

Proposal for Addressing the Scholarly Ethics and Integrity Requirement*
Virginia Tech Center for Leadership in Global Sustainability
College of Natural Resources and Environment

1.1 Importance of Scholarly Ethics and Integrity for the Study of Leadership in Global Sustainability

Each graduate program offered by the Center for Leadership in Global Sustainability (CLiGS) at Virginia Tech prepares students to become leaders in their professional field of practice and to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world toward a more sustainable future. Ethical conduct and practice is at the heart of sustainability leadership and is essential for success in the program. Because of the inherently complex nature of the political, social, and economic issues surrounding sustainability there is a fundamental need to address the ethical concerns that are embedded within the study of sustainability. Although the coursework required for each degree option—the Executive Master of Natural Resources, the Online Master of Natural Resources, and Global Master of Natural Resources—touches on ethical considerations that might arise when undertaking work at the intersection of human and natural systems, it is prudent also to address issues of integrity that are particular to scholarship. As such, CLiGS proposes to incorporate the following as an “Ethics and Integrity Requirement” to the curriculum pursuant to CGSP Resolution 2012-13B.

1.2 Required Topics

At present, all CLiGS students are required to secure an advising appointment with Kieran J. Lindsey, Associate Director of Online Programs before registering for classes and as the plan of study is put together. With this in mind, and beginning in the Spring 2015 semester, no student will be

* Note: Pending approval, this plan will be implemented in the Fall of 2014 for full compliance with the Commission of Graduate Studies and Politics Resolution 2012-13B Resolution to Include a Scholarly Ethics and Integrity Component in Graduate Education.

able to secure an advising appointment, nor register for classes without the successful completion of the CLiGS Scholarly Ethics and Integrity training module, which is currently being developed and will be implemented by October 21st, 2014. Because this particular administrative process covers each new student that is entering into the CLiGS graduate programs, this is a practical way to ensure that all new students are receiving proper instruction and information with regard to scholarly ethics and that this information is also delivered early on in the academic career, so that it is able to be accessed as needed. As such, the training module will incorporate the following topics:

1. Plagiarism and other violations of the Graduate Honor Code;
2. Proper use of professional conventional in citation of existing research and scholarship, accurate reporting and ownership of findings, and acknowledgement of contributions to the work;
3. Ethical standards in teaching, mentoring, and professional activities;
4. Guidelines for determination of authorship;
5. Available avenues for reporting alleged misconduct;
6. Appropriate research protocols involving human and animal subjects. *NOTE: Students will be required to complete the VT Human Subjects Protections Tutorial and successfully pass the certification quiz.

In addition to the integration of the Scholarly Ethics and Integrity Component being assimilated into a required course, an “Ethics” section will be added to the Online Student Manual currently in development, in which resources will be made available to all CLiGS students about scholarly ethics as well as ethical considerations for the discipline.

Furthermore, in order to be fully compliant with the Commission of Graduate Studies and Policies Resolution 2012-13B Resolution, all incoming students for the Fall 2014 semester will be individually contacted and given information and instruction on the above “required topics.”

1.3 Optional Topics

All CLiGS students will have the opportunity to undertake “International Field Experience” and will therefore have the opportunity to collaborate with professionals in different cultural contexts, where ethical standards may differ from professional standards in a United States. As such, it is essential that students be well prepared to address such occurrences. Therefore, the

following topics will be covered by faculty in a cultural competency module to be completed prior to departure:

1. Discipline or field specific professional ethics
2. Guidelines for maintaining confidentiality (and, where relevant, anonymity) when necessary

1.4 Implementation of CLiGS Scholarly Ethics and Integrity Component

The components outlined above will be fully implemented at the beginning of the Spring 2015 semester and will serve as the minimum requirements for the CLiGS graduate programs henceforth. Please note that students entering into CLiGS graduate programs in the Fall 2014 semester will receive individual instruction on the Scholarly Ethics and Integrity component. The requirement will be evaluated by the program director for effectiveness on a bi-annual basis, with the first review taking place by the end of the Spring 2016 semester, and adjustments will be made to the requirement as deemed necessary by the program director.

1.5 Enforcement and Oversight

In every CLiGS graduate program, each student builds a customized Plan of Study, with oversight from faculty mentors and program administrators to support individual interests and career goals. The plan of study approval process from within the program, in conjunction with the necessary approval from the Virginia Tech Graduate School, provides an opportunity for oversight ensuring that students have successfully completed the online training module. Additionally, students will be blocked from enrolling in courses and will not be granted advising appointments until proof of a successful completion of the online training module is delivered to Kieran J. Lindsey, Associate Director of Online Programs.