Civil and Environmental Engineering, PhD

Graduate study in civil and environmental engineering prepares students for professional careers and further study. The principal concentration areas are environmental engineering and environmental science; hydraulics, hydrology, and water resources; structures, mechanics, and materials; sustainable water development; and transportation.

Research and Study Areas

Structures, Mechanics, and Materials

The structures, mechanics, and materials curriculum is designed for students who wish to gain knowledge and skill in the mechanics of solids and structures that they can apply to civil infrastructure systems and other fields. The program concentrates on developing appropriate methodologies for tackling broad, complex issues related to civil infrastructure systems, and on educating engineers in the implementation and application of methodologies to actual engineering projects. Faculty members have expertise in structural engineering, design optimization, solid mechanics, and computational methods.

Transportation Engineering

The transportation engineering curriculum is geared toward students interested in developing specialized knowledge and skills applicable to the diverse set of issues associated with transportation. Faculty members have expertise in traffic engineering, infrastructure management systems, pavement engineering, advanced construction materials, dynamic load and pavement simulation, optimal design, winter highway maintenance, real-time simulation, human factors, intelligent sensors, nondestructive testing, transportation planning, and travel demand modeling.

Water and the Environment

The water and the environment graduate program focuses on both fundamental and applied aspects of environmental systems and processes across a range of scales. The water and the environment program offers unique opportunities for students to actively participate in the research, analysis, and design aspects of real-world problems. There are three areas of specialization: environmental engineering and science; hydraulics, hydrology, and water resources; and sustainable water development.

The environmental engineering and science curriculum provides a comprehensive base of coursework and research in the areas of air and water quality management; environmental chemistry and microbiology; natural systems modeling; and processes for water supply, pollution control, and solid and hazardous waste management.

The hydraulics, hydrology, and water resources curriculum is associated with IIHR—Hydroscience and Engineering, a world-renowned research institute, where senior staff members of the institute are professors in the program. IIHR offers unique curriculum opportunities in laboratory and field-scale experimentation, and in mathematical modeling with IIHR's high-speed computer facilities.

The sustainable water development curriculum is focused on training interdisciplinary professional engineers, researchers, educators, and those who are ready to meet the water resource challenges of communities most in need. Community service and professional development experiences complement innovative research at the food, energy, and water nexus.

Across all specialization areas within water and the environment, interdisciplinary research and study are conducted with programs including the Center for Global and Regional Environmental Research, the Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination, the Center for Hydrologic Development, the Iowa Flood Center, the Iowa Superfund Research Program, the Hazardous Substances Research Center, and the Center for Biocatalysis and Bioprocessing; the departments of Chemical and Biochemical Engineering (College of Engineering), Earth and Environmental Sciences, Geographical and Sustainability Sciences (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences), Microbiology and Immunology (Carver College of Medicine), and Occupational and Environmental Health (College of Public Health); and the School of Planning and Public Affairs (Graduate College). Other areas of interdisciplinary focus include groundwater contamination, biotechnology, global climate change, and hazardous substances.

Learning Outcomes

Students will gain an ability to:

- apply critical thinking skills and principles of engineering and science to solve problems that address societal needs;
- communicate effectively with a range of audiences;
- make ethical and professional judgments that consider the global, economic, environmental, and societal contexts of their decisions and proposed engineering solutions; and
- conduct original research that advances discovery through the use of modern research tools and methodologies.