The Jefferson Public Citizens (JPC) program inspires University of Virginia students to put their learning into action. It offers opportunities for U.Va. undergraduates, in collaboration with faculty and graduate students, to design hands-on research projects that serve the public while advancing students’ understanding of today’s complex world.

The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, through its Office of University Community Partnerships, administers the JPC program along with two academic grant programs that help students and faculty incorporate public service into the University’s curriculum—the Community-Based Undergraduate Research Grant (CBURG) and the Academic Community Engagement (ACE) Faculty Fellow Grant.
JPC EXPERIENCE

Participants in the JPC program—students, faculty, and community partners—collaborate to tackle societal problems and seek simple and effective solutions. The JPC experience complements classroom learning, teaching students lessons that last long after the projects end. These academic service projects span the disciplines, from helping a Nicaraguan town convert garbage to burnable gas to conducting a study to help a health center make better use of its limited medical personnel. JPC is a rich, hands-on, learning experience that adds depth to any major and fosters creativity, commitment, and confidence. Above all, JPC creates a powerful undergraduate student experience that unites community engagement and academic achievement while inspiring public service and lifelong learning.

Each spring dozens of students receive funding to conduct group research-service projects around the world. More than fifty JPC projects have been launched to address various areas of concern, including health care, sanitation, housing, and education.

Recent JPC projects include the following:
Grande-Aides Rural Health Care, Hohhot, Mongolia
Composting Community Waste, Bluefields, Nicaragua
Ceramic Water Filter Factory, Venda, South Africa
Building Sustainable Stoves, Mashamba, South Africa
Women’s Health Education, Xining, Tibet
Women in Livestock Development, Gulu, Uganda
Conducting a Customer Survey, Charlottesville, Virginia
Designing Disaster Housing, Charlottesville, Virginia
Stormwater Management, Charlottesville, Virginia
Young Women Leaders, Charlottesville, Virginia
FEATURED PROJECT: VIRGINIA
SURVEYING CITY MARKET SHOPPERS IN CHARLOTTESVILLE

Interested in the local food movement and the future of the Charlottesville City Market, a JPC team collaborated with Market Center, a nonprofit group of vendors and patrons encouraging community involvement, to decide the future of the city’s farmers’ market. This team conducted a survey of customers to learn not only who shops at the market but also what its strengths are and how it can be improved.

The JPC team discovered that the most popular products at the City Market are vegetables, which 96 percent of the shoppers often or sometimes buy, while the least popular are handicrafts, which 74 percent of market patrons reported rarely or never purchasing. The survey also found that 96 percent of shoppers said it was moderately or very important that their food be locally grown or produced, with 35 percent considering food grown within 100 miles to be “local” food, while about 30 percent thought 50 miles was the boundary for “local” food. On average, shoppers spent $21 to $30 per visit.

Erica Stratton, a second-year student considering a major in urban and environmental planning in the School of Architecture, appreciates the opportunity provided by the JPC project to focus on an issue long enough to see results. “We’ve been working on this project for more than a year,” Stratton said, “meeting with professors; developing the JPC proposal; designing, conducting, and analyzing the surveys; and giving community presentations of our results.”

The Charlottesville City Council will use the information gathered by the JPC team in its deliberations on the future of the Charlottesville City Market.
“I’ll be able to use my background in engineering to look for practical solutions to problems in sustainable agriculture in underserved communities and composting will be a big part of that.”

— Rowan Sprague (Engineering ’13), a civil and environmental engineering major, School of Engineering and Applied Science
ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY COMPOSTING IN NICARAGUA

In the inaugural year of the Jefferson Public Citizens program a JPC team headed to Nicaragua to identify sustainable economic enterprise projects. Team members noticed huge trash heaps smoldering night and day on the outskirts of Bluefields, Nicaragua, polluting air and water.

Through research and discussions with Bluefields officials and students at the Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University, the initial JPC team identified two approaches to the problem—biogas production and small-scale “backyard” composting.

Following up on the composting plan, a subsequent JPC team learned that 75 percent of the community’s waste is organic, which means that composting could offer triple benefits: reducing the city’s waste-management expenses, improving the environment, and benefiting community gardens. Although the Bluefields municipal government and local university already do some composting, this JPC team worked with community partners to build greater awareness of the value of composting through a public education program targeted at schools and individual households.

For Rowan Sprague (Engineering ’13), a civil and environmental engineering major, the lessons learned from participating in the composting project solidified her career choice of urban farming. “I’ll be able to use my background in engineering to look for practical solutions to problems in sustainable agriculture in underserved communities,” she said. “And composting will be a big part of that.”
“Students had to learn how to learn, how to listen, how to establish trust.”

—Carol Anne Spreen, assistant professor, Curry School of Education
BUILDING SUSTAINABLE STOVES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Every day during the school year, volunteer cooks of the Mashamba Presidential Primary School in South Africa prepare lunch for the school’s 900 pupils. Their traditional cooking method—heating water and grain in aluminum cauldrons over open fires—wasted wood, emitted unhealthy levels of smoke pollution in the partially enclosed kitchen, and contributed to deforestation.

A JPC team designed an insulated stove that reduced the amount of wood needed for cooking while funneling smoke outside the kitchen. After a community critique of the design, a local mason, assisted by schoolchildren, built the new wood-burning stoves with locally available materials.

In addition to acquiring organizational skills, such as project planning, budgeting, scheduling, and presenting results, JPC students also learned about social responsibility. “Students had to learn how to learn, how to listen, how to establish trust,” said Carol Anne Spreen, project advisor and assistant professor in the Curry School of Education’s Department of Leadership, Foundations, and Policy, who has been traveling to Mashamba since 1997.

The U.Va. students developed and taught a course, in collaboration with local schoolteachers, introducing the children and their parents to the concepts of environmentalism, resource usage, and problem solving, using the energy-efficient wood stove as a case study. They also worked with college students from the nearby University of Venda to draft a manual to encourage further stove construction. A follow-up team recently reported that the Mashamba school now has three functioning stoves and ten other area schools are interested in building similar stoves.
JPC PARTICIPATION

This team-based, interdisciplinary program attracts students and faculty from across the Grounds. Working in teams with people from different backgrounds and perspectives helps students prepare for today’s collaborative, cross-cultural workplace.

Top ten majors of participating undergraduates

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<th>Rank</th>
<th>Major</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Global Development Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Civil &amp; Environmental Engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Economics</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Mechanical Engineering</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Civil Engineering</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>History</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Systems Engineering</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Biomedical Engineering</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Environmental Science</td>
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Top ten participation by schools and units

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<th>Rank</th>
<th>School/Unit</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Curry</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>McIntire</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Women’s Center</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Darden</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Carter Woodson Institute/Weldon Cooper Center (tie)</td>
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Philosophy teaches students how to read critically, analyze arguments, and think logically. In Europe, the subject is taught widely in high school, but in the United States, it is usually not broached until college.

The result? “In the United States, you have well-educated and smart people who can’t tell the difference between a good argument and a bad argument,” said Mitchell Green, professor of philosophy at the University of Virginia.

Green believes American high school students would not only benefit from the study of philosophy but also enjoy it. “Sixteen-year-olds are perfectly capable of grappling with questions of philosophy, questions such as free will, personal identity, the mind-body relationship, right and wrong.”

With this in mind, Green launched a multifaceted project, High-Phi (www.high-phi.org), to extend the study of philosophy beyond college to high schools. Among the initiatives is an internship for third- and fourth-year philosophy students at U.Va. to teach philosophy in area high schools. The internship was made possible by funding from an ACE Faculty Fellow Grant, administered by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost through its Office of University Community Partnerships.

A dozen U.Va. students enrolled in the first year of the program, and after good reviews from the participants, seventeen students signed up for the internship’s second year.

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—Mitchell Green, professor of philosophy, College of Arts & Sciences
MEASURING SUCCESS
JPC ACHIEVEMENTS

The JPC program measures its success through participation, enhancement of the undergraduate student experience, faculty engagement, and community partner assessments. In addition, program participants have found that others—including peer-reviewed journals, graduate programs, and award committees—value the JPC learning experience as well. Program accomplishments include the following:

- National Publications and presentations by JPC teams include three peer-reviewed articles in *International Journal of Service Learning in Engineering* and *Partnerships: A Journal of Service Learning and Civic Engagement*; and a second-place award for a student scientific paper given at the Clinical Augmentative and Alternative Communication Research Conference.

- Prestigious, national awards won by participating students include the Udall Scholarship; the Laura Bush Traveling Fellowship; the 2010 ARCHIVE International Housing Competition, first prize; the Architecture for Humanity and Open Architecture Network, classroom challenge; and a Davis Projects for Peace Award.

- Faculty-Student Engagement has increased. Since 2000, the National Survey of Student Engagement shows a statistically significant increase in student engagement at the University, due in part to JPC opportunities provided since.

- National Visibility for the University has been enhanced by the JPC program through a feature article in *Planning for Higher Education*; inclusion in the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll; and recognition from the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities’ Council on Engagement and Outreach.

- Lasting Community Impact achieved through JPC projects includes the Gulu Women Dairy Farmers Association in Uganda, which has become the number one supplier of milk to all nongovernmental and aid organizations in the area.
Pamela Brown Kelly (College ‘81) and her husband, Peter C. Kelly, of Los Angeles, California, recently made a pair of gifts to support an interdisciplinary public service project in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The project is working to find simple and inexpensive ways to provide a consistent supply of clean water to local villagers.

The Kellys’ unrestricted gift supports the operations of the Water and Health in Limpopo project, while their parallel endowed gift created an award that funds related research by students at U.Va. and the University of Venda. The Kellys’ gifts are among many that benefit more than one University program as interdisciplinary collaboration grows among faculty and students working together to address society’s complex problems.

The Kelly Award already has enabled several U.Va. students to pursue related research in South Africa, said Dr. Dillingham. The most recent U.Va. beneficiaries are Carly Farrell Krause, a doctoral candidate in civil and environmental engineering (Engineering ’13), whose summer project in Limpopo involves an assessment of chemical disinfectants for ceramic water filters, and Mariam Nageh Awad, a biological chemistry major (College ’13), whose Limpopo project involves health and hygiene education.

In addition to the work funded specifically by the Kelly Award, Ms. Krause (shown in photo at left) is also working on a project, supported by the Jefferson Public Citizens program, which is seeking to advance the adoption of low-cost, locally made ceramic water filters in Limpopo. And Ms. Awad is working on a project that is developing a health education curriculum for high schools in Limpopo. Both are interdisciplinary projects involving faculty and students from other schools at U.Va., as well as students from the University of Venda.

JPC DONORS
The University of Virginia launched the Jefferson Public Citizens program in 2008 and provided it with $3 million in pilot funding. With that funding coming to an end, the program is seeking private support, both one-time and endowed gifts, similar to those made by the Kellys to the Limpopo project. With the University covering overhead costs, all gifts to the JPC program will go directly to fund student projects.

**JPC FUTURE**

The Jefferson Public Citizens program is a leading-edge initiative that distinguishes the University of Virginia and offers a national model worthy of emulation. In 2008, the Board of Visitors provided three years of funding. Generous donors also have provided essential support. With the pilot funding coming to an end, the University is seeking funds to establish the JPC program on a permanent footing.

**JPC GIFT OPPORTUNITIES**

- **$5,000**  
  Sponsor a Community-based Undergraduate Research Grant
- **$42,000**  
  Sponsor a JPC Graduate Student Fellowship
- **$50,000**  
  Sponsor a JPC Faculty Fellowship
- **$55,000**  
  Sponsor a JPC Student Team Project
- **$50 million**  
  Endow and Name the JPC Program
For more information, contact Megan Raymond, director of Academic Community Engagement, by e-mail at meganr@virginia.edu, by phone at 434-924-0875, or call the Office of Development and Public Affairs at 434-924-7306 or 800-688-9882.

www.virginia.edu/jpc