MISSION STATEMENT

The University of Virginia is a public institution of higher learning guided by a founding vision of discovery, innovation, and development of the full potential of talented students from all walks of life. It serves the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world by developing responsible citizen leaders and professionals; advancing, preserving, and disseminating knowledge; and providing world-class patient care.

We are defined by:

- Our enduring commitment to a vibrant and unique residential learning environment marked by the free and collegial exchange of ideas;
- Our unwavering support of a collaborative, diverse community bound together by distinctive foundational values of honor, integrity, trust, and respect;
- Our universal dedication to excellence and affordable access.

Source: [www.virginia.edu/statementofpurpose](http://www.virginia.edu/statementofpurpose)
SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Professor Kirsten Gelsdorf is a beloved professor and mentor to countless students, an inspiring scholar, a dedicated member of the UVA community, and a leader in harnessing the potential of higher-education to foster real-world impact. In her short time at the University, she has not only built novel courses on humanitarian aid, but also found ways to bring together interdisciplinary-faculty teams and complete research to address some of today’s most pressing global problems. She has raised nearly $1 million dollars in grants and contracts, scored perfect course evaluations in not one but numerous different courses, and contributed to influential international policy processes. She has already achieved international recognition for her contributions to shaping humanitarian policy and is one of the most popular female faculty members at the University.

Teaching and Mentoring

Although Gelsdorf has only completed three years of continuous service as a full-time faculty member at the University of Virginia, her reputation as an instructor is extraordinary. In 2017-18 she was the recipient of the Batten Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award, and the 2019 recipient of the All-University Teaching Award. She was also honored by the prestigious Seven Society in 2018 for uncommon dedication to the University and by the Z Society in recognition for individuals who have inspired the faculty and student body of the University. In 2017 she gained the Inter-Sorority Achievement Award for mentoring and the Pies and Professors recognition for teaching and support to students. Finally, she was also selected for the Casteen Teaching Fellowship in Ethics. She earned these accolades because of her unrelenting dedication to improving and developing her classes to be the most relevant, to inspire learning and her strong belief that she is educating the next generation of responsible citizens and global leaders.

Since 2016, Professor Gelsdorf has taught 10 courses to over 670 students. Five of the courses she newly developed the syllabi and taught them for the first time. All were taught with exquisite care and commitment. Kirsten excelled in both the largest and smallest classes and in introductory and advanced material. She is the first professor at Batten to have received a perfect 5.0 rating in 5 different evaluated measures ranging from being an effective instructor to delivering a worthwhile course (and these ratings were across 4 different courses). She received above a 4.9 in three other courses. “Amazing” seems to be the most common word among student comments.

When she first offered her now-famous class on Global Humanitarian Crises, it was slated for a 40-person seminar. Given her reputation, student demand snowballed, growing the course from 40 to 200 students in a matter of days. The following year 240 students tried to enroll. Professor Gelsdorf also piloted Batten’s first-ever remote synchronous learning course, to allow her class to be available to students at the UVA WISE campus in rural Virginia. Professor Gelsdorf is well-known for trying to make UVA’s mission to develop the full potential of talented students come alive in the classroom. Here are a few comments from students and a co-instructor:

- “In 5 years of University courses I quite possibly have never learned more in a single class than I did in this course. Professor Gelsdorf brings so much depth and drive to the classroom. Not only did I learn about Humanitarian Crises, but I learned how to think clearly and critically, how to write effectively, and how to speak in a way that will make people yearn to listen. I also learned a lot about myself and about what I value and what matters to me.”
- “Beyond the thematic content of the course, Professor Gelsdorf seamlessly wove professional and leadership skills into the classroom. I often advocate that all courses should replicate Professor Gelsdorf’s model.”
- “This course was the course I have been looking for at UVA for four years now. I not only gained immense insight on the nuances of the humanitarian system, but I also discovered a
great deal about myself in the process."

- "It's not an over-exaggeration for me to say that this class has been the best class I have taken at UVA. It has been incredibly challenging and simultaneously the most rewarding."
- "Having co-taught a class with her I can give a first-hand account of her dedication to students and ambition to design a course that combines rigorous assignments, engaged learning, and offers the real ability for students to grow intellectually and emotionally. I remember when we were first developing the syllabus her comment on 'how can we design this course so that students get more comfortable working with ambiguity.' She explained that she had noticed how many of her students were terrified of failure and wanted to see if she could find ways to design assignments and lectures where students gain more comfort in taking risks.... From there she helped construct a course which included exciting lectures and ended with students doing some of the highest caliber work I have seen in my twenty seven years of teaching....I should also mention that Professor Gelsdorf was not even slated to teach this class as part of her contractual obligations but agreed to do it because she felt that it would be an extraordinary opportunity for the students."
- "Professor Gelsdorf also served as my MPP capstone advisor. In this role, she took what was initially a daunting assignment and turned it into a passion project for each student in the class. She went above and beyond the call of duty, getting to know each student well and working with us in one-on-one meetings to refine project scopes that were meaningful to both us and the clients we were working with..."
- "Professor Gelsdorf was exceptionally supportive of students' work in this course. She asked us to think about our goals and was committed to our work and our success."
- "Because of her guidance and inspiration, I now work for a humanitarian organization where I both enjoy my work and excel professionally. She has provided me with so much invaluable advice, and even after graduating, I still turn to her when I'm faced with difficult choices."

Engaged Learning: What sets Professor Gelsdorf apart is that in addition to delivering strong courses she has brought to the University a new energy to build hands-on experiential learning and mentorship opportunities outside of the classroom that will help develop the next generation of global citizens. She wants to expose them to professional environments and challenge them to learn about themselves. She has run too many to list here but to give you a sense, they include:

- Developing a 2-year partnership learning program with the Charlottesville International Rescue Committee where students work with and in service of recently resettled refugees on projects such as: a focused semester project on mental health screenings; a group field-study on improving nutritional outcomes; and development of public photo-voices event to increase the understanding of the Charlottesville community on how refugees support the city.
- Initiating an applied project for graduate students to prepare United Nations Analytical Reports using primary data submitted by over 81 humanitarian organizations. The best student reports were published on the United Nations Website.
- Following the events of 11-12 August 2017, together with the City of Charlottesville Human Rights Office she worked with 20 students to develop materials for a public simulation, so that community members could gain a better understanding of the refugee resettlement process.
- Leading 16 students on a 3-day Humanitarian Field Training in rural Clarke County, VA, students were able to complete the same training requirements given to current USAID and State Department officials and practiced participatory methods, negotiation, coordinating assessments, leadership and teamwork.
- Launching a Global Policy Research Seminar Series where students could join her in professional research meetings and webinars to introduce them to the latest policies and research being discussed by practitioners on topics such as multi-sectoral cash transfer programming in emergencies, policy gaps in treatment of Global Acute Malnutrition, policy
and programming to support refugee mental health, etc.

- Together with the non-governmental organization, *Girl Determined*, based in Myanmar she directed a project for 3 students to analyze the NGOs primary data from the past 5 years to help formulate recommendations for future programming.

Her mentorship in career placement is also extraordinary. She has taken on seven distinct independent studies (not required in her contract, nor additionally compensated). She has written approximately 200 recommendation letters, served as the faculty advisor for a successful Rhodes Scholarship, Marshall Fellowship, and numerous Fulbright Fellowships. She has helped students secure over 18 competitive internships at the United Nations and other organizations and helped place students in jobs on all 6 continents.

**Discovery**
Professor Gelsdorf holds a research portfolio that is directly linked to public impact and in three years she has secured over $1 million in grants and contracts to support her work. Her expertise is on increasing the effectiveness of the global humanitarian response system. Today, humanitarian crises are some of the most gripping and complex challenges facing local communities, national governments, and international leaders. In the last decade, there has been almost a quadrupling in the number of people around the world in need of emergency aid, resulting in today there being 132 million people caught in intractable and complex humanitarian crises. Challenges such as finding ways to deliver assistance in the protracted war in Syria, the lack of accountability and community engagement in providing aid, security concerns emerging with new technologies and innovative approaches in response, and increased refugee flows and climate displacement dilemmas have all led to critical research and policy gaps. Professor Gelsdorf has become one of the leading academics to try and address some of those gaps.

What is most impressive is that she has built on her unique role in the University as a Professor of Practice and proven her passion for discovery in 3 different capacities; (1) engaging in high-profile external applied research that impacts current policy, (2) building and leading university wide interdisciplinary research initiatives, and (3) personal scholarship leading to the publication of a recognized book. It should be noted that in almost every single one of these projects she included students and to date she has worked with and mentored over 30 student research and teaching assistants all in just three years.

**Applied Research:**
Some examples of her external applied policy research include:

- She served as the PI for research completed as part of the *North American Humanitarian Response Initiative*, project on 'Cross-Border Catastrophic Disaster Response', that aimed to increase efficiencies, better align operational procedures and address policy opportunities in cross-border response to potential catastrophic disasters between USA, Mexico, and Canada. Specifically, she led a team and helped develop a policy framework on meeting the potential humanitarian needs of underserved populations in case of cross-border catastrophe. In addition to the research she served as the Co-Chair of the Working Group coordinating research and findings of over 20 academics, government actors, and aid organizations. She was also selected to facilitate a 3-day workshop and present the research to US, Canadian, and Mexican government officials at First Nations reservation.

- She served as the co-PI and Strategic Lead for the *Global Prioritization Study for Research and Innovation in the Humanitarian System*. This research led to the drafting of a 53-page study that presented an analysis of current research and innovation capacities to help identify clear priorities for investment by key government donors. The study also developed a primary dataset through a systematic literature review (SLR) that is now being actively
used by key actors in the system. The study was received by 3 top government donors of humanitarian aid (US, UK, and Australia). This work was so well-received that Professor Gelsdorf was invited to personally meet with the Director-General of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations to help the EU prioritize funding in 2018.

- She won the grant for UVA to lead in the drafting of the ‘No Time to Retreat’ First Annual Synthesis Report on Progress since the World Humanitarian Summit. Published December 2017. This 76-page study served as the seminal policy report tracking progress of the government and organizational commitments from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and created an evidence base for how policy and action needed to be amended. Following its publication, it was presented to over 250 people including representatives of 15 Governments at a high-level event at the United Nations.

Cross-University Research Engagement:
Examples of her cross-university research includes:
- In 2018 Professor Gelsdorf was awarded a grant that allowed her to establish the UVA Humanitarian Collaborative. This research and engagement project brings together over 20 faculty and students from across Grounds (Policy, Architecture, Nursing, English, Politics, Studio Art) and pairs them with external partners such as Save the Children, The United Nations, the Peace Appeal Foundation, and Charlottesville’s International Rescue Committee on 8 applied research and engagement initiatives that look at the common question of “How might we more effectively use visual imagery and advocacy to drive global compassion and action in the field of Humanitarian Aid?” Projects include looking at the effectiveness of virtual reality; use of emergency claim making; assessing compassion versus empathy in humanitarian advocacy; role of literature as humanitarian advocacy, etc. https://humanitariancollaborative.com/. The project was so successful that in 2019 she was awarded another $87,000 to expand the collaboration.
- This August Gelsdorf (and two Batten co-PIs) were awarded a highly competitive UVA Strategic Investment Fund grant of $600,000. The funds will be allocated towards her goal of building a new infrastructure at UVA called the Humanitarian Research Exchange (HRX) that will host multiple research labs to bring dynamic practitioners to UVA to work with faculty and students on cutting-edge policy-relevant research on pressing humanitarian challenges. Her team has already gotten commitments from international partners and they will launch a lab in Predictive Analytics and a lab on Early Childhood Development in Crisis Contexts later this Fall.

Book:
Finally, Professor Gelsdorf demonstrates not only commitment to discovery in that her first two-years she also co-wrote the book Understanding the Humanitarian World (Routledge, 2019). She wrote the book as after the first semester of teaching her class on Global Humanitarian Crisis she realized there was no current overarching text offering a critical introduction to the origins, development, architecture, operational parameters and policy agendas of the contemporary institution of global humanitarianism. The book was published in May 2019 and has already been endorsed by the former Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and head of the Overseas Development Institute, and is used by international organizations in their trainings and adopted by prestigious Universities such as London School of Economics, Tufts University, etc.

Knowledge Integration
Professor Gelsdorf has been a leader at the University in striving to make connections and ensure her expertise and teaching extends beyond her office and classroom. This is evident in that she was voted by fellow faculty to receive the 2018-2019 Excellence in Engagement in Public Policy and Leadership award. Her heart-felt dedication to knowledge integration is evident in that she
infuses activities in all of the other three categories (Service, Discovery, Teaching). Her portfolio of engaged student learning, forming an inter-disciplinary research consortium, mentorship of dozens of RAs in real-time policy research, and service on International Board member positions are what make her unique. To add to this significant list, it may be helpful to note the extensive public speaking she does across the University and outside its walls.

In three years, she has spoken at over 30 cross-disciplinary University public speaking events for students and the larger community. These have included everything from talks at the Engineering School, law school symposiums, trainings for Medical School Residents to fireside chats with International Relations and Development Service Organizations. She has Moderated Political Debates and led Career Panels. She has also been honored as the keynote speaker at numerous events such as for a formal 200 student 2nd year council dinner, to a First Year Curriculum event attended by 400 people. She also spoke to 100 female students at the Women's Leadership Development conference; and was a public speaker at the UVA event for the Virginia Film Festival. She has also given over 10 guest lectures for professors across the University in such diverse departments and schools as Engineering, Architecture, Public Health, Politics, and Psychology.


Service
Kirsten is known across the University and at the Batten School as the one who raises her hand first when there is a service opportunity. In 2019 she received the highest ranking in the Batten School’s annual review process for recognition of Service to school, university, and her discipline. That is because not only does she strive to bring change and improvement to UVA, but also gives incredible time to support small local organizations in Burma and Charlottesville to influential international policy making boards.

At Batten she has served not only strategic school-wide policy making roles, but also been a main driver of change and leadership. After her first year at the University her faculty colleagues elected her to the School’s governing Executive Committee. Later she was selected to be on the influential 2019 Search Committee for the new Dean. Including these she served on no less than 12 Committees in 3 years, the most of any faculty member. These include: Chair, Hiring Committee, Professor of Practice, 2017-2018; Batten Engagement Committee, 2016-2017; Batten Admissions Committee, 2016-2017; Director of Simulation and Gaming Hiring Committee, 2016-2017; Advisory Committee for NASPAA Global Simulation Student Competition, 2017; International Engagement Committee 2017-2018; Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, 2018-2019; Teaching Evaluation Criteria Committee, 2017; Applied Policy Project Curriculum
Committee, 2019; and Jefferson Medalist Committee. Outside of Schoolwide service committees, she also serves the School as a leading member of the School’s Global Policy Center. In this role she has helped develop the Center’s Strategic Plan, complete funding proposals, mentor countless students, organize research and engagement public events, host prestigious speakers, and represent the Center at numerous events.

Her commitment to service is also evident in her commitment to the wider University. Over the last three years: She was selected by the Vice Provost of Community Engagement Committee to serve a two-year term as one of the founding core members to increase civic engagement at the University and gain Carnegie Accreditation. She also served as a core member of the Women’s Global Leadership Committee that developed a global leadership agenda, and ran a conference that included Hillary Clinton. As part of this service she met with the First Lady of Virginia, developed student internships, led planning sessions, and identified speakers. For three years she has served as a Faculty Fellow of Center for Global Health participating in the dinner series, mentoring, and the scholarship committee. She also one of the 3 faculty members to choose the Elizabeth Zinti Leadership Award. She has also been part of a Faculty Contemplative Practice Community trying to promote mediation and contemplative practices in pedagogy.

The field of humanitarian studies is still a fairly new inter-disciplinary field and Professor Gelsdorf has made efforts to support Faculty at other Universities to develop their programs. She has contributed through giving invited lectures at Columbia University, NYU, Tufts University; Brown University; Millersville University, and Leiden University. She has also undertaken many book and article reviews in a range of journals. Most recently she has become an active member of the International Humanitarian Studies Association (I-HSA), speaking at conferences, serving on the Ethics Committee and helping to plan the next conference in Beirut. She also serves on the academic Advisory Board: Do no harm: Ethical humanitarian innovation and digital bodies (EthHumIn). She was also selected as one of the Speakers at the 2018 I-HSA Conference. She has spoken multiple times at the International Studies Association (ISA) and National Association for Public Policy and Public Administration Schools (NASPAA).

Another bright spot in her service record is her dedication to service to the community and society (locally and globally) outside of the University. In three years, she has served on:

- The Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI). (Alliance Member) Focus on advising on how to advocacy and scaling-innovation. Was able to have UVA invited as the only academic member besides Oxford University.
- Humanitarian Grand Challenge Fund. (External Review Panel) Over two-years reviewed over 60 proposals and spent time in Toronto advising the USAID/OFDA, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and Grand Challenges Canada on allocation for $500 million Fund for Creating Hope in Conflict: A Humanitarian Grand Challenge.
- United Nations Centre for Humanitarian Data, Netherlands (Board Member and Senior Fellow): Advised in developing the strategic framework for the Center and its data literacy and data policy capacity.
- Advisory Committee on Platform for Disaster Displacement, Geneva, Switzerland (Advisory member) Supported the development of the platforms strategic plan to develop normative frameworks and policies to protect people displaced by climate driven disasters.
- Girl Determined, Myanmar (board member): Support this International non-governmental human rights organization based in Myanmar working on protecting girls from violence, increasing educational opportunities, and carrying-out health education.
- International Rescue Committee Charlottesville (community board member): Support this local organization with fundraising and advocacy efforts.
PERSONAL STATEMENT

I sometimes ask students at the beginning of the semester; "if you could trade in your national passport to become a citizen of the world (with the same rights and responsibilities you now hold) would you?" I ask this question not only to introduce the concepts of citizenship and global normative frameworks, but because at my core I have been struggling with how to bring forward a renewed sense of global humanity and their connectedness to the world.

The field of global humanitarian aid, which has defined my life's work, rests on the principle of the humanitarian imperative—that people have the right to give and receive aid. I have spent much of my professional life adhering to that code. I lived in Liberia during the end of a war and stayed to support families returning to their war-torn communities, I was a member of the first team of international aid workers sent to Banda Aceh Indonesia after the Tsunami to help coordinate search and rescue efforts, I deployed to Pakistan after the earthquake to build coalitions of local actors, I lived in rural Ethiopia during the famine designing livelihood programs, and later spent years in capital cities carrying-out diplomacy and trying to develop new policies and ways of delivering aid to people caught in crisis. In these experiences I saw some of the very worst and, surprisingly, the very best of global humanity. What tilted the scale towards optimism and hope for me was observing how, in the midst of crisis, people from all nationalities can come together to find ways to help some of the most vulnerable populations.

But the standard approaches to providing global humanitarian aid is no longer working. There has been an almost four-fold increase in the number of people caught in humanitarian crises and in most cases less than 40% of the funding needed to assist them has been forthcoming. More aid workers than ever are being killed and injured, and even more disturbing, there have been aid workers found guilty of sexual exploitation. Refugees now spend an average of 27 years living in camps; and the predicted growth in the number of people displaced from climate-induced disasters is beyond comprehension. We lack critical research and need new policies.

But this is only part of what will be a major challenge of the 21st century. The other issue, and what disturbs me even more, is that future generations will not only not know how to confront these challenges, but that they won't want to. They will not believe in the humanitarian imperative. The students we teach are inundated with negative imagery, stories of despair, and fear of being part of the problem and not the solution. There is nativist rhetoric on radio and social media, while on the flip side, aid organizations cite numbers so large that empathy fatigue takes over.

I loved my job at the United Nations. But I left because I needed to feel empowered to confront and remedy these challenges; the challenges that can be faced head on in the classroom and through new research and partnerships. It is my job as stated in the UVA mission to engage in discovery, innovation, and serve the world by developing responsible citizen leaders and professionals. This means I have the opportunity to take on research that addresses some of the humanitarian challenges listed above, and it is my clear responsibility to bring the questions of global humanity to this next generation. This is a gift for me.

How do I do this?

First, in my research and service efforts, I recognize that I am not a traditional scholar at the University. With this comes quiet moments of uncertainty, but more often it engenders in me incredible motivation to take all of my energy and fully engage in each opportunity I have to
contribute in bridging the academic-practitioner divide and influence policy change. For too long, practitioner-based, and scholarly discussions about the causes of humanitarian crises, and the responses to them have proceeded on largely isolated tracks. I have experienced how this isolation impedes the emergence of productive conversations and potential solutions to critical global problems.

Therefore, in my first three years at the University of Virginia I have built a portfolio of discovery that rests on real-time engagement in policy and on filling existing gaps in policy. I want to help grow an evidence base and form influential partnerships that lead to new discoveries. At the University of Virginia, I am able to see how we can be part of a global network of knowledge producers to find compelling solutions to challenges that will affect generations to come. A network that includes not only academics focused on international relations, governments, and local and international organizations, but scholars from all disciplines. The chance to walk down the hall or across the Lawn and seek advice and collaboration with psychologists, architects, and political ethicists allows me a rare chance to address these crises that are driven by multidisciplinary threats. My opportunities here feel limitless.

Now for the other challenge.

In my teaching, I follow the words of a mentor — that the goal of teaching should be not only to provide content, but also to provide space. For me, this has translated into a teaching philosophy that urges me to build and teach courses that give space for students to develop intellectual as well as emotional curiosity, and see where and how they can find their own relationship to global humanity. When I finish designing a syllabus or a lecture I ask myself, ‘In addition to knowledge and skills, what emotions may my students confront in this class; and will this combination of knowledge, skill and emotion provide an opportunity for them to discover their connectedness to each other and the world?’

To apply this philosophy in the classroom and in coursework, I think a lot about how I can engage different learning styles, various lived experiences, and divergent points of view. I try to merge traditional lectures and discussion with small group activities, role-play, reflective writing, and contemplative practices. Even in a lecture with 200 students, can each student feel engaged in such a way that they can confront difficult or divisive topics and not only think about how they form their opinions, but also the perspectives of others? Can I help them find ways to not ‘shut off’ or ‘shut down’? One way I do this is to help students not only develop their writing, reading, and speaking skills, but to also explore the skill of listening. Students are asked to be aware of the different styles of listening they employ — autobiographical listening, surface listening, solution-oriented listening, deep listening, etc. I provide in-class exercises where they pair-up to do listening exercises and really dive into the opinions and beliefs of another student and also have a chance to see where they stand and what they feel.

One student told me that she felt like in my class I ‘brought the outside in so that she could later bring the inside out.’ She explained that she felt my class exposed her to current global issues and let her and her classmates explore these real-time challenges in our classroom while at the same time giving them freedom to critically define their perspectives so that later they are equipped and empowered to make use of their classroom learning as they engage with the larger world. This is the impact I strive to achieve with every student. Not only does this challenge inspire me as a teacher to find creative ways to design assignments, lectures, and extracurricular activities; but I believe that the global challenges that this generation will face requires them to be able to be incredibly thoughtful and independent analytical thinkers who can find solutions through critical thought, personal courage, and compassionate collaboration.
ABBREVIATED CURRICULUM VITAE

EMPLOYMENT
University of Virginia, (UVA)  
Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy  
Charlottesville, VA  
Aug 2016-present  
Professor of Practice of Public Policy and Leadership, Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy  
- 2017-2018 Batten Excellence in Teaching Award; 2019 All-University Teaching Award; 2019 Casteen Teaching Fellowship in Ethics; 2018-2019 Batten Excellence in Engagement in Public Policy and Leadership Award  
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)  
Global  
2002-2016  
- Served as the Chief of Policy Analysis and Innovation and a Senior Policy Advisor to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs on all major humanitarian policy issues.  
- Served in numerous humanitarian deployments including South African Regional Food Crisis, the Liberian War, the Tsunami in Indonesia, Hurricane Katrina, the Pakistan Earthquake, the Timor-Leste Security Crisis, the Global Food Crisis and the Haiti Earthquake.  
- Served as the Humanitarian Advisor for the UN Special Envoy, President William Clinton, following the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

TEACHING
LPPS: PPOL 4991, Policy Capstone; PPOL 3295, Lecture Global Humanitarian Crisis: Dilemmas, Leadership, and Action; PPOL 7610, Seminar Applied Policy Project; PPOL 5200, Seminar Advanced Policy and Practice in Humanitarian Aid; PPOL 6135: Development of Global Humanitarian Policy; Independent Studies on: Data Policy and Practice; Human Rights in Myanmar; Mental Health of Resettled Refugees; Non-Governmental Organizations; Virtual Reality on Displacement; Imagery, Advocacy and Humanitarian Aid; World Humanitarian Day Campaign

RECENT RESEARCH, ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLICATION
Director, UVA Humanitarian Collaborative  
https://humanitariancollaborative.com/  
Principle Investigator, Chair of Policy Working Group  
North American Humanitarian Response Initiative (NAHRI)  
Principle Investigator/Senior Strategic Advisor  
United Nations, Annual Synthesis Report on Progress since the World Humanitarian Summit  

FUNDING, GRANTS, CONTRACTS
1. UVA Strategic Investment Fund  
   Award amount: $600,000  
   "UVA Humanitarian Research Exchange"  
2. Ruth Young/Indar-Riyukhe Fund  
   Award amount: $83,000  
   "UVA Humanitarian Collaborative"  
3. Ruth Young/Indar-Riyukhe Fund  
   Award amount: $77,500  
   2017-2019
Award amount: $90,000  
5. ELRHA, Global Humanitarian Research and Innovation Prioritization 2017  
Award amount: $133,950  
Award Amount: $71,155  
7. Private Grants and Donations 2018  
Award amount: $15,000  

SELECTED INVITED SEMINARS AND LECTURES  
RECENT UNIVERSITY AND SCHOOL SERVICE  
EDUCATION  
The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University  
MA, USA  
1999-2002 Masters of Law and Diplomacy in Humanitarian Affairs and Food Security  
Dartmouth College  
NH, USA  
1993-1997 Bachelors of Arts with double major in History with a focus on Asian Studies and International Environmental Affairs
EXEMPLARY LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Batten School Leadership and Faculty

"Professors of Practice are critical to the Batten School's ability to merge real-world experiences with classroom learning, and Kirsten is leading the way on this not only at the Batten School, but for the University at large. Professor Gelsdorf focuses on applied learning, tying theory to real-world experience and incorporating community and professional partnerships into her research and courses. Professor Gelsdorf has set an extraordinarily high bar."

— Ian Solomon, Dean, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy

“One story that exemplifies the kind of Professor Kirsten is that earlier this year, while faculty and staff were on a bus to Washington DC, Professor Gelsdorf called a student struggling with a literature review. Although it was 7pm, Kirsten carefully listened and guided the student. Once the call was over she moved to the back of the bus and spoke with another Professor from a different discipline to make sure she got another perspective. She then called the student back to give additional insights. Consistently we hear stories like these, and that Kirsten's classes and mentorship are the best at the Batten School and at UVA."

— Allan Stam, Former Dean, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy

"Having chaired the Department of Politics for over 8 years, in my experience it is rare that the University finds a teacher as dedicated and talented as Professor Gelsdorf. From a strictly quantitative perspective, Kirsten is a rock-star. Her average teaching effectiveness score is 4.84 out of five… What you may not see from the extraordinary student evaluations and teaching averages, is that Professor Gelsdorf goes above and beyond in her classes to build in the kinds of community partnership learning experiences UVA strives to promote. In the wake of the Executive Order banning refugees from the USA, Kirsten worked with the City of Charlottesville Human Right Office, and 24 students to design and organize a simulation on refugee resettlement for the residents of Charlottesville. She never stops finding ways to inspire our students."

— David Leblang, Director of Global Policy Center, Professor of Politics, University of Virginia

“As a UVA alumni and now advisory board member of the Batten School I cannot stress enough what an incredible Professor and faculty member Kirsten Gelsdorf is. In her short time at UVA she has single handedly built one of the most popular set of classes on humanitarian aid, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the school, and her research has brought UVA into influential global policy processes. She exemplifies leadership at both the policy and operational levels within the humanitarian community and at UVA. The university, its students and fellow faculty benefit from her commitment to education that makes a difference at the level where policy meets practice. UVA is extremely fortunate to have her on Grounds and making such a positive impact on students and humanitarian efforts around the world."

— Langdon Greenhalgh, Member, Batten School Advisory Board

“While Kirsten’s gifted teaching in front of the classroom gets rave reviews from students, it is her thoughtful course design that has impressed me. Kirsten has invested in her teaching in ways that few faculty I’ve known have. It shows. Watching her teach, I can see opportunities for active learning in class abound. Her assignments are diverse, frequent, low stakes, and well scaffolded. She uses contemplative science to support her students as they face the emotional challenges of her material. The variety of learning modalities present in her classroom is striking and the proof of her success in weaving them together is in the pudding: student growth. I’m grateful for and proud of the work she does. While I’ve spent much of this letter talking about her large lecture class. Kirsten also teaches one of the 12 student MPP capstone classes where she’s
a gifted mentor to students who are working with organizations across the world. Her constant flow of encouragement, challenge, and innovation extends beyond her students to the faculty teaching team (including me). The generative effort she has invested in the course design has transformed the experience of every student in our MPP program. Finally, Kirsten's impact on teaching is felt school-wide through the changes she has pushed for as a member of the Executive Committee. The School now celebrates and rewards faculty when they invest in their teaching. Kirsten understands that teaching is something you can work to be great at. Her growth mindset on this front (and many others) is a gift to both the faculty and students at Batten."
— Andy Pennock, Assistant Professor, Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy

Scholars in Humanitarian Aid

"I was thrilled when Kirsten took up the position at UVA because she is exactly the kind of person we need to build the field of humanitarian studies. She has the experience and the field credibility to understand the key issues that require research. For a field that is still in its infancy, this is critical. Kirsten is a rising star and a key player bridging between real life practice and the research needed to build the evidence base for decision-making about that practice. Kirsten is a strong analyst and a great teacher at heart. She has taught classes for me at Tufts University on several occasions in recent years. Her ability to connect with students and not only convey key knowledge, but enthuse students with that knowledge, is inspiring. Her record at UVA is testimony to her teaching abilities. And finally having worked for years to shape high level policy in the UN, Kirsten has an unique ability to get things done! I know lots of academics who may be brilliant but who rarely produce (whether building new classes, conducting new research, or building new bridges to practitioners) according to their abilities. Kirsten does all this. I strongly recommend her, and wish I could convince her to come to Tufts."
— Daniel Maxwell, Henry J. Leir Professor in Food Security, Tufts University

"As a fellow humanitarian studies scholar, I can attest that she personifies the magical combination of qualities that all academic institutions wish their faculty to have, but few do. During our extensive collaboration through the North American Humanitarian Response Initiative over the past few years, I have been consistently impressed by Professor Gelsdorf’s display of genuine big picture intellectualism paired with operational wisdom. During many meeting sideline chats, she always sought out new ways to effectively engage her students. Professor Gelsdorf is beyond a “rising” star. Her innate talent and earnest dedication to the academic profession already places her far up there!"
— Kirsten Bookmiller, Professor, Department of Government and Political Affairs, Millersville University

"Professor Gelsdorf has been one of the key international academic minds who has shaped the study and policy development in humanitarian innovation. Her unique combination of practitioner and policy experience, her critical mindset and her ability and willingness to engage colleagues in sometimes difficult debates has deeply impressed me over the years. Her numerous reports, public lectures, and strategic engagement with the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation and the Grand Challenges Advisory Board means that she is ideally suited to offer practical and theoretical guidance for research projects in this field, and her input is always constructive and highly valued."
— Kristin Bergtora Sandvik, Professor of Sociology of Law, Department of Criminology and Sociology of Law, University of Oslo

Practitioners

"Professor Gelsdorf is a star in her field. We sought her out to have her lead a systematic review of humanitarian and research and innovation, which she delivered at a level of rigor and quality
that exceeded our expectations. I was also fortunate to observe her entrepreneurial attitude, collegiality, and outstanding strategic leadership over the months we worked together and was deeply impressed by her leadership during several high-level meetings with government donors, senior officials, and policy makers in driving recommendations and change. Since then she has promoted more efforts to bring humanitarian organizations into increasing partnership with academic institutions, and I consider her work in advancing the community of practice around humanitarian data practice instrumental in improving the aid sector’s commitment to evidence-based accountability.”
— Josiah Kaplan, Senior Research Advisor, Migration and Displacement, Save the Children

“Professor Kirsten Gelsdorf is one of the key academics we look to, to help bridge the academic-practitioner gap and inspire students to dedicate their careers to the humanitarian endeavor. I am also aware that Professor Gelsdorf has received a large grant to launch a humanitarian practitioner/academic research exchange project which has the potential to influence current behavior and thinking in the humanitarian system. The UN’s Centre for Humanitarian Data in The Hague has benefitted from Professor Gelsdorf’s sound advice since its establishment in December 2017 and we were honored to have her work directly with us as a Senior Fellow in the summer of 2019.”
— Sarah Telford, United Nations Centre for Humanitarian Data, The Hague, Netherlands

UVA Students

“Prof. Gelsdorf invites her students to think and question more deeply. While other students were writing papers, Prof. Gelsdorf adroitly crafted an experiential, weekend-long humanitarian crisis simulation, which required a higher level of thinking than any other college assignment. This experience encapsulates Prof. Gelsdorf’s desire to push us as students, to help bridge the gap between the theoretical and the practical. Instead of getting tied down in theoretical experiences, we confronted the messiness and joys of policy. Finally, Prof. Gelsdorf both challenges and inspires her students. As someone who currently teaches (albeit 3rd grade), I often reflect on Prof. Gelsdorf’s pedagogy—demanding and supportive, amicable and professional, joyful and serious. I struggle to think of another professor who more holistically exposed me to policy and who more genuinely sought feedback to improve her classes and Batten. I struggle to think of another professor who so willingly gives, who so seamlessly encourages, and who so genuinely cares and who so completely embodies the meaning of this award.”
— Robert McCarthy, Alum, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy (BA ‘18)

“Professor Gelsdorf is an outstanding teacher both inside and outside of the classroom. She is passionate about her field and the broader agenda of the Batten School and teaches in a way that makes this passion contagious. She encourages her students to grow and to serve as change agents in the world around them. Professor Gelsdorf forced the class to think about complicated issues in nuanced ways that have stuck with me in the years since. For example, distinguishing the difference between a hard decision and a moral dilemma. Whenever I am asked about my favorite course at Batten I also add that, beyond her phenomenal teaching abilities, Professor Gelsdorf has personally changed my professional trajectory in multiple ways. Through my various conversations with my Batten colleagues, former students, and other professors, I know I am not unique when I say that Professor Gelsdorf has defined and enhanced my experience at the University of Virginia.”
— Rachel Raycraft, Joint Batten UVA Law Student, University of Virginia (MPP, JD 2020)
Course Evaluations
Taking a simple average of courses taught at Batten and categories, students rated her effectiveness as an instructor. 4.84/5

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<th>Worthwhile Course</th>
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Additional Excerpts from Letters of Support
"Professor Gelsdorf has an incredible reputation. This is because not only is her work excellent, but because she is pushing the boundaries of discovery to truly have an impact on improving global humanitarian aid. For the past two years we have been engaged in her Humanitarian Collaborative project. In addition to her research, the world is already benefitting from her gifts as a teacher. She has sent numerous interns to our United Nations office. We see how she has inspired them and given them a strong sense of ethics and rigor in their approach to those complicated issues. The State of Virginia is lucky to be able to call Professor Gelsdorf one of their own." -Kirsten Mildren, Chief Public Advocacy/Campaigns, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

"Professor Gelsdorf is one of the truly rare professors who go beyond the call to both educate and inspire students; instead, she constructs spaces where their students feel free to inhabit alternative perspectives and envision more expansive futures for themselves. However, what makes her distinctive, and deserving of this award, is her investment in mentorship and propensity to have an individualized impact on every student she encounters — changing professional trajectories and increasing moral reflection for countless students, enabling personal growth which extends far beyond the classroom. Over the years, her students have come to expect from her the highest caliber of rigor and instruction in the classroom, and concerted, generous mentorship outside of it. In her class, I was not handed inflated grades; instead, we worked for them and received kind, individualized and incisive critiques reflecting her genuine support for us as people, not just students. However, sharing feedback with Professor Gelsdorf was always a dialogue; we were constantly invited to offer constructive feedback on her teaching and be co-designers of the curriculum. For example, when we said we wanted more professional opportunities, Professor Gelsdorf created a partnership between our class and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Charlottesville, enabling students to work as research assistants and gain practical, enriching experience working beyond Grounds.” -Lauren Jackson, UVA BA 17’ (current journalist with New York Times)

"One of the toughest and most valuable lessons I will take from Professor Gelsdorf is to face ambiguity with a positive attitude. In an academic world plagued by detailed rubrics, stale lectures and cookie cutter paths to success, she stands out as a champion of the unknown and
uncomfortable. She taught me how to thrive in ambiguous situations by breaking down my fears of failure and embracing risk. I am lucky to have known Kirsten as a professor, team member, boss, and mentor." -Rita Clifton, Alum, Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy (MPP ’19)

“This book [Understanding the Humanitarian World] is a much-needed introductory text on how and why the United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and hundreds of international and national non-governmental organizations do what they do in times of crisis and conflict. *It will be essential reading* for students and practitioners and others with an interest in humanitarian action, international humanitarian and human rights law, disaster management and international relations.” -Jan Egeland, Secretary General Norwegian Refugee Council/former United Nations Emergency Coordinator and Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs

“Professor Gelsdorf’s service to the university and to the Batten School is compelling. She has participated in an exceptional number of committees at Batten, including: the Executive Committee (Batten’s elected governing body). **Professor Gelsdorf’s service contributions to the Batten School, the University, and the community are on par with the most generous service contributors at the university.**” -Jay Shimshack, Associate Dean, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy

“This is Kirsten’s fourth year at the Batten School (joining us following a successful career working to resolve humanitarian aid crises throughout the world), over which she has combined her compassion, natural abilities, and tenacious work effort to become a star teacher. Tying theory to real-world experience is second nature to Professor Gelsdorf, from simulating refugee resettlement activities in Charlottesville to holding a multi-day humanitarian crisis simulation in the woods, complete with abductions and high-stakes negotiations used to train USAID and State Department officials.” -Craig Volden, Former Associate Dean, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy

“Despite her extremely busy schedule in the Spring 2017, Professor Gelsdorf agreed to take on the task of leading an independent study for me and another student who had identified education on nonprofits as a gap in our curriculum to that point. She took the time in advance its start to ensure that the curriculum we set out for ourselves aligned directly to our personal and professional goals — a thoughtfulness that I came to understand as a hallmark of her teaching style and philosophy. Equally impressive and important was the dynamism she brought to the curriculum — this was not just a course recounting what had been done in this industry. Instead, Professor Gelsdorf challenged us to analyze the successes, failures, and trends in the nonprofit space, and use it to inform forward-looking critical thinking on ways to shape its trajectory. I found this experience invaluable as I went into my first job, which was in a newsroom that focused on global development. I will close with excerpts from emails that I sent to Professor Gelsdorf over the last few years, as I believe they demonstrate the ongoing impact she has had on me and many of her former students:

- “Your classes and mentorship were so valuable throughout my job hunt, whether it was having the confidence to do timed assignments or being able to speak about the professional skills I was able to gain through the APP.”
- “Your class has been so relevant in the day-to-day of my job, so I just wanted to say thank you for the practical assignments and having us stay on top of the trends!”
- “Though it’s hard to believe it’s been well over a year since graduating, I was still referencing your classes — and above all, your influence — throughout the process, so just wanted to share the news.”

-Sumedha Deshmahuk, MPP 2017’ Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy
Student-written articles on her ‘Global Humanitarian Crises Response’ Course (without her knowing)

THE CAVALIER DAILY

Why everyone should take Global Humanitarian Crises

How this class has impacted both my academic interest and my worldview

By Luke Fischer | 02/14/2018


Richard Dizon | Cavalier Daily

It’s a great feeling to walk out of a classroom truly inspired. For most students, class time is spent fidgeting in desks and checking the clock every five minutes, watching the time tick away slower than desired. There are occasional lectures that pique the interest of the entire class, but it’s natural that college students would rather be sipping Twisted Teas on Mad Bowl than sitting in a lecture hall for hours on end. However, when we find a course that can not only sustain our interest but also leaves us genuinely excited about coming to class, we are reminded why were at the University in the first place.

This is becoming a familiar feeling now that I’m enrolled in Global Humanitarian Crises with Kirsten Gelsdorf. The course centers around the innumerable crises that currently plague our world and the international humanitarian responses that seek to alleviate them. These are stories that we hear about in the news, such as the Haiti Earthquake or the Syrian Refugee Crisis. We see pictures plastered across CNN and read about various non-governmental organizations that respond to disasters, but Prof. Gelsdorf delves into the intricate process, careful steps and thoughtful planning that are required for a successful response and recovery.

Because Gelsdorf brings over 20 years of experience working for the United Nations, her students learn from someone who responds directly to conflicts and disasters across the globe. For instance, our first class was postponed because she was facilitating a simulation between the American Red Cross, Mexican Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross to prepare for future North American emergencies. In order to prepare us for real humanitarian issues, she poses difficult questions and attempts to recreate the complex circumstances that a typical aid worker faces on a daily basis. She tests our ability to think critically and analyze problems quickly through timed assessments, prompting us to hone our reasoning skills.

While class takes place in a large lecture hall with all 200 seats filled, Prof. Gelsdorf approaches it like an intimate discussion section, encouraging participation and allowing her students to share personal stories related to the crises we study. To supplement class themes, Gelsdorf also welcomes an array of guest speakers who have held some of the top positions in the humanitarian aid field, including directors at the World Food Program and her former colleagues at the UN. They share their experiences and photographs, placing us directly in their shoes as they responded to the crises.

For an intended public policy major with undecided career aspirations, the most valuable part of the course for me is how accessible and attractive Gelsdorf makes the humanitarian aid field seem.

While she and her guest speakers acknowledge that it is a high-pressure, high-stress industry, they recognize that there is no single skillset or type of person best suited to be a humanitarian aid worker. Because the needs during disasters are so great and the environment is so complicated, students from all backgrounds and majors are required. From civil engineers building new water systems during a drought to accountants and financial analysts managing donor funds, it takes an actual village of diverse responders to manage a crisis.

Although I have only been in this class for about a month, it has impacted both my academic interest and my worldview. At a time where the news cycle is full of negativity and political pettiness, Global Humanitarian Crises reminds me that a sentiment of charity and altruism still exists. It prompts us to consider that there are career paths — besides those that seek to simply accumulate the most wealth — that can enact real change in the world and save the lives of those victims that we only hear about on the news.
The Class You Never Knew You Needed

By Mac Harris • UVA Contributor • Lifestyle March 2, 2018 at 12:04am

“Global Humanitarian Crises: Dilemmas, Leadership, and Action” taught by Professor Kirsten Gelsdorf is one of the best classes I have taken at UVA by far. If you are looking for a class that will change your world perspective, teach you skills about how to be both thoughtful and proactive, and leave you after every lecture with a renewed sense of hope for the world...this class is for you.

First of all, Professor Gelsdorf is the role model you never knew you needed. She has 20 years of UN experience and service behind her, from multiple roles on the front line of response to a policy coordinator in a New York. She carries the class in an awe-inspiring, yet instructional way that makes the hour and fifteen minutes feel like a blink of an eye.

We have covered the history of humanitarian aid, focusing on monumental crises such as Ethiopia in 1984 and the impact and change each crises bestows on the humanitarian world. After spending a couple weeks learning about major UN agencies and NGOs, our class feels comfortable discussing them in their weird, and often random, acronyms—which feels pretty official, if you ask me. Over the next couple weeks we are going to go over tools of implementation, how to respond, and how to successfully operate a refugee camp. One of the things I love about this class is that is really is theory and practice. There is never a concept that we learn about that isn’t then explained in practice, which makes this class feel different from any other course. If you haven’t already noted this class on SIS, let me make one more point for my case. Professor Gelsdorf has many friends from her professional background and she invites them for guest lectures—and they usually come bearing real-time pictures.

What truly makes this class amazing is her emphasis on turning our lectures into a reality. While it is a course offered through the Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, Professor Gelsdorf and her guests, make the point that anyone can be a humanitarian worker. And even if you don’t want to go into humanitarian aid, the things we learn are applicable to anything. At its core, this class is about learning how to do good in the world—something that should always be sought after.

Some Additional Articles and Coverage

- “Batten Professor Kirsten Gelsdorf Receives All-University Teaching Award,” Batten News
- “Bringing Contemplation to Life—Kirsten Gelsdorf,” UVA Contemplative Sciences Center
- “Collaborative Visual Storytelling,” Batten News
- “Leading from Everywhere,” Batten Reports Magazine
- “Toward Compassion and Action,” Batten Reports Magazine
- “Globetrotting Batten Student Did Anything but Stay Home for School,” Batten News
- “What do you get when you cross a doctor and an impact investor? A reviewer’s perspective on the Humanitarian Grand Challenge,” Grand Challenges Website
- “Kirsten Gelsdorf to Advise Humanitarian Data Center in The Hague,” Batten News

Photos of Professor Gelsdorf working on policy initiatives and engaged student learning

Speaking at the United Nations on research about the effectiveness of the commitments to the World Humanitarian Summit
Leading a session at American Red Cross Headquarters at the North American Humanitarian Response Summit
Leading a discussion with students at the Humanitarian Field Training in rural Virginia