and community partners into a collaborative relationship. There are over 10 Action Learning Teams, 250 undergraduate and 20 grad students participating both on and off campus in the areas of social, environmental, and economic justice.

## *Past Thesis (selections)*

*Luminous beings are we: Towards a new relationship with waste* Eden, 2015

*Front yards as transitional space: Edible landscapes in Flagstaff, Arizona* Carl, 2015

*Decolonizing street art: Diné artists and intellectual sovereignty, alterities and the politics of the aesthetic* Richter, 2015

*Rebuilding post-disaster community resilience: A complex adaptive systems approach* Day, 2015

*Stepping back to move forward: How the skills of empathic dialogue support interpersonal communication* McCain 2014

*Cultivating consciousness within community gardens: Out of the iron cage and into a living web* Corbinmeyer 2014

*Growing food with sustainable sources of water: Conversions to arid land agroecosystems by Arizonan farmers* Bechok 2014

## *Curriculum*

The MA in Sustainable Communities can be a two-year program that includes a summer session, offers day and night courses, and consists of 36 credit hours in the following areas:

### **15 hours of core courses:**

- SUS 601: Visions of Good and Sustainable Communities
- SUS 602: Elements and Contexts of Sustainable Communities
- SUS 603: Social Transformation
- SUS 604: The Craft of Inquiry
- SUS 695: Achieving Sustainable Communities

### **15 hours of elective courses:**

- these electives can be drawn from across the university and are chosen in consultation with the Program Director and/or your academic SUS Special Topics
- up to two 400-Level courses with approval:
- up to six hours of independent study work (SUS 697), graduate research (SUS 685), and/or fieldwork experience (SUS 608)

### **Minimum 6 hours of thesis credits**

[request more info /schedule a visit /apply](#)

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