

INTERVIEW WITH DR. CHRISTOPHER SILVER

# 2011, A MASTER'S PROGRAMME IN SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Image courtesy of Dr. Christopher Silver



CITYGREEN interviews Dr. Christopher Silver, Ph.D., FAICP, Professor and Dean, College of Design, Construction and Planning, University of Florida. He introduces and promotes the exciting Master's Programme in Sustainable Design, which will be offered by the University of Florida, in partnership with the Center for American Education in Singapore, in January 2011.

**CG: CITYGREEN**

**DS: Dr. Silver**

**CG: The University of Florida is partnering with the Center for American Education (CAE) to offer a Master's Programme in Sustainable Design?**

**DS:** Yes, we are partnering with the Center for American Education (CAE) because of their successful track record working with US-based universities to offer degree programmes in Singapore. They offer facilities that will make it possible for students to engage in the sort of interactive programmes that we have developed, and because they fully appreciate the value of our unique offering.

**CG: When are you launching this programme?**

**DS:** We are launching the programme in early January 2011.

**CG: What is the curriculum like? Are students required to attend classes or are these all done online?**

**DS:** The curriculum for the programme includes a set of core courses in the first semester, studio and electives during the second semester, and then a capstone course (leading to a several-week studio and field visit to the University of Florida) and additional electives in the third and final semester. Over the course of the year-long programme, there will be five separate extended but intensive live sessions at CAE in Singapore, and the final capstone session at the University of Florida, supplemented in between by web-based instruction, regular video conferencing, and continuous engagement with University of Florida faculty.

**CG: There are a couple of programmes offered in Singapore that are related to the topic of "Sustainable Design." How does your programme differ from them? Why should a prospective student sign up for your course?**

**DS:** None of the available sustainability offerings provides the breadth and depth offered by the University of Florida. Our faculty is drawn from architecture, building construction, historic preservation, interior design, landscape architecture and urban and regional planning, and includes experts with significant applied experience in all aspects of sustainability within urban and regional contexts. These are our regular faculty, not adjuncts or temporary faculty hired to deliver an overseas programme. Thus, they bring high-level instructional skills along with research and applied professional experience in the field. The unique ability to compact the curriculum within a single calendar year enables participants to gain in-depth knowledge in all aspects of sustainability, without the disruption of programmes structured over two or more years. The University of Florida is one of the largest and most prestigious public institutions in the United States, and is recognised as a leading institution in the area of sustainability.

**CG: How will they benefit from taking this course?**

**DS:** Individuals will enhance their skills and knowledge in sustainability to improve their performance in their current positions, or prepare themselves for positions within the growing field of green and sustainable development. Because each student will be able to choose an advising team reflecting his or her individual interests within the broader field of sustainability, the curriculum chosen can be tailored to his or her needs.

**CG: Why should prospective students sign up now?**

**DS:** To encourage and facilitate students to enrol in our initial January 2011 cohort, we have reduced programme costs by nearly 40% below what it would cost to do this same programme on campus at the University of Florida. And to reduce further the costs for securing a Masters degree from a leading U.S. university, we are bringing the programme to the Southeast Asian region. It could not be easier to secure this post-graduate degree.

**CG: Who will be teaching this course? Are you tying up with National Parks Board Singapore?**

**DS:** Our sustainability faculty team, comprised of more than 20 leading academics, has built the online components of instruction and is going to come to Singapore to deliver the live sessions. Those who do not travel to Singapore will be available through video conferencing and regular e-communication, as well as during the on-campus session in the third semester to help students bring their programme to a successful conclusion. We are exploring partnering with the National Parks in Singapore, which will give us the ability to share our exciting programme with professionals routinely engaged in advancing environmental and sustainability objectives. Our faculty is as eager to learn about Singapore's extremely advanced efforts in environmental and land use sustainability as they are to share their perspectives drawn from a variety of other experiences.

*Christopher Silver, Ph.D., FAICP is a professor at and the Dean of the University of Florida's College of Design, Construction and Planning. He served as professor and Head of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (1998-2006). Prior to that, Dr. Silver served as Urban Development Advisor to Indonesia under a U.S. Agency for International Development project (1995-1997). His international experience in Indonesia began in 1989 with a Fulbright Senior Lectureship at the University of Indonesia, followed by appointments in 1992 and 2004 at the Institute of Technology Bandung. He has also held academic and administrative appointments at Virginia Commonwealth University (1979-1997). He holds a Bachelor's degree from St. Lawrence University, a Master's and Ph.D. in History from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and a Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree from Virginia Commonwealth University. He has authored or co-authored several books, articles, presentations and speeches and has held major positions in several national professional organisations. He currently serves as the General Secretary of the International Planning Society.*

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