

Provost's Charge: Recommend a permanent departmental home for the Sustainability certificate and minor that can be implemented by Fall 2026.

Sustainability Advisory Board: [Gowri Betrabet Gulwadi](#), [Alicia Rosburg](#), [Brian Rumsey](#), Alex Oberle, Eric Lee, [Julianne Gassman](#), [David Grant](#), [Elizabeth Sutton](#), [Robert Earle](#), [Chad Heinzl](#)

Program Goals:

1. Maintain interdisciplinary nature of the Sustainability Certificate and Minor by including courses from ALL colleges
2. Maintain and promote access to all UNI students regardless of their major.
3. Enhance UNI's Sustainability Certificate and Minor curricular offerings.
4. Grow participation in the certificate and minor.
5. Minimize 'bottle-neck' issues for students needing to take courses and graduate in a timely manner.

Trajectory thus far: Current sustainability Curricula and graduate numbers may be [found here](#).

Tasks needed to administer the program:

Instructor facing:

- Maintain a list of sustainability course offerings each semester
- Collect documentation & lead evaluation of courses recommended for addition to certificate and/or minor
- Monitor course sustainability content, work with faculty to enhance content and opportunities
- Administer final student certificate and minor reflections and in-person exit interviews

Student facing:

- Promote programs: Maintain digital content, marketing materials, and support campus engagement
- Advise students and help students navigate course choices
- Work with Registrar for course substitutions
- Advise and support the Student Advisory Board PEST

Institution facing:

- Work with UCC on curriculum changes
- Work with Registrar on catalog changes, advising list corrections and course 'mapping'/degree audits
- Work with other college advisors to promote programs and courses
- Submit Student Outcome Assessment reports
- Collaborate with Centers and Institutes within and outside UNI for opportunities and conferences
- Represent programs at recruiting and other UNI events

Support:

- Office space for director
- Office administrative assistant support
- Print/copy support
- Gathering space for meetings and events

Future potential:

Coursework: Potential to increase coursework coming in from COE - see chart Report 2, COE has 4 courses in the Sustainability programs, there is room for growth here.

Students: Potential to increase student access across the university working to reach 80 to 100+ active students in an effort to show the potential need for a small sustainability major (or co-major) that could easily be doubled with existing majors.

Questions for Department heads:

Note: We assume there will not be any additional resources provided by the university for housing and administering the UNI Sustainability certificate and minor.

1. Why should the sustainability programs be housed in your department? Please list the advantages to the program.
2. How would your department work to maintain and enhance interdisciplinary access for coursework?
3. How would your department work to maintain and enhance interdisciplinary opportunities to all UNI students?
4. How and where will sustainability fit within your departmental structure and hierarchy?
5. Assuming no additional resources, what level of staffing can your department provide for sustainability program tasks?
6. What challenges do you anticipate if sustainability programs are housed within your department? How do you plan to address these challenges?

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY RESPONSES

- 1. Why should the sustainability programs be housed in your department? Please list the advantages to the program.**

The Department of History is the department at UNI best positioned to help Sustainability engage in the three spheres of sustainability: environmental, social, and economic. With its sustained program of social and economic inquiry, its methodological practices that seek to study the history of decision-making and its social and economic impact, and its faculty specialists in environment, social, and economic history and ethics, History is uniquely qualified to partner with Sustainability to offer UNI students exposure to and training within all three pillars of sustainability.

Should Sustainability programs be housed in the Department of History, they would join the 9th-largest major on campus, one that maintains high visibility because of its successful teaching major and its community outreach through public history, internships, and outward-facing engagement. In particular, Kevin Mason's leadership of our public history initiative represents a new focus on engagement and is well suited for projects that work at the intersection of public history and sustainability. The department, soon to include the faculty and programs of Philosophy and World Religions, will be home to a significant number of faculty whose research specialties anchor them in the environmental, social, and economic study: Barbara Cutter (US history and environment), Robert Earle (Wilson Fellow, environmental ethics), Kevin Mason (public history, history of Iowa and indigenous culture), and Brian Rumsey (US environment and climate, instructor of the Intro to Sustainability course). These specialties have prompted and will continue to prompt programming for students that engage sustainability topics in the three pillars. Robert Earle, for example, is bringing noted environmental sustainability expert Naomi Oreskes to campus, with support from the Aldo Leopold fund, the Wilson Endowment for Integrity and Excellence, and a grant from the CEEE. Wilson Fellow Nick Sars has also developed a course on Ethical Capitalism, which will enhance our contributions to the economic pillar of sustainability. Further, our new unit is engaged in the consideration of AI's impact on sustainability, with new coursework and emphases on the ethical and environmental impact of AI.

As HIST and PWR have worked together on our next chapter—first as an enlarged Department of History and next as a School of applied humanities—curricular integration has centered around the possibility of creating an environmental humanities program (shared with Chad Heinzel in email communication dated 6 November and 3 December). This initiative could be an outstanding opportunity for building synergies between the current Sustainability minor and a new Environmental Humanities minor, providing a broad range of complementary disciplinary perspectives for students interested in this area of academic study. We are enthusiastic about creating a partnership that allows the three pillars of sustainability to evolve across the UNI curriculum (see 2 and 3 below).

We have a culture of outreach and academic excellence in the department that includes winning and administering large grants (more than \$3.6M in grant monies secured in 2025 and another \$1M grant submitted in early 2026). History is also houses Fortepan IA ([About | Fortepan Iowa](#)), a networked platform that preserves family and historical photos from Iowa and offers a rich digital resource that could service Sustainability as well.

2. How would your department work to maintain and enhance interdisciplinary access for coursework?

Crucially, the new Department of History has strong curricular and personnel connections across all four academic colleges at UNI, thanks to the long history of Philosophy and World Religion within the College of Humanities, Art and Sciences, History's location in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and extensive partnership with the College of Education for History and Social Studies teaching, and the Wilson Endowment and the Wilson Fellows' connection to the Wilson College of Business. The Wilson Fellows' academic home will be History, but their duties extend outward to include teaching Business Ethics coursework to WCOB majors. History's academic partnerships allow for the identification of additional faculty to teach within the Sustainability program, and the department head has extensive experience in working with administrative partners across campus to ensure fair and equitable workload in support of History's many programs. History's strength in collaboration can serve Sustainability well as it grows into a signature program at UNI.

Moreover, the expanded Department of History will be one of the most interdisciplinary academic units on campus, with 2 majors (with 5 tracks), 8 minors, and 3 certificates (2 of which—Museum Studies and Youth Work in Religious Settings—are cross-listed with other departments and demonstrate a long history of interdepartmental cooperation). History has recently revised its entire curriculum, with 90% of its course offerings in fall 2024 being courses created or significantly revised since 2019, largely in support of the LAC-to-UNIFI transition and to make our Teaching program more competitive. Philosophy and Religious Studies are also redesigning their curriculum in tandem with the department merger. As a result, the new department will offer Sustainability considerable experience in curriculum design, in navigating UNI's curricular approvals process, and in working with the Registrar's Office on implementation, catalog revisions, and advisement reports.

3. How would your department work to maintain and enhance interdisciplinary opportunities to all UNI students?

The Department has a strong track record of recruiting students across campus for coursework. Further, History, Philosophy, and World Religions are the anchors of UNIFI, with courses (23 and counting – 3 courses are currently under deliberation for UNIFI designation) in each of the UNIFI categories save Oral

Communication. This foundational position in general education means that the department would grant Sustainability considerable visibility with all UNI students, as we offer coursework to a sizable portion of the university's undergraduate population. History has an extensive recruitment and retention strategy to achieve its enrollment success, and we look forward to incorporating Sustainability into department-wide efforts to encourage the kind of interdisciplinary inquiry that Sustainability represents. History is used to wearing two hats with students, as both a Humanities and a Social Science discipline, and we are intentional about encouraging students in gen ed and our own majors to explore a wide range of perspectives and analytic lenses. Many faculty members have experience in interdisciplinary co-teaching environments that could be applied to the benefit of this proposed partnership. Brian Rumsey's appointment is itself interdisciplinary: he teaches for both History and Construction Management (Intro to Sustainability).

According to the shared data, the sciences currently have the largest number of students engaged in Sustainability, and housing the program in one of those departments would likely anchor Sustainability firmly within the sciences. By contrast, housing Sustainability in History would significantly expand its audience, given the campus reach History achieves through its relationship with all four colleges, with its numerous UNIFI offerings, and with its own interdisciplinary emphasis and faculty.

4. How and where will sustainability fit within your departmental structure and hierarchy?

As noted above, the newly expanded Department of History will be home to a sizable range of minors and certificates. We are building department culture and governance structures now, which include a coordinator structure, to ensure that programs are well represented in department decision-making. We also have a history of advisory board governance connected to the public history program, and the advisory board of Sustainability faculty would function well within our new department structure. We would take our cues from the documented goals and needs of the Sustainability program, rather than present a single model for structure and hierarchy. Our department merger has emphasized the need for collaboration and consultation, and that model would work well for integrating Sustainability into the Department of History.

5. Assuming no additional resources, what level of staffing can your department provide for sustainability program tasks?

We have a Secretary III in History, and the head anticipates rewriting the tasks associated with that position to allow for a percentage of work time to Sustainability tasks. Given the recent online shift (fall 25) of our MA program in History, the job description for our secretary can be revised to accommodate this work. Both Brian Rumsey and Robert Earle are on the Sustainability Advisory Board and bring their knowledge to the department. Each could perform enhanced administrative tasks on behalf of Sustainability.

We have an endowed conference room (the Howard Room, Seerley 317) adjacent to a kitchenette for meetings and activities, a large lecture hall (Seerley 115, capacity 120), and faculty office and storage space in Seerley as well.

6. What challenges do you anticipate if sustainability programs are housed within your department? How do you plan to address these challenges?

Our current department merger has increased the workload of faculty significantly this academic year, as we carefully structure a new academic unit that houses many programs and faculty. That work will not be completed by the end of spring semester and will continue in the next academic year, and so Sustainability

would enter an environment of considerable change. That dynamism and fluidity, however, should actually benefit Sustainability. Rather than join a department with firmly established customs and culture, Sustainability would be a part of the building process for the new department and School beyond it (our timeline has us submitting a School proposal to the Board of Regents by the end of the 2026-2027 academic year). We invite Sustainability's faculty and programs to join us in this endeavor.

2026 Timeline:

- **Jan. 30** - Send questions to department heads with a return date of **Feb. 13, 2026**
- **Mid-to-late February** - The Faculty Sustainability Advisory Board reads, interprets and writes a paragraph of their thoughts and recommendations.
- **Late February or early March** - Faculty advisory board meets to discuss a singular department and provides potential interdepartmental collaborations/secondary options (e.g. Museum Studies Cert. - managed between departments and colleges).
- **March 13, 2026** - Send Provost: Department Head responses, Faculty Advisory Board paragraphs with recommendations. Secondary options and/or other requests (e.g., possibly relocating the Intro. to Sustainability course)
- **Spring/Summer 2026** - Provost Herrera interprets the data and advisory board recommendations and engages campus with a new home for UNI Sustainability Curricula.