

Environmental Studies
The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

Memorandum

1 July 2003

To: Michael Zimmerman

From: Tom Bickford and David Barnhill

Cc. John Cross, ES Faculty

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM REPORT

Program Accomplishments & Activities (2002-2003 AY)

- The ES Program has 26 declared majors as of Spring 2003. This is well ahead of the target of 17-20 given in last year's report. There are 23 minors. Given that the program has been severely hampered by the loss of faculty in ES, Geography and other supporting departments we are very pleased with these numbers. We believe that the program will grow substantially when the program is fully staffed. This underscores the importance of replacement searches for Adrian Ivakhiv and Charles Allen. It is critical that these searches be allowed to go ahead despite budget cuts. There is enormous interest in the program from both students currently at UW Oshkosh and among prospective students when they visit campus.
- The program was successful in hiring a replacement to take over from Bron Taylor as Director. Dr. Barnhill is an excellent hire and will greatly improve the program. It is also good to see Michael Lizotte return to the program.
- The ES Program co-hosted an Earth Charter Community Summit meeting in September 2002. There was a weeklong series of panels, keynote speakers and other events connected with the Earth Charter. We are the only campus in the country to devote an entire week to the Earth Charter. The meeting brought together UW faculty, administration, students and the Oshkosh community together for a day discussing Earth Charter principles and how the university and the local community can support the charter. The ES program will again be very active in the Earth Charter this coming October.
- Communicated effectively with all ES faculty, students, and prospective students (including by a newsletter, regularly updated program web site, and email). ES faculty and students worked together on a number of events to celebrate Earth Day including planting trees on campus.
- Coordinated ES courses, across all the various departments, so that they do not conflict and make difficult the schedules of ES students.
- The ES Program's new by-laws have been approved by the Faculty Senate.
- The ES program has added four electives, approved by the Faculty Senate, to its program: *Introduction to Limnology*, *Field Ecology*, *Environmental Economics*, and *Natural Resource Economics*.
- The ES faculty have continued to be involved in research and conferences. Adrian Ivakhiv presented papers at three conferences including one outside of his discipline (The national Geography conference in New Orleans). He has also been involved in collaborative research with ES students, and he continues to be active with the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. David Barnhill has continued his work as Associate Editor of the *Encyclopedia of*

Religion and Nature, in which five of his articles will appear. In the fall of 2002 he published an essay on American nature writer Gary Snyder in *Worldviews: Environment, Culture, and Religion*, using the biological concept of ecosystem to analyze his view of culture. He is also finishing two book manuscripts scheduled to be published next year by the State University of New York Press. They consist of a two-volume translation of the Japanese nature writer Matsuo Bashō. The research activities of Tom Bickford and others involved with the ES Program are included in the end of the year reports of other departments.

Planning Issues (2002-2003 AY)

- The ES program has achieved its stated goal of becoming a major but it has also been affected by the departure of Drs. Taylor and Allen last year and Dr. Ivakhiv this year. We have been successful in replacing Dr. Taylor with Dr. Barnhill. It is critical that the program be allowed to search for a replacement for Dr. Ivakhiv and that Geography be allowed to search for a replacement for Dr. Allen. We have a lot of momentum as evidence by the fact that we have gone from 10 majors in June 2002 to the current 26 declared majors now. It is essential to keep the program going by replacing departing faculty. It is also important that the program be allowed to get new faculty lines once the current budget problems are over. As the past two years have shown, the program is highly vulnerable to any resignations. The major is highly dependent on other programs to offer courses for the major. Moreover, without additional faculty, we are limited in the kind of major we can offer, and will not be able to offer what we consider to be the most “cutting edge” curriculum possible. We wish to highlight the need, expressed repeatedly by other ES directors to us, for establishing a core faculty of at least three individuals devoted primarily to Environmental Studies. This is generally considered the minimum staff to offer a sustainable program of any kind, one in which faculty can flourish. The program realizes that budgetary problems will limit what we and other programs can accomplish. We simply wish to stress, once again, the need to pursue new faculty lines when the opportunity arises.
- Greater clerical support is also needed. While the program currently has two excellent student assistants, they will graduate in a year. Even if new students of an equally high caliber are found, relying on student assistants is not a viable long-term solution. Now that the program is a major, the costs of not having a well-trained program assistant become more obvious. Managing the ES program, with its diverse faculty from many departments is a complicated and arduous task, and experience with the routines and procedures of the program is critical.
- We will continue to build the major and establish a high profile on campus. Even with the departure of an excellent colleague, we have a strong program that seeks to be on the cutting edge in its curriculum. We will play an active role in campus events aimed at raising the awareness of environmental issues on campus and in the community. We will also continue are commitment to excellence in teaching and research.

Program Objectives (2002-2003 AY)

- Replace departing staff.
- Seek to increase the number of majors and minors.
- Work toward establishing a more sustainable clerical situation for the program.
- Continue the process of diversifying our curriculum, faculty, and student body.