



THE JUSTICE CHALLENGE

FOOD • CLIMATE • SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE



CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Join honors students from universities across the United States in exploring the complex issues around sustainable agriculture in the 2025-2026 academic year. Collaborating with experts from a variety of fields, you will engage with real social needs and develop your capacity for civic engagement, innovation and leadership.

The program is open to a limited number of participants. Each student will enroll in a nine-week online colloquium and a 1-day concluding online conference. In addition, each student will participate in at least one of three signature experiences: a Design Challenge (semester-long course, in-person); a Hackathon (2-day, online); or a Field Course (1 week, in-person). Details of each are provided below. Applicants should complete the signature experience preference form. Every effort will be made to match participants to one of their top preferences based on availability. Applicants selected for the Justice Challenge will be notified of their signature experience match prior to committing to the program.



CALENDAR

YEAR 3

Priority Registration Deadline

MARCH 1, 2025

Students may nominate themselves or be nominated by a representative of their college or program. Students who self-nominate should ask a current or former professor to complete this reference form by March 1st. After the priority registration deadline, applications will be considered on a rolling basis.

Colloquium

AUGUST 26–OCTOBER 28 OR
AUGUST 27–OCTOBER 29,
2025

Students in the colloquium will meet online once a week, Tuesdays 5-8 PM CST OR Wednesdays 1-4 PM CST.



The Program

A nine-week synchronous virtual online colloquium for all participants to engage with experts to explore the theme of sustainable agriculture. Students will meet online once per week with dual foci of meeting with a subject expert or experts and applying the knowledge in an online workshop format. The colloquium will provide the context and content knowledge that students will need to take on the challenges offered in the subsequent signature experiences. Students may (but are not required to) enroll for credit at participating institutions.

Signature Experiences are offered in multiple formats to allow each participant flexibility in what best accommodates their needs. Signature experiences include the Design Challenge, Hackathons, and Field Course described below. Students will be matched to one or more experiences based upon their preferences and availability.



In the Hackathons, student problem solvers from multiple institutions will form working teams and develop innovative solutions for a sustainable agriculture challenge, concluding the event with solutions presented and evaluated based on workability, feasibility, and usability. The top three teams in each hackathon will receive a \$500 award.

Design Challenges

SPRING 2026

On-site at Oklahoma State University (Stillwater, OK) and South Dakota State University (Brookings, SD).

Hackathons

SPRING 2026

Online over a weekend (Fri-Sat). Students form teams and develop innovative solutions for an issue central to sustainable agriculture.

Field Course

MAY 2026

On-site at Texas A&M University and South Dakota State University. Each student participant will receive a flight subsidy of \$500. Student participants will be housed on-campus and provided with a campus meal plan. Capacity 15 students.

Culminating Conference

June 2026



The Program (continued)

The optional semester-long Design Challenge is a local, in person opportunity for students to identify and propose solutions to a problem related to sustainable agriculture. Design Challenges emphasize systems thinking, creativity, and collaboration on solutions to sustainable agriculture issues. Understanding the complexities of “wicked problems” (issues so inter-related that a singular solution may lead to further problems unless they are tackled at a systemic, structural level) is central to each Design Challenge.

A six-day in-person Field Course experience will immerse students in a deep exploration of sustainable agriculture within a community and surrounding areas. Students will experience real-world constraints, opportunities, and realities of sustainable agriculture from the expertise of field course coordinators and the lived expertise of local communities. The curriculum will include local community visits, team building, problem solving, and projects.

The annual program ends in a Culminating Conference for all participants to reflect on their learning and to provide a forum for cooperative learning across student signature experiences. Student participants will create an e-portfolio.

Students will be offered (but not required) to enroll for credit at participating institutions.

- Colloquium: 3 credits
- Design Challenge: 3 credits
- Hackathon: 1 credit
- Field Course: 3 credits



This work is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

