

## Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate

### MEMO

**To:** The UVM Faculty Senate  
**From:** Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Laura Almstead, Chair  
**Date:** May 6, 2021  
**Re:** Approval of a proposal for a new micro-Certificate of Graduate Study in Agroecology from the Department of Plant and Soil Science in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

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On May 6, 2021, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

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The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a proposal for a new micro-Certificate of Graduate Study in Agroecology from the Department of Plant and Soil Science (PSS) in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs). The proposal was also approved by the CALs Curriculum Committee, CALs faculty, and Dean of CALs, Leslie Parise. If approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees, the anticipated start date is fall 2021.

Micro-Certificates of Graduate Study (mCGSs) were established as a credential as of spring 2021 with the goal of providing students an opportunity to take smaller, more specific sets of courses that can either stand alone as an independent credential or be used towards the completion of an existing Certificate of Graduate Study (see guidelines [here](#)). In 2017, PSS launched a CGS in Agroecology. Students in the Food Systems graduate programs (AMP, MS, PhD) as well as students in other UVM graduate programs have expressed interest in transdisciplinary coursework and/or a stacked credential in agroecology that would complement their area of study. While the existing CGS in Agroecology, which requires 15 credits, is feasible for PhD students to complete, master's students find it challenging to complete the full certificate during a typical two-year program.

To earn the proposed mCGS in Agroecology credential, students will be required to successfully complete PSS 311 Introduction to Agroecology, PSS 312 Ecological Foundations of Agroecology, and PSS 314 Agroecology, Food Sovereignty and Social Movements. These three courses are the foundational courses for the existing CGS in Agroecology, and represent the three dimensions of agroecology: practice, science, and movement. Two are online courses (PSS 312, PSS 314); PSS 311 is a hybrid course offered in the summer that includes an intensive residential experience where students visit farms to consider applications of agroecology. Thus, the proposed mCGS in Agroecology provides students a good overview of the field with a course load that is accessible to masters students and, with the exception of the summer residential experience, can be completed online.

The proposers believe the mCGS in Agroecology, which will be the first at UVM if it is approved, will both encourage new graduate student enrollment at UVM and enrich the current CGS in Agroecology

program, as it will provide greater accessibility for a broader pool of applicants. Having a more diverse group of students will be particularly beneficial for the program as the coursework is based in transdisciplinary and participatory approaches. Students who complete the proposed mCGS in Agroecology will also be positioned to complete the full CGS in Agroecology if they choose.