

Symposium of the Institute for Sustainable Energy and Environment

April 8-10, 2026

Virginia Commonwealth University
Engineering Research Building, Room 1313
401 W. Cary St, Richmond, VA 23220

April 8, 2026

4:30 – 6:30 PM Reception and Student Poster Presentations

April 9, 2026

Inaugural Session

Chair: Catherine Ingrassia, Dean and Professor, College of Humanities and Sciences, Virginia Commonwealth University

8:30 – 8:45 AM Opening Remarks, **Puru Jena**, Director, Institute for Sustainable Energy and Environment, Virginia Commonwealth University

8:45 – 9:00 AM Welcome Address, **Arturo Saavedra**, Interim Provost, Virginia Commonwealth University

9:00 – 9:45 AM Keynote Address, **Jackson Ewing**, Director of Energy and Climate Policy, Nicholas Institute of Energy, Environment & Sustainability, Duke University

9:45 – 10:30 AM **Coffee Break/Posters**

10:30 – 12:00 PM **Session I: Panel - Global Challenges in Sustainable Energy and Environment: From Science to Society**

Moderator: John Byrne, Director and Distinguished Professor of Energy and Climate Policy, University of Delaware

Yushan Yan, Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, University of Delaware

Prashant Kamat, John A Zahm Professor of Science, University of Notre Dame

Srirama Rao, Vice President for Research and Innovation, Virginia Commonwealth University

- 12:00 – 2:00 PM **Lunch/Posters, Luncheon Speaker (To Be Announced)**
- 2:00 – 3:30 PM **Session II: Energy distribution, security, and efficiency**
Chairs: Jayasimha Atulasimha, Engineering Foundation Professor,
Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering, Virginia
Commonwealth University
Supriyo Bandyopadhyay, Commonwealth Professor of Electrical and
Computer Engineering, Virginia Commonwealth University
- 2:00 – 2:30 PM **Zhifang Wang**, Associate Professor, Department of Electrical and
Computer Engineering, Virginia Commonwealth University
- 2:30 – 3:00 PM **Joseph A Hagmann**, Quantum Devices Group Leader,
Quantum Information Sciences, Imaging, and Optics, MITRE
- 3:00 – 3:30 PM **Jesse Wilson**, Grid Resilience Coordinator, Virginia Department of
Energy
- 3:30 - 4:00 PM **Coffee Break**
- 4:00 – 5:30 PM **Session III: Localized Air Pollution on Virginia Communities**
Chair: Elizabeth Kreydatus, Professor, Department of Focused Inquiry,
Virginia Commonwealth University
- 4:00 – 4:30 PM **Damian Pitt**, Associate Professor, Urban and Regional Studies and
Planning, Virginia Commonwealth University
Ivan Suen, Associate Professor, Urban and Regional Studies and
Planning, Virginia Commonwealth University
*"Localized Air Pollution Impacts from Data Centers in Northern
Virginia"*
- 4:30 – 5:00 PM **Lucas Henneman**, Assistant Professor, Environmental Engineering,
George Mason University
"Air pollution in Virginia: emissions sources and health effects"
- 5:00 – 5:30 PM **Faith Harris**, Executive Director, Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
- 5:30 – 7:00 PM **Dinner**

April 10, 2026

- 9:00 – 10:30 AM **Session IV: Energy of the Future or Now? Fusion Energy in Virginia and Surrounding Region**
Chair: Lane Carasik, Assistant Professor, Nuclear Engineering, Virginia Commonwealth University
- 9:00 – 9:30 AM **Lane Carasik**, Assistant Professor, Nuclear Engineering, Virginia Commonwealth University
“Fusion Energy Sciences R&D within Virginia Commonwealth University”
- 9:30 – 10:00 AM **Ben Byboth**, Director of Power Business Development and Strategy Commonwealth Fusion Systems
“Commonwealth Fusion Systems: The path to commercial fusion energy”
- 10:00 – 10:30 AM **Troy Carter**, Director, Fusion Energy Division, Oak Ridge National Laboratory
“Fusion Energy Sciences R&D within Oak Ridge National Laboratory”
- 10:30 – 11:00 AM **Coffee Break**
- 11:00 – 12:30 PM **Session V: Panel - Education and Outreach**
Moderator: Kristin Carleton, Assistant Professor, Interior Design, Virginia Commonwealth University
- Laura Battaglia**, Assistant Professor, Interior Design, Virginia Commonwealth University and **Student Presenters**
- Erin A. Speck**, Assistant Professor, Interior Architecture Program, George Washington University
- Andrea Simonelli**, Associate Professor, Thrust 4 Research Director, Institute for Sustainable Energy and Environment, Virginia Commonwealth University
- John Fife**, Associate Professor, STEM Education, Virginia Commonwealth University
- 12:30 – 2:00 PM **Lunch and Luncheon Speaker (To Be Announced)**
- 2:00 – 3:30 PM **Session VI: Effect on human health and life**

- Chair: Leah Spangler**, Assistant Professor, Chemical and Life Science Engineering, Virginia Commonwealth University
- 2:00 – 2:30 PM **Amir Sapkota**, Chair of Epidemiology, University of Maryland School of Public Health
- 2:30 – 3:00 PM **James R. Allison, III**, Associate Professor, Department of History, Christopher Newport University
"Manifesting Power: The Geologists, Boosters, and Capitalists that Built the Appalachian Coal Regime"
- 3:00 – 3:30 PM **Brian Virelli**, VCU School of Life Sciences and Sustainability
- 3:30 – 4:00 PM **Coffee Break**
- 4:00 – 5:30 PM **Session VII: Panel - Industry and Government Partnership**
Moderator: Radhika Barua, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Mechanical & Nuclear Engineering, Virginia Commonwealth University
- Shaun Mathew**, Virginia Clean Energy Innovation Bank, Virginia Department of Energy
- Braden Croy**, Program Director, Dominion Energy Innovation Corporation
- Robert Williamson Gray**, Climate and Water Strategist, Dupont
- Shubhagato Mukherjee**, Vice President, Global Head of Sustainability, Nokia
- 5:30 – 5:45 PM **Concluding Remarks**
Chair: Jayasimha Atulasimha, Engineering Foundation Professor Professor, Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering, Virginia Commonwealth University
- 5:45 – 7:00 PM **Closing Reception**