

Assessment Report

Environmental Studies Major

Spring 2014

I. 2014 Evaluation of Assessment

At our assessment meeting the faculty in Environmental Studies (ENVR) we reviewed our assessment areas and criteria for success (Table 1). Using data and artefacts from the classes of 2013 and 2014, we discussed the degree to which we are meeting our criteria for success in each of our four established assessment areas. We evaluated each area using appropriate evidence as laid out in our assessment plan.

Table 1. Assessment Areas with Associated Criteria for Success for the Environmental Studies Major.

<i>Assessment Area</i>	<i>Criteria for Success</i>
Completion of Course Activities	Students are considered proficient if 70% of the students demonstrated a passing grade on the assessed activity.
Senior Thesis Project	Students who are majoring in Environmental Studies should be capable of planning and executing an original research project.
Oral Presentation	Students should be able to deliver a senior thesis presentation that is deemed satisfactory in the judgment of the ENVR faculty.
Comprehensive Exam	Students who are majoring in Environmental Studies should be capable of earning a "C" or better on the comprehensive exam.

Completion of course activities is the broadest and most diverse of our four assessment outcomes. Overall, evidence in the form of records of student work on various types of activities indicates that we are meeting our goals. Senior thesis projects and associated oral presentations were discussed. Overall, our students are conducting satisfactory original research and expressing their findings well in both written and oral form.

We reviewed the scores earned by 2013 and 2014 seniors on the ENVR comprehensive exam. Out of a total of six students, all met or exceeded the assessment goal of a “C” or higher. Thus we are satisfied that overall, students are demonstrating that they have appropriate competency in the areas covered in the comprehensive exam.

II. Emerging Focus on Environmental Science

Over the course of the past year we also assessed student interest in the multidisciplinary environmental studies program and its components. We compared our observations with our assessment goals and outcomes and determined that a clearer focus on scientific and technical skill development would serve our students well, and make the best use of the resources available. Rather than the existing very broad multidisciplinary Environmental Studies program, a proposed Environmental Science major, which retains a degree of breadth within the sciences, emerged. Parallel to this effort a new social science-based major in Sustainability was also proposed. These very distinct majors are currently in the approval process and when in place are expected to be strong programs at Wells.

III. Follow Up on Action Items in Last Round of Assessment

- In the last round of assessment we noted the need to increase attendance and participation of ENVR faculty at oral presentations of senior theses in our major. To address this action item we selected the dates for these presentations early in the spring 2014 semester and alerted the ENVR faculty to the chosen dates, with the aim of minimizing possible conflicts and increasing participation.
- We reviewed, and were satisfied with, the alignment between ENVR 101L and ENVR 102L course content, course objectives, and the larger objectives, outcomes, and mission of the major.
- We had previously indicated our intention to request added support for the major in the form of increased staffing. This year we were able to incorporate those requests into a proposal for the development of an institute for sustainability and the environment at Wells. Areas highlighted as pressing needs in this proposal include GIS (geographic information systems).

IV. Next Steps

- Review course content of remaining ENVR courses to make sure it is explicitly tied to course objectives and outcomes of the major
- Review the ENVR major in light of work by the Educational Policy Committee on student learning goals, institutional responsibilities and institutional core values, and reconcile where needed.
- Begin drafting an appropriate assessment plan for the new Environmental Science major, in anticipation of its approval.

- Continue to request added support for the major in the form of increased staffing. This would help us meet more fully the goals that flow from our mission.