

UCC Program Review Committee - Summary of Review

Program – Environmental Studies

This program includes the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

- M.S. in Environmental Studies
- Graduate Certificate in Environmental Sustainability
- Undergraduate Certificate Environmental Studies

Recommendation

This program is found to be viable.

Date of last review – ?

Date of this review – AY 2019

This review has been sent to school director and the dean, their joint response is attached.

The Graduate Council discussed this review and had no additional concerns or comments.

Review of the Environmental Studies Program, The Voinovich School, Ohio University.

March 2019

Review Team

Peter Walker, Dean, Falk School of Sustainability and Environment, Chatham University

Gary Holcomb, Professor of African American Literature, Ohio University

Zaki Kuruppallil, Assistant Chair, Kraft Family Scholar/Associate Professor, Engineering Technology and Management, Ohio University

Terry Masada, Assistant Chair, Professor of Civil Engineering, Ohio University

1: Executive Summary

The graduate Environmental Studies Program (ESP) is fundamentally sound. Some minor adjustments are needed to its present structure to ensure academic coherence and consistency of quality in the program. Growth opportunities exist using the program's present structure by adding new research areas, noting that this is at the cost of increased research fund-raising and spending, and increased staff and faculty.

The program's undergraduate offerings essentially serve an internal university market and bring no additional revenue into the university. The utility of continuing these offerings, which by necessity use up the time of program faculty, is something an external review can't really pass judgement on.

It is the consensus of the reviewers that the program in its present form is entirely viable and lays the foundation for further growth.

The program and Ohio University are not immune from the demographic trends of the eastern USA which project a substantial shrinking of the percentage and actual number of 18-25 year olds in the population and thus potential students. Real growth in the graduate program will be most possible though adding new packaging of programs - be they online, stackable certificates or tailored in-house training for businesses, which appeal to new sectors of the population.

2: Framing the Review

Universities, like most not-for-profit organizations, operate to a triple bottom line: maximize service for the public good, maximize intellectual space and financial security for their employees, and maximize financial viability for the organization as a whole. These three imperatives often collide and require conscious tradeoffs. They change over time with any one of them being more under threat than the others.

At present, we see two main threats to universities. First, the financial imperative. The basic business model of publicly subsidized institutions coupled with fee-paying 18-25 year-olds is looking less and less viable, especially in the eastern USA where the % population and actual population in the target demographic range has been and will continue to go down. Coupled with this, the trend away from funding public institutions, to a more neoliberal individualized free market model, has led to a decreasing willingness of federal, state and municipal bodies to fund universities. Basically, universities need to explore new markets and new business models.

Second, the public good imperative. The last thirty years have seen an increased tendency of students and their parents to value a degree as a means to a job. Students talk of return on investment: If I do program A at cost B, how much more average salary does that set me up for

than the cheaper program C? There is a legitimate concern, which left unchecked drives towards favoring vocational programs and very narrow skill-sets rather than the more public-good goal of education to create active, informed citizens.

It is through the lens of these two eternally driven imperatives that we think we need to look at the future of the Environmental Studies Program.

Internally, Dr. Nellis, Ohio University's President, has identified four Strategic Pathways to guide the university's future:

- Become a National Leader for Diversity and Inclusion
- Enhance the Overall Academic Quality of the University
- Build a University Engagement Ecosystem
- Become a Place Where Dialogue and Rigorous, Civil Debate are Institutional Hallmarks

3: The Review Process

The external reviewer (**Peter Walker**, Dean, Falk School of Sustainability and Environment, Chatham University) spent two days in March 2019 at Ohio University interviewing a range of program faculty, staff and students (See appendix A). In these interviews, he was accompanied by internal reviewers:

- **Gary Holcomb** Professor of African American Literature,
- **Zaki Kuruppallil**, Assistant Chair, Kraft Family Scholar/Associate Professor, Engineering Technology and Management, and
- **Terry Masada**, Assistant Chair, Professor of Civil Engineering

Various members of the program supplied previous reviews and other documents prior to the interviews and kindly supplied more material upon request as the evaluation progressed.

Notes were taken by all reviewers at each interview and key findings and suggestions discussed as the interviews progressed. This final draft was prepared as a shared paper on Google Docs with input from all reviewers. The final product remains the responsibility of the external reviewer.

4: The Structure and Rationale of the Environmental Studies Masters Program

The Masters in Environmental Studies was founded in the 1990s and fully moved into the Voinovich School, its present home, in 2011. In its present incarnation, it is a research-driven program with students taking a limited number of graduate level core courses and then, theoretically, having choices from all grad courses offered at OU, plus a variable number of credits for their thesis research work and write up. Students wishing to take a more applied approach to

their research can opt for a practicum rather than thesis. This is more of a problem-solving project, often carried out with or for a local community partner.

At present, students wishing to take the practicum have to complete a total of 40 credits to graduate, whilst those doing the thesis need only 36.

The curriculum

1. Students take four core classes
 - o ES 6800 | Seminar: Community-Based ES | 1
 - o ES 6810 | Seminar: Environmental Society | 3
 - o ES 6820 | Seminar: Ecology and Environmental Issues | 3
 - o ES 6830 | Concepts in Sustainability | 3
2. A colloquium mixing professional development and introductions to key faculty,
3. A methods course, choosing from thirteen courses offered in other programs in the university and electives,
4. Four approved electives,
5. At least one research/thesis credit or Practicum credit.

In the past six years, the program has varied in intake number from 13 to 25 with an average of 16 students joining the program each year (see figure 1), with an expectation of graduating in two years. Actual graduation rates are shown in figure 2. On average, 30% of the intake graduate at the end of their second spring semester and 53% at the end of the following summer.

Over the last three years, some 77% of students completing applications have been accepted into the program and of those, 70% matriculated giving an average matriculation yield on applicants of 52%.

On average for the 2015-18 period, 77% of students who completed applications were accepted into the program, and 70% of them ended up matriculating. These rates are similar to other Environmental and Sustainability master programs.

The 2014 intake has an exceptionally low graduation rate. Taking that year out of the equation, spring and summer graduation rates go up to 35% and 62% respectively.

Entry year	Started Fall Semester	Graduated in 2 years, # and %		Additional Graduated by end of 2nd Summer, # and %	
		#	%	#	%
2011-12	13	6	46%	2	62%
2012-13	16	5	31%	0	31%
2013-14	13	3	23%	6	69%
2014-15	14	1	7%	0	7%
2015-16	25	4	16%	13	68%
2016-17	14	8	57%	3	79%
average	16		30%		53%

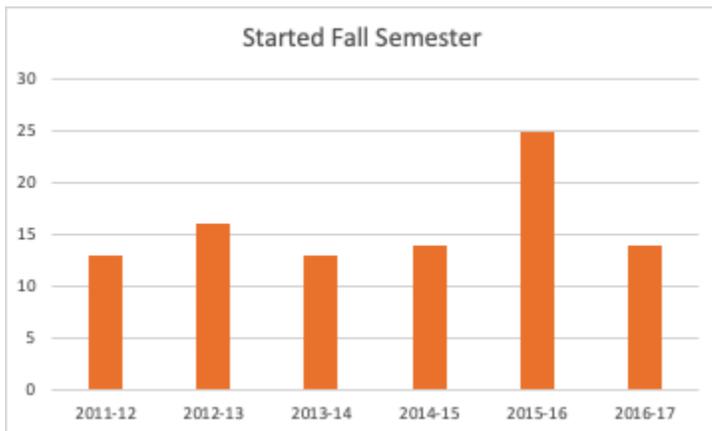


Figure 1. ES Program's Intake Numbers



Figure 2. Actual Graduation Rates

Program Academic Assessment

The [assessment plan](#) for the program is published on the university's website. The program director offered that they have only just started using the assessment plan and realized it is not as functional as they would like.

The plan lists the following five learning outcomes (also referred to as program objectives):

1. Describe environmental concepts and methods;
2. Formulate research questions and implement methods to answer these questions;
3. Evaluate environmental issues from an interdisciplinary perspective;
4. Demonstrate written and oral communication skills, and;
5. Describe the value of community engagement.

It goes on to describe in some detail the following four instruments used to assess the learning outcomes:

1. Interdisciplinary Terms, Concepts, and Acronyms Test,
2. ES 6800 Seminar in Community-Based Environmental Studies,
3. Oral and Written Thesis or Leadership Practicum Proposal,
4. Oral and Written Thesis or Leadership Practicum Defense.

No matrix is provided which would show how the program learning outcomes are fed down into the learning outcomes of the core courses.

Student funding

There are three models for funding students through their program:

1. **Graduate Assistants (GAs)** in 2018 receive \$12,244 stipends and full tuition waivers for two semesters.
2. **Graduate Research Scholars (GRSs)** receive \$1,800 stipends and a partial tuition waiver for two semesters.
3. **Full Fee Paying** but actively assisted by the program to find university and alternative sources of funding.

GAs and GRSs are required to work during the fall and spring semesters 15 hours per week for GAs and 6 hours per week for GRSs as part of student-faculty-staff teams.

Recruiting students

Students seem to be recruited mostly by friends and former students recommending the program. All the students we had lunch with came in this way. They all then went to the website to learn more about the program. No student reported being recruited via college fairs, email, or

social media advertising. This is typical of graduate programs where the “clients” are much more discerning and specific in their needs than at the undergraduate level.

All faculty, staff and students interviewed felt the website did not do the program justice nor acted as a good recruiting tool. A screen shot of the ESP’s home page is shown below. Note there is no highlighting of the research programs, which drive the school, and the recruiting button is hidden way down at the bottom of the page.

When you access the homepage on a mobile device, which is how most students now work, the same page as below is displayed and is just about impossible to read.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Environmental Studies program at the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. The header features the school's name and the program title "Environmental Studies" in a large green font. A navigation bar includes links for Home, Students, Faculty/Staff, Alumni, About, News/Events, and Voinovich School. The main content area is divided into several sections: a video player for the "Environmental Studies Program" with a play button, a large group photo of the "MSES Class of 2015", a "Welcome to Environmental Studies" section with a list of program features, an "Announcements" sidebar with three news items, a "Featured Stories" section with three articles, and a footer with social media icons and an "Apply Now!" button.

Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs

Environmental Studies

Home Students Faculty/Staff Alumni About News/Events Voinovich School

Environmental Studies Program

MSES Class of 2015

Welcome to Environmental Studies

At the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, this is what Environmental Studies looks like:

- Studying global trends to support local action
- Crossing disciplines to research the whole story
- Learning by doing through hands on practicum partnerships, and
- Working side by side with faculty and professional staff in the field

We're making the map, not just following it. From the computer lab to the greenhouse ... From the creek bed to the boardroom ... The Environmental Studies Program makes you part of the answer. Join us!

[Read more about us](#)

Announcements

News & Events >

Free Ohio EPA-supported storm drain stenciling kits designed with downstream in mind
[Read More](#)

The Future of Environmental Politics and Communication: A First of Many Conversations
[Read More](#)

MSES students compete in regional climate change simulation
Two students in the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs Master of ...
[Read More](#)

Featured Stories

See All >

Environmental studies student awarded for research on re-domestication of native crop June 13
[Read More](#)

New interactive watershed website launched by the Voinovich School offers educational opportunities for students and teachers June 7
[Read More](#)

OHIO alumnae combines environmental studies and June 7

Apply Now!

Faculty

The program is now supported by four full-time faculty, each with a course load of two courses, thus eight dedicated courses available across the program, thus allowing for the coverage of the necessary core courses and some key electives, assuming student cohort sizes remain small enough to warrant just one section of each course.

Staff

The program has three dedicated staff members. With its reliance on research programs to bring in students, it relies on the research activities of the separate Energy and Environment Research program, which also reports to the School Dean. This soft funded program employs between 50 and 70 staff, depending on project load.

Advisory Committee

The program's advisory committee is made up of faculty from other parts of the university who teach into the program and are supportive of its success. It was not entirely clear what status the committee has, how many people are on it, or how long people serve on it, though this probably doesn't matter, as it is clear that the committee provides a welcome way for faculty to share ideas, support the program, and be recognized for the contributions they make to the program. The committee, therefore, functions more like a community of practice and as such might benefit from enlarging to include other actors in the field.

Alumni

The alumni are surveyed each year using the survey shown in Appendix 2. The program offers that there is a very low completion rate on these surveys and thus they have very patchy knowledge about where their graduating students are going, what jobs they have, and how much they are earning.

There is no formal attempt to build a program alumni grouping and systematically stay in touch, so there is very little knowledge of career progression for the program alumni.

Facilities

The program has benefited from its absorption into the school, as it now has a physical home with sufficient office, class and meeting room space, all in close proximity. The program seems to have sufficient lab space, for the moment, but faculty and staff noted that the labs were at some distance from the rest of the program facilities.

5: Graduate Certificate in Environmental Sustainability

The Environmental Sustainability Graduate Certificate allows graduate students outside of the EPS to develop skills and understanding of crosscutting sustainability themes. It consists of 15 credits, including two obligatory courses taught by ESP faculty. At present, there are only a handful of students enrolled.

The certificate provides an opportunity to the existing graduate student body but does not bring in new students or revenue.

6: Existing Undergraduate Programming

Undergraduate Certificate in Environmental Studies

The 18-credit Environmental Studies Undergraduate Certificate is an internally offered product, with a required capstone course or environmental leadership internship led by environmental studies faculty, plus additional relevant courses from across the university. Some 60 students appear to be enrolled in the program.

Honors Tutorial College - Environmental Studies

This program presently has 25 students enrolled making it the third largest HTC in the university. To quote from the ESP's recent internal review.

“Eight tutorials are required over the course of the four-year ES certificate program. Students complete a Senior Thesis under the direction of a faculty mentor and with approval of the DOS and the Dean of the Honors Tutorial College. In addition, students are expected to take a minimum of six upper-division environmental courses, including one each from the program's core areas: humanities, social sciences, and natural and physical sciences.”

The key point to note is that these two products are internal to the university. They certainly enhance the educational opportunities of existing students and the mission of the program to “prepare future environmental leaders.” However, they do not bring in additional students or revenue to the university, school or program, but they do incur a cost in terms of the additional faculty time needed to support the tutorials and theses.

7: Discussion of Existing ESP

Research driven recruiting

Promoting the program as being research-driven sets it apart from most other master programs in environmental and sustainability studies. Most are driven by curriculum, with research as an add-on. This gives the program a marketing and, with the present funding, a recruiting edge over its competitors. Students graduating from the program do so with a strong set of research and organizational skills, and, through their work with local partner organizations, a good chance of employment.

The down side of linking the program so tightly with research is that it limits its growth. Each research area can only absorb so many students (both in terms of financial support and work for them to do). To grow the program would require adding new areas of research which of course will add additional costs. So, there is scope for growth here but no economies of scale.

Recommendation: The program should look at expanding into new areas of research to attract extra cadres of students. Four areas identified by faculty, staff and the advisory board (where there is a market and likely available funding) are, in order of preference:

1. **Sustainability in the urban and built environment.** Most people live in towns, and many towns face serious environmental problems forcing them to look for more sustainable solutions for their futures.
2. **Local agriculture, or rather rural economies.** Farming in the Athens region is a lifestyle hovering around the poverty line. If the rural economy is to be regenerated, family farming alone won't cut it. So, what does an environmentally sound and sustainable rural economy look like?
3. **Data analytics.** At the core of environmental problems and their solutions lie complex every fluctuating systems. Many of these systems, be they built, economic, social or natural, render vast amounts of data in real time which allow students to uncover pattern, explore causality and test possible solutions. Data analytics, using real-time massive data sets, is becoming a key tool for the environmental scientist.
4. **Sustainable businesses and processes.** Many more companies now see sustainability and respect for the environment as part of their business plan. Partly because wasting less and turning former waste lines into profit lines makes business sense and partly because the market for greener products is growing. Most businesses do not know how to "green" their business. There is a research and development market here which the program could tap into.

The website

Other than word of mouth, we know the website is the single most important recruiting tool. At present it is not up to the job

Recommendation: Redesign the website to focus on recruiting students, ensuring that the mobile version of the site is easy to navigate.

Enhancing existing program quality

The program presently feels like a successful start-up, ready to turn into a more structured organization. To this end, if it is to remain competitive, it needs to be more systematic in monitoring its place in the market.

Recommendation: The program identifies a small set of peer programs at other universities it sees as competitors and regularly monitors its standing in comparison to those programs, maybe including this in the program's annual report.

At the same time, there are a number of small adjustments to the program which could be made to enhance its quality.

Recommendation: Fix the program size at the same number of credits, regardless of whether a student is doing a thesis or a practicum. Whilst there may have been reasons in the past for requiring students doing the practicum to take more credits to graduate, it really is not defensible from an academic standpoint and is of no value as a marketing tool.

Students enter the program from a wide variety of educational and cultural backgrounds, this is one of its strengths. It also surfaces a problem shared by all holistic styled programs - one cannot assume background understanding in any one field. Most environmental and sustainability programs deal with this by having a set of core courses students must take to ensure they are up to speed on the must-have knowledge and skills of the program. The ESP does this through its four core courses. In discussions with faculty and students, there was a widespread desire to revisit just what core knowledge and skills were needed and how they should be packaged into courses. In particular, concern was expressed over the lack of common understanding of what good science was, how it is practiced and how evidence-based policy is derived from it.

Recommendation:

- 1. Review the content and number of core courses against the knowledge and skill set essential in this field and in demand from employers.**

2. **Include a new core methods course on the basic philosophy and practice of science and the notion of evidence-based policy making, something even more needed in these days of fake news and policy by Twitter.**
3. **Consider using the concept of Core Competencies¹ in the environmental studies field to shape the expected learning outcomes for the program.**

If the program learning outcomes are going to be revisited then it would also be timely to revisit the program assessment tools and process. The key is to have a system that is relevant, coherent and measurable. In too many universities, program assessments are more like box-ticking exercises than valued quality improvement tools.

Recommendation: The faculty revisit and redesign the program assessment system ensuring that program learning outcomes flow down through course learning outcomes, and that all learning outcomes are formulated using a recognized rubric such as the much cited [Guidelines](#) produced by the American Association of Family Physicians (AAFP)

The Advisory Committee should be a key group in helping review and revise the content of the program. Functioning more like a community of practice, there is scope to enlarge the committees membership and thus its utility.

Recommendation: Consider offering committee places to active program alumni and key local project partners.

Facilities

Office and class space are adequate and co-located. Lab space, though, is an issue. The labs are not co-located with the rest of the facilities. Staff and faculty both saw this as an issue.

Recommendation: Regardless of whether or not the program grows, it will benefit in efficiency and coherence from having its labs co-located with its offices and classrooms.

8: Discussion - The Future

New programs?

The market for programs in Environmental Studies, often now called Sustainability Studies, is a niche one and not likely to grow as for example the market for law, engineering or medical programs.

With a few exceptional outliers, annual program enrollment sizes average between the upper teens and upper twenties. It is likely therefore that although the present program can grow

¹ See as an example: Wiek, A., Bernstein, M., Foley, R., Cohen, M., Forrest, N., Kuzdas, C., Kay, B. and Withycombe Keeler, L., 2015. Operationalising competencies in higher education for sustainable development. *Handbook of higher education for sustainable development*. Routledge, pp.241-260.

incrementally by adding new areas of research to attract new students, it will not grow substantially. There is also a good case to make that its present research-focused hands-on nature would suffer if the faculty/student ratio increased substantially.

Real growth therefore, which is needed both from a mission point of view and an income perspective, will come with new products. Below we recommend some of the products that could be considered. Note that just about every small Environmental or Sustainability studies program is also looking at this range of options.

Recommendation: Explore the possibility of launching one or more of the following products.

- **Inter-university collaborations.** The program at Ohio University has expertise in wetlands and water systems. Other reasonably local graduate programs have expertise in urban sustainability, food systems or aquaculture. Forming a partnership, which allows students to transfer to another university for a semester to gain expertise not offered at Ohio, adds value to the program at no additional cost. If this is done as a no-cost, no-funds-transfer model, all universities in the arrangement benefit.
- **Expand into the online market,** specifically aiming at work-force professionals who want to enhance their skills but cannot afford the time or opportunity costs of leaving the workforce for two years. This can mean an online masters or shorter certificate-like programs.
- **Offer stackable certificates,** whether online or on the ground, packaging education in smaller units (1-9 credits), which can be stacked up to achieve a masters, or just taken as certificates in their own right.
- **Offer in-house “mini-credentials”** delivered directly into a business place, tailored, in collaboration with the employer, for that specific work force.

Faculty and Staff

The program presently has four dedicated faculty and two staff, but draws on the time of many more research staff and faculty in other departments to support the work of students

Faculty

Many of the courses taken by students are delivered by faculty outside of the program, who are represented on the program’s advisory board. Given that a student pursuing the research track takes 11 core credits plus 12 electives and makes up the total credits needed (36) from research/thesis credits, each students ends up taking 13 research credits.

The faculty teach the 11 core credits plus some electives and supervise the 13 research credits/student. At an average matriculation of 13 students/year, that generates 26 students at any one time needing supervision. So, the average faculty member teaches a core course, teaches an elective and supervises six to seven masters research students.

Is this a sustainable load? It really depends where you are coming from. From the external examiner's perspective as the Dean of a school in a small liberal arts college where faculty regularly teach six courses, advise 15-20 undergraduate and mentor the research of up to 12 graduates students in any one year, as well as pursuing their own research, the Ohio load does not seem excessive.

If the university holds that the load level is acceptable, it still remains a fact that under the present model, it is not scalable. To add more students will mean adding more research programs and thus more faculty to supervise students' research. However, with the present program curriculum, there is no obvious need to add more courses as more students are added, until one gets to the point of needing extra sections for popular courses. This suggests that growth of the program in its present form, which will require more faculty, will open up the opportunity to use some of that extra faculty time to explore new offerings the program can consider, as outlined previously in this report.

Staff

The program has three support staff, servicing administrative and students support needs. In such a short visit as the writers had, it really is not possible to judge if the staffing is adequate. What we can say is that it was clear that the staff were highly dedicated and passionate about supporting student success. If the program is to make better use of its alumni (see below) and provide more service to help craft student careers, then, regardless of whether the total number of students grows or not, the program will need more staffing.

Recommendation: The program cannot grow beyond its present size unless it adds more faculty and staff. To grow without additional human resources would be significantly to reduce the quality of the present program.

Alumni

Programs that build and maintain strong alumni networks from the get-go thrive. At present relationships with the program's alumni are ad hoc and underdeveloped. Building alumni commitment brings a whole range of benefits, from enhanced recruiting, through in-program mentoring, to, eventually, funding donations.

Recommendation: Build a strong program alumni network, starting from the moment students enter the program, building an expectation that they will help recruit the next

generation of students, be available, in person or online to help mentor students, contribute to publicizing the program's research and when able, give back to the program in gifts and donations.

Conclusion

The ESP is a well-run, exciting program. The atmosphere between faculty, staff, and students is good, reflecting the desired collegiality needed in pursuing environmental and sustainability solutions. It feels, in many ways, like a successful start-up and, like start-ups, now faces the challenge of maturing, both in terms of systemizing its work practices and breaking out into new markets. All the faculty and staff we talked to understand these two points and were in support of them.

All the review team members would like to express their appreciation to everyone who gave up time to talk with us, all openly and candidly. We hope our report does you justice!

And finally, any factual errors in the report are of our making, and we apologize in advance.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Environmental Studies Program Review Site Visit

External Reviewer: Peter Walker, Chatham University

Internal Reviewers: Gary Holcomb, African American Studies, Zaki Kuruppallil, Engineering Technology and Management, Terry Masada, Civil Engineering

March 7, 2019

8:00 – 9:30 Intro Meeting at Breakfast with Natalie Kruse, Geoff Dabelko, Cutler's Restaurant, Ohio University Inn

9:45 – 10:30 Geoff Dabelko, Room 214, Building 22, the Ridges

10:30 – 10:45 Break

10:45 – 11:30 Derek Kauneckis, Room 214, Building 22, the Ridges

Joe Wakeman drives Peter to Baker

12-1:00 Lunch with ES Graduate Students – Tess Herman, Jennie Brancho, TJ Vanek, Toby Adjuik at Latitude 39, Baker University Center

Joe Wakeman drives Peter to Ridges

1:30-2:30 Energy and Environment Staff Members – Jen Bowman, Kim Miller, Nora Sullivan, Nicole Kirchner, Room 214, Building 22, the Ridges

2:30 – 3:15 Sarah Davis, Room 214, Building 22, the Ridges

3:15 – 3:30 Break

3:30 – 4:30 Meeting with ES advisory board working group – Danny Twilley, Viorel Popescu, Nancy Stevens, Room 214, Building 22, the Ridges

6:15 Natalie will pick Peter up at OU Inn to drive to Salaam

6:30 pm Dinner with Environmental Studies Faculty Group, Salaam

March 8, 2019

9:00-10:00 Meeting with Office of Student Academic Services, Room 214, Building 22

10:00-11:00 Morning session with ES advisory board working group – Nancy Stevens, Geoff Buckley, Scott Miller, Room 214, Building 22

11:00 – 11:45 Natalie Kruse, Room 214, Building 22

Natalie drives Peter to lunch

12:00-1:00 Lunch with Natalie Kruse, Geoff Dabelko, and Nancy Stevens at Thai Paradise

Natalie drives Peter to Ridges

1:30-2:30 Mark Weinberg, Marsha Lewis, Nancy Stevens Room 116 Building 21

2:30-3:00 Natalie Kruse, Director, Environmental Studies

3:00-5:00 Internal and External Reviewer Debrief, Room

Appendix 2: Ohio University GVS Alumni Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 Graduates, As we embark upon a self-study for MSES prior to our seven year program review, we would like to engage with our current/past students to ensure we develop the strongest learning environment possible. For this reason, we ask that you take a few moments to reflect on your education MSES and help us to understand what worked best for you and why.

Q2 What year did you graduate?

- 2017 (1)
- 2016 (2)
- 2015 (3)
- 2014 (4)
- 2013 (5)
- 2012 (6)
- 2011 (7)

Q3 What was the topic of your project?

Q4 When you reflect on your education in environmental studies, what do you recall as the most effective **single learning activity** for conveying complex information? Describe why it was effective.

Q5 What was your most enjoyable class or learning activity? Describe why it was enjoyable.

Q6 What learning experience best prepared you for the practical setting? To function as part of an environmental team? How did these learning activities specifically prepare you to work more effectively?

Q7 What learning experience best helped you to integrate scientific literacy into your current work?

Q8 Is there a class or learning activity that you did *not* enjoy at the time, but that you *now* think improved your efficacy on the job? How or why?

Q9 If you could keep one class or learning activity for future students in MSES, which one would it be and why?

Q10 Are you currently employed in a career field associated with your MSES education? If so, can you tell us about your work?

Q11 Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience in the MSES program or how it connects to your current work?

End of Block: Default Question Block

Graduate Contact Information

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 First Name

Q2 Last Name

Q3 Student Home Address

Q4 City

Q5 State

Q6 Zip Code

Q7 If you are employed after graduation, please tell us where and your job title.

Q8 If you are continuing your education after graduation, please tell us where what you are pursuing.

Q12 Other plans after graduation if not continuing your education or seeking employment such as military service or volunteerism.

Q9 Phone number

Q10 Email

Q11 Do you plan on joining the GVS Alumni Society?

Q13 What was your most valuable experience at The Voinovich School?

End of Block: Default Question Block

To: John Cotton, Program Review Committee

From: Natalie Kruse, Director, Environmental Studies Program

Date: April 10, 2019

Subject: Response to Environmental Studies Program Review

Thank you to the reviewers of the Environmental Studies Program for the productive conversations and timely report. We appreciate their generous giving of time for the site visit. The Program Review process including the self-study, site visit, and review report have contributed positively to our ongoing efforts to advance the Environmental Studies Program and the Voinovich School.

I welcome the opportunity to address several key points in the Program Review Report. I also want to include a few factual corrections to the report for completeness.

Website

The reviewers identified the website as a key recruitment tool for students and we have identified ways that our current website would benefit from increased functionality. As part of the university-wide website update, the Voinovich School is currently overhauling its website and the Environmental Studies Program is directly part of building the new site that will be optimized for both mobile browsing and search engines. We welcome the reviewers reinforcing the importance of this platform.

Alumni Relations

The move Environmental Studies Program moved from the College of Arts and Sciences to the Voinovich School as its institutional home at the beginning of the review period. The Voinovich School started granting the degree within the review period. Alumni tracking and engagement has been difficult and not systematic before or after that move. As a school, we are prioritizing alumni relations and improving these systems moving forward. An alumni group, the Voinovich School Alumni Society, was established during the review period and has focused on professional development and networking for recent alumni. We are working to diversify these efforts and move towards a partnership model to engage a small group of alumni to support program development and a larger group that would give feedback on the program, support student placement, and engage with advancement activities. The Environmental Studies Program 50th anniversary is in 2020, so engaging more effectively with alumni is a particularly timely suggestion.

Core Competencies in Core Courses

We welcome the recommendation of the reviewers to revisit the core competencies and key skills that our students are expected to gain through the core courses, mapping our courses to the learning objectives, and refining student learning assessment in accordance with University and external accreditation processes. This recommendation tracks well with ongoing internal conversations around learning outcomes and external conversations with partners and alums regarding best preparing our students to succeed in a variety of professional settings.

Environmental Studies Advisory Board

The program reviewers recognized the importance of internal and external partnerships to the success of our transdisciplinary Environmental Studies Program. In that vein, they suggested expanding the Environmental Studies Advisory Board to a 'community of practice' to encompass a larger group of associated faculty across campus. They also suggested more formal mechanisms for consulting with alumni and practice partners. We plan to pursue these goals and develop a partnership model with two groups – one smaller executive group of alumni, faculty, staff, and practitioners who support program development, recruitment, student placements, program planning; and a larger community of practice consisting of alumni, faculty, staff, and practitioners who can engage with our program and students through research, practicums, student placement, program feedback, and advancement.

Future Directions

As recommended in the Program Review Report, the Environmental Studies Program is pursuing market analysis for an interdisciplinary online Masters degree built of stackable certificates. This ongoing effort is drawing directly on diverse capacities within the Voinovich School that also include the Masters of Public Administration program and the extensive entrepreneurship, social enterprise, and policy innovation collaborations. We are also working to connect these online offerings with the Voinovich Academy, our executive training center located on the Dublin Campus that serves working professionals. We recognize that our small, engaged faculty will need to seek innovative ways to absorb this additional work load.

Factual Corrections

Page 2: The program was founded in 1970, not the 1990s

Page 3: ES 6800 is worth 2 credit hours

Page 7: Student services staff are not dedicated to the Environmental Studies Program, they are Student Services staff for the Voinovich School as a whole with considerable duties for the Masters of Public Administration Program.

Page 7: Clarification: There is a formal Voinovich School Alumni Group, but not specific to Environmental Studies.

Dean's Response to the Ohio University 7-Year Curriculum Review of the Environmental Studies Program

April 12, 2019

The Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs thanks both the external and internal reviewers for the time they spent with the Environmental Studies Program. Their valuable review report will help us chart the future of the Program. As Dean, I welcome the reviewers' finding that the Program is "fundamentally sound."

I would like to highlight several key observations from the report and their connection to the School's and Advisory Committee's development of Environmental Studies. The Voinovich School in collaboration with the University's Vice Provost for Curricular Innovation is currently in the planning and development stage for future curricular offerings in Environmental Studies with a focus on building an online Master's degree based on a stackable certificate model. I was pleased to see this approach suggested in the report. The School and Office of the Vice Provost have committed resources to undertake market analysis, program development and assessment of return on investment. In addition, as suggested by the Program Review Report, we are beginning research and development to examine opportunities for building programming in environmental leadership and innovation as part of the Voinovich Academy for Excellence in Public Service on the Dublin Campus. This initiative specifically focuses on providing executive education to external stakeholders. The Voinovich Academy's current emerging leadership program with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency provides an opportunity for this program development.

The reviewers recognized the value of the applied research, learning by doing, and partner engagement that is central to the Voinovich School's approach and President Nellis' strategic pathway of engagement. The Ohio University Board of Trustees created the School as its first independent multidisciplinary engagement college. As part of this mandate, the School has a 12-month engaged faculty and professionals' model in which faculty and professionals work closely with community partners to promote economic growth, social impact, sustainability and leadership. Each faculty member links their work to a range of community challenges through applied research, classroom teaching, external training, and service to the region, state, and beyond. To facilitate this model, the School is organized in program partnerships as opposed to traditional departments or divisions. The Voinovich School approach to public service innovation and education is at the heart of the vision of the new American university. Arizona State University's President Michael Crow captures what this dynamic approach can be.

“The idea of the *New American University* offers an intriguing possibility of blending entrepreneurial and engaged approaches in a way that allows universities to differentiate themselves in meaningful ways. The key principles are being responsive to the unique challenges and characteristics of the university’s region; academic excellence with a focus on broad access and diversity; an entrepreneurial approach to the academic enterprise, including transcending disciplinary boundaries; a focus on research that has the potential to impact societal challenges; and direct engagement in the community, locally and globally. This model opens up some interesting opportunities for the role of university public service as a vital component of the American University of the future.” (Crow, 2010; adapted)

Ohio University’s Voinovich School gets great results for students and state and community partners. Faculty and professionals take their tremendous talents and apply them to real world public policy issues – including the difficult task of policy implementation – and bring students along to learn. At the heart of these efforts are countless investments in public-private partnerships designed to enhance state and local government effectiveness as well as economic vitality, quality of life and sustainability. This practical approach to problem solving, explains why the Voinovich School is a 21st Century example of a public university keeping its public service promise.

The reviewers provided valuable suggestions for improving the function of the Environmental Studies Advisory Board, alumni network, and extensive set of partners. We intend to pursue a model that allows a smaller group of engaged alumni, faculty, and staff to actively support the program through a program partnership. These changes will better enable us to pursue collaborative program development, mentoring, student placement, and fundraising. We will also be working to cultivate a larger ‘community of practice’ to include alumni, faculty and staff who support our students and community members. This recommendation fits into the School’s plan to work with senior University Advancement leadership, key stakeholders and outside consultants on the further development of a mission-based advancement strategy for the Voinovich School.

These items represent just some of the valuable input we received from this 7-year review process. The conversations among faculty, professionals, and partners that it sparked before and during the review were highly productive and enlightening. We believe we have achieved a great deal in the 10-year tenure of the Voinovich School and we look forward to Environmental Studies continuing its leading role within the School, across the university and in the region.

The GVS and its environmental science and environmental programs will continue to be active partners in the development of the OHIO Museum Complex on the Ridges.