

[pathways.prov.vt.edu](http://pathways.prov.vt.edu)

## Pathways to General Education: A Worthwhile Journey

**I get asked this question a lot: ‘Has the gen ed change been worth it?’ It’s often said with one eyebrow raised...** At the Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) annual conference, this question comes from colleagues at other universities in the idea phase of gen ed reform. They attend the event hoping to be inspired for what their new curriculum could be, to hear best practices and lessons learned about implementation, and to get ideas for communicating the value of their gen ed curriculum to students, faculty, and the greater campus community. They want to know that the general education reform journey on which they are about to embark is going to take them in the right direction.

**I usually respond with a joke like ‘Well, it depends on the day... and who you ask...’ Then I quickly point them to our conference sessions to see our results in action.** This year, James Jewitt and Carolyn Shivers joined me to share their experiences developing and leading the Visual Arts and Society and Disabilities Studies Pathways Minors (pg. 2). Rachel Corell shared her work with undergraduate program assistants (read all about them on pg. 2) to make videos, flyers, image galleries, and various other web content to tell the Pathways story. I want folks to decide for themselves whether they think it’s worth it or not.

On campus, the question might come from someone with the idea for a new Pathways course. They want to know if the time and effort needed to get their new course in place pays off for students. I point them to student exhibits like the one held in the library this semester for the new ALCE 2414: Identity and Inclusion in Agriculture and Life Sciences (pg. 3). I want folks to see for themselves that given the opportunity, students can step out of their comfort zones to explore complex issues and reflect on their place in the world, even if that takes a trip through governance.

**So has it been worth it? Absolutely. Are we finished? Nope! That’s why we have another call for Pathways grants (pg. 4).** This year we are especially focused on supporting the implementation, delivery, or scaling-up of existing Pathways Minors to ensure these awesome opportunities are available to more students for the long-term. We will hold another Summer Institute in late May to make sure we can keep sharing and learning from each other.

And we must thank members of the committees, college curriculum coordinators, and the registrar’s office staff (see the list of names on pg. 6) for their continued help in reviewing and improving each and every course approved for Pathways (see diagram on pg. 5).

Read on and see for yourself the great things happening along the Pathways journey.

**Stephen Biscotte**

Director of General Education

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> Conference

## Pathways General Education Showcased Once Again at National General Education Conference

This September, Virginia Tech was represented once again at the annual meeting of the Association of General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) in Orlando, Florida.

James Jewitt and Carolyn Shivers were joined by Stephen Biscotte to present “Gen Ed Minors: Overcoming the One-and-Done Mindset through Thematic Transdisciplinary Programs.” The presentation included an overview of the experience and role, as well as opportunities and challenges to designing, contributing to, and supporting the development of Pathways General Education Minors. Jewitt discussed the Visual Arts and Society minor while Shivers shared on the Disabilities Studies minor.

In addition, Rachel Corell presented on new uses of media in general education efforts on behalf of the Office of General Education. Corell discussed the use of student-created and directed media for engaging and communicating general education requirements.

Biscotte also joined the Director of AGLS, Joyce Lucke, to examine the role of general education in a digital age: “The Rise of the Machines: Broad Questions, Simmering Tensions, and Curricular Opportunities.” In a role-play format, Biscotte represented higher education and Lucke represented industry, exploring the ongoing push and pull of industry demands and societal values with the ideals and outcomes of a liberal education.



*Dr. James Jewitt presenting on the Visual Arts and Society Minor*



*Dr. Carolyn Shivers presenting on the Disabilities Studies Minor*

> Student Profiles

## Student Program Assistants Bring Unique Perspective to Undergraduate Education Communication Efforts

The Office of Undergraduate Education, which includes the Offices of General Education, First-Year Experiences, and Undergraduate Research, is pleased to continue working this fall with student program assistants to create student-friendly materials about general education options at Virginia Tech. With respect to Pathways, these students are helping expand the course showcase on the website through class visits, student interviews, and photography. They are also working to develop additional Pathways scenario videos featuring the different minors students can pursue.

**Abby Mercatoris-Morrison** is a senior majoring in Business Marketing with minors in both Art History and Visual Arts and Society. She is also an accelerated graduate student pursuing a Masters in Material Culture and Public Humanities. In addition to the history of art, she loves how artistic evolution has shaped the modern world in perpetual creative innovations. In particular, she is passionate about the visual aesthetic of brands and how the image of a product drives consumer behavior in purchases. Abigail is putting these passions to work as this year’s Chief Marketing Officer for Collegiate Women in Business, where she ensures quality visuals to represent the club and its interests on social media and beyond. She is looking forward to projecting and promoting graphics and events as an Undergraduate Student Program Assistant this year at Virginia Tech.

**Alyssa Duong** is a junior majoring in Marketing Management with a minor in Political Science. She is also a global mentor for international students within Pamplin International Programs where she works to exchange new perspectives of the world around us. She enjoys using her creativity to solve everyday problems while facilitating spaces for creative stimulation in others as well. Through various mediums such as photography, videography, dance, and music, Alyssa is passionate about connecting the world using visual storytelling. She plans to pursue a career in the creative ad agency business where she will be executing various strategy based marketing campaigns. Alyssa values her experience as an Undergraduate Student Program Assistant and Videographer for the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs where she can share her passion for storytelling with countless students to come.



**Abby Mercatoris-Morrison**



**Alyssa Duong**

> In the Spotlight

## ALCE 2414: Identity and Inclusion in Agriculture and Life Sciences

If you ask some of the students who took the pilot section of ALCE 2414: Identity and Inclusion in Agriculture and Life Sciences last fall, there are those who will admit that at first they were just looking to fulfill requirements for “Discourse” and “Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the United States” under the Pathways curriculum.

However, if you ask sophomore civil engineering major Henry Brown about the class, you get a different answer. Brown, who took the course last spring during his freshman year, is quick to tell you it offers quite a bit more than you might expect for “just a gen ed” class:

**“ALCE 2414 was the most rewarding Pathways general education class that I have taken at Virginia Tech. I’m so glad I enrolled in it for the first semester of it being available.”**

Open to students from all majors, students who take this class examine histories of persons representing different social identities, statuses, space, place, and traditions in agricultural and life sciences. They also explore how differences influence experiences that individuals may have in agricultural and life sciences.

The course culminates with an exhibit showcasing student projects for the assignment: It’s Your Thing/Express Yourself. After examining

some of the barriers to inclusion and diversity in the United States food system, students express their perspectives on those issues through the visual arts, poetry, or another creative outlet. The projects from the spring semester pilot course were then featured as part of an exhibit in Newman Library during the fall 2019 semester.

“Students researched an aspect of the experiences of an underrepresented population in American agriculture to create their response and personal perspective of the issues and challenges with respect to inclusion efforts within the agricultural and life sciences industries,” said Donna Westfall-Rudd, course instructor, about the class.

Brown emphasized the importance of this project and its impact on him, noting that he learned far more than he expected relating to minority involvement in agriculture.

**“One of the most striking is how farmers’ markets have predominantly white sellers at each booth, while the farms are worked by mostly non-white workers. I think about this now every time I pass a farmers market,”** added Brown.



Students and visitors evaluate student projects during the library exhibit for ALCE 2414.

## Save the Date for Summer Institute 2020

The **Summer Institute** will be held **May 19 - 20, 2020**. It will again bring together folks involved with Pathways, FYE, and HHMI Inclusive Excellence for two days of high-quality programming, networking, sharing, and of course great food and plenty of coffee.

Be on the lookout for more information in the upcoming months!

## Save the Date for the 2020 Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy

The **2020 Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy** will be held **February 6 - 7** at The Inn at Virginia Tech & Skelton Conference Center. Pre-conference workshops will be held on February 5.

The conference showcases the best current pedagogical practice and research in higher education. Sessions will address both disciplinary and interdisciplinary instructional strategies, in addition to outcomes and research.

The early registration deadline is January 6.

View more information at: <https://chep.teaching.vt.edu/>

> Grant Announcement

## 2020 Pathways Annual Grant Program is NOW OPEN!

Read all about the program scope, goals, and funding details down below. Visit [www.pathways.prov.vt.edu](http://www.pathways.prov.vt.edu) for forms.

**Deadline for submission:** March 1

### Overview:

The Provost's Office is committed to the continued transition to Pathways, which includes base funding for grants to be used in the development of Pathways courses.

This Request for Proposals describes the grant process that will be used to invest these new resources strategically to ensure that students have access to innovative and experiential learning across the Pathways curriculum.

### 2020 Grant Goals:

1. To support the **development and delivery of Pathways Minors**, particularly those that span multiple colleges.
2. To support the development and delivery of courses in areas of need: advanced/applied quantitative and computational reasoning, arts, design thinking, advanced/applied discourse, and identity/equity in the United States.
3. To scale up best practices in general education to reach a greater number of students.
4. To support the incorporation of engaging pedagogies and informative assessment strategies across the Pathways curriculum.
5. To increase the incorporation of high-impact practices such as undergraduate research, project-based learning, education abroad, and service learning (Kuh, 2008) in Pathways courses and minors.

### Funding Details:

Pathways Grants will support the work of an individual or a team of faculty members in designing or redesigning courses, minors, or alternative pathways.

- **Pathways Grants for an individual** will be awarded at a maximum of \$10,000.
- **Pathways Grants for minors** will be awarded a maximum of \$30,000 and up to 3 years. However, multiple courses must be included in this level of work and must be offered across AT LEAST two different colleges.

### Priority Funding:

Priority will be given to work that aligns with outcomes of greatest need to this point. Just need a bit of money to incorporate an innovative pedagogy or project into an existing Pathways course? You can use this same proposal process to make that request.

### Grantee Commitments:

For funding, **awardees must commit to ALL of the following:**

- Participation in Pathways Summer Institute OR alternative\*
- Participation in Pathways Grantees Cohort (ten 1-hr meetings per year)
- Submission of a brief report by May 1 following each year of funding

*\*If the applicant is completely unavailable for the Pathways Summer Institute, they will work with Stephen Biscotte to develop an alternative professional development plan to be completed over the course of the year.*

## Pathways Grants

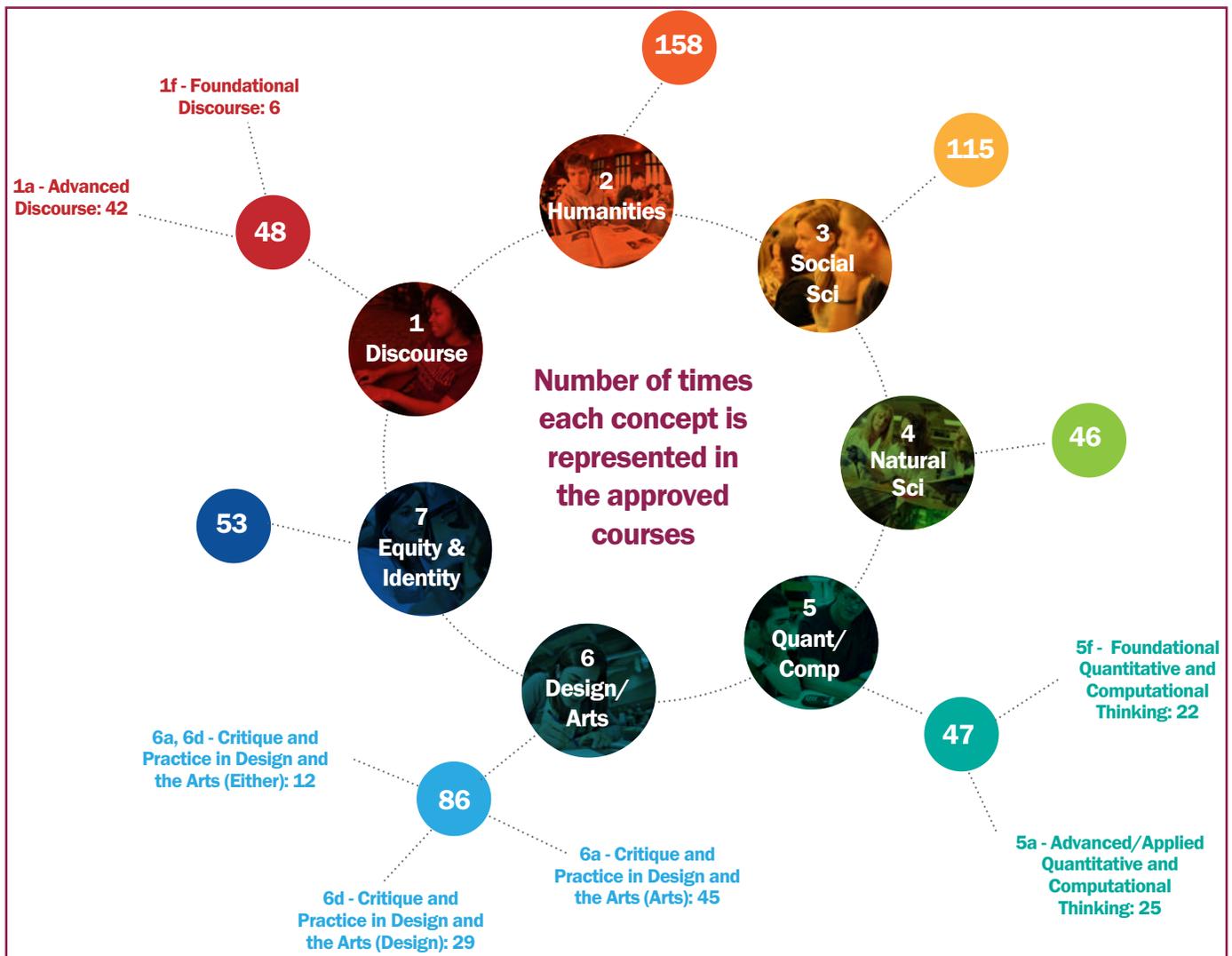


ANNUAL PATHWAYS  
GRANT PROGRAM

OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS

[www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/grants](http://www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/grants)

## To Date, the Pathways Ad Hoc Committee Has Approved Over 400 Courses and 21 Pathways Minors



**Currently approved\* minors include:**

- Biodiversity Conservation
- Blue Planet
- Civic Agriculture and Food Systems
- Community Systems and Engagement
- Data and Decisions
- Disabilities Studies
- Ecological Cities
- Event and Experience Management
- Global Business Practices to Improve the Human Condition
- Global Food Security and Health
- Innovation
- **Integrated Security**
- Language Sciences

- **Materials in Society**
- Organizational Leadership
- Pathways to Sustainability
- **Peace Studies and Social Justice**
- Philosophy, Politics, and Economics
- Science, Technology, and Law
- Strategic Communication
- Visual Arts and Society

*\*Recently approved minors indicated in bold*

For more detailed information about approved Pathways minors, please visit the website:

[www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/minors](http://www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/minors)

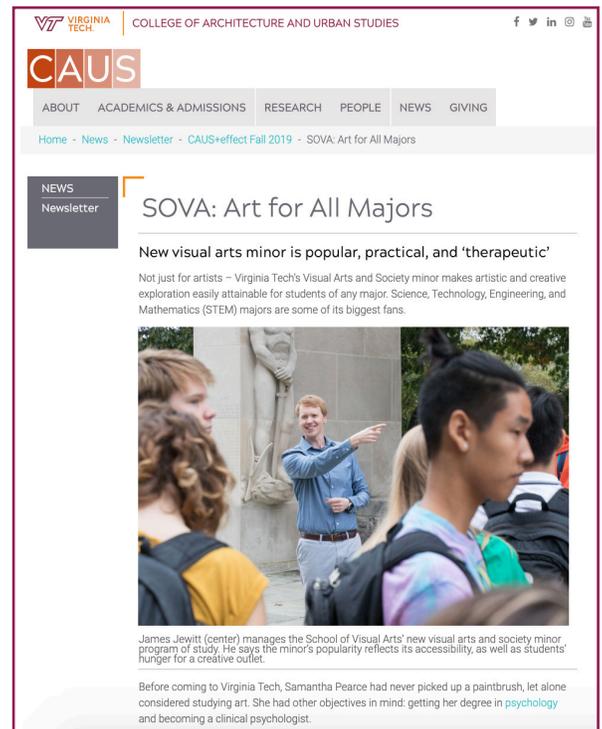
In the News

## Pathways Minor in Visual Arts & Society Featured by CAUS, VT News

Pathways Minors are getting some great PR this year! In addition to a feature article on the Disabilities Studies Minor in VT News this July, *CAUS+effect*, the online magazine for the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, published a profile of the Visual Arts & Society Minor. The piece was also published by VT News.

**“Taking art was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. It introduced me to a creative outlet I really needed as a STEM major,”** said Samantha Pearce, a senior psychology major undertaking the Visual Arts & Society minor.

Read the full story: <https://www.caus.vt.edu/news-events/newsletter/causeffect-fall-2019/sova-art-for-everyone/>



**Share your story!**  
Reach out if you want us to  
**showcase your course or minor.**

Contact Rachel Corell at [rcorell@vt.edu](mailto:rcorell@vt.edu).

### >Acknowledgments

## Pathways Support Continues with Ad Hoc Committee Leading the Way

The Office of General Education would like to acknowledge the Pathways Ad Hoc Committee members for their continued efforts in reviewing proposed courses and minors, as well as the registrar’s office and college curriculum coordinators.

### Thanks to the the Pathways Ad Hoc Committee:

- **Sara Arena**, College of Engineering
- **Chad Bolding**, College of Natural Resources and Environment
- **Kim Carlson**, Pamplin College of Business
- **Carolyn Copenheaver**, University Curriculum Committee
- **Michelle Czamanske**, University Curriculum Committee
- **Julia Feerrar**, University Libraries
- **Mary Kasarda**, University Curriculum Committee for General Education
- **Ann-Marie Knoblauch**, College of Architecture and Urban Studies
- **Bob Rogers**, College of Science
- **Nick Sano-Franchini**, University Studies
- **Hannah Shinault**, College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
- **Ben Tracy**, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- **James Wilson**, University Curriculum Committee for General Education

### Thanks to those supporting the committe’s efforts:

- **Gary Costello and staff** from the Registrar’s Office
- Curriculum Coordinators from each College
  - College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
    - **Anna Taylor**
  - College of Architecture and Urban Studies
    - **Robert Jordan Jacks**
  - College of Engineering
    - **Tracy Sebring**
  - College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
    - **Lisa Kathleen Burns**
  - College of Natural Resources and Environment
    - **Cathy Barker**
  - College of Science
    - **Robin Kay Panneton**
  - Pamplin College of Business
    - **Julia Action**
  - University Honors
    - **Sara Vandyke**