

## CORNELL LAUNCHES SUSTAINABILITY MAJOR

Beginning fall semester 2013, Cornell will offer an environmental science and sustainability (ESS) major in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs). The curriculum will integrate physical, chemical, biological and social sciences with humanities, offering concentration areas that include environmental biology and applied ecology, environmental policy and governance, biochemical sciences, and environmental economics. “The curriculum will seek to advance students’ ability to solve real-world environmental problems, manage social-ecological systems in a sustainable manner and affect decisions involving environmental policy, resource management and biodiversity conservation,” says Max Pfeffer, senior associate dean of CALs and professor of environmental sociology.

Architects of the new ESS major said it has the potential to significantly raise Cornell’s stature as a “green campus” and help CALs reach its benchmark goal of including “sustainability” as a formal learning outcome. The program is designed with the flexibility to incorporate new concentrations as environmental problems, faculty interest and students’ needs evolve.

## VERMONT FOOD BANK RECYCLES SUSTENANCE

With central offices near the state capital of Montpelier, the Vermont Food Bank partners with 280 organizations distributing food to those in need across the state, including food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, afterschool programs and senior centers. “Our Community Kitchen Program diverts a tremendous amount of food that would otherwise go to the landfill,” says Vermont Food Bank CEO John Sayles. “We call it ‘rescue food,’ not just food that we collect from grocery stores, which we do as well, but we also work with restaurants and catering services.” Food that does not get repurposed right away into soups, stews and the like gets processed, bagged and flash frozen for later use. Any residual recovered food that does not make it to someone’s plate goes first to a rotating list of pig farmers or else to a commercial or-



ganics recycling facility such as Vermont Compost Company.

About 70 percent of what the Vermont Food Bank collects via its gleaning programs — about a half-million pounds of produce annually — is harvested and donated directly by local farmers; the remaining 30 percent is field gleaned by a cadre of food bank volunteers who visit the farms and deliver the harvest to the partnering organizations. What doesn’t ultimately get served to man or beast gets composted. “In fiscal year 2011, we diverted [a total of] 1,000 tons of perishable foods that would otherwise go into the waste stream,” says Sayles.

## SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A recently published report entitled “Sustainable Materials Management: A New Materials Hierarchy, Solutions to Barriers, and Recommendations for a Path Forward,” suggests creating a new priority scale for materials management, prescribes ways to do so sustainably and establishes life-cycle based performance metrics. The report culminates a year-long collaboration between stakeholders that included the business, industry, academic, environmental and civic communities, as well as state and local governments.

“I believe that this report and its recommendations will result in a greater focus and higher priority being given to sustainable materials management in the United States,” said Timothy Fields, chair of the coalition and a former EPA Assistant Administrator. “A diverse group of stakeholders are in agreement that sustainable materials management is the future for current waste management programs. Developing performance factors for evaluating or comparing the environmental and public health performance of individual

processes is particularly important for the future.” View the full report: [www.michaeldbaker.com/news\\_sustainable.html](http://www.michaeldbaker.com/news_sustainable.html).

Also with the goal of developing sustainability performance metrics, The Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI) is recruiting verifiers for Envision, a new, independent, third-party project evaluating system. The program is designed to rate all manner and scale of sustainable infrastructure projects. Verifiers will provide rigorous, transparent validations and will be completely independent of the projects they verify. Qualified verifiers will receive training and then be contracted by ISI through their employers. Find out more at [www.sustainableinfrastructure.org](http://www.sustainableinfrastructure.org).

## SIMPLE INVENTION PREVENTS FOOD WASTE

Kavita Shukla, a Harvard alumna and social entrepreneur, has invented a simple and natural way to keep food fresher longer based on a discovery she made while visiting her grandmother’s village in India when she was in middle school. Shukla was brushing her teeth when she accidentally swallowed tap water, an inadvisable move for a visitor whose stomach was unaccustomed to the many water-borne bacteria commonly found in the land of her ancestors. Her grandmother made her a special tea of fenugreek and other herbs and spices, and she avoided getting sick. The memory stuck with her, and a few years later the young inventor decided to test the recipe on strawberries that were going bad. The outcome of that experience led to a patent at age 17 and, 10 years later, the launch of a product called Fenugreen FreshPaper, a 5-inch square piece of infused paper that costs 50 cents, can be used repeatedly and greatly increases the shelf life of produce, inside or outside of the refrigerator.

“In 2010 we founded Fenugreen, which started out as a simple project to learn more about our food system and to find out how FreshPaper might be able to help,” Shukla told an assembled TED Talk Manhattan audience in January 2012. Handmade batches of FreshPaper were handed out at the farmer’s markets and street fairs, and a local co-op began

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