

2015 PROGRAM REVIEW Strategic Goals and Action Plans

The Program Committee of the Environmental Science Program (ES) met to review the Program Review Report (PRR) in March 2015. ES faculty participated in the development of the ES Strategic Goals and Action Plans that address and build upon the recommendations of the PRR.

The PRR, produced by the external review team consisting of Carol Boggs, Ph.D. (University of South Carolina), Jeffrey White, Ph.D. (Indiana University), and Alka Sapat, Ph.D., (FAU School of Public Administration), was based on the 2014 ES Self-Study Report and a two-day site visit in February 2015. The review team commended the ES for its strengths, including outstanding graduate students with an excellent job placement rate, faculty who seek inter-disciplinary research opportunities and are well-connected with agency partners, good laboratory facilities, and a strong interest from the university-level administration in building the program and making it a key growth area.

The Strategic Goals and Action Plans focus on areas where the ES has the most potential to build strategically on its existing strengths, and address problem areas where the ES Program should consider alternative governance structures or changes in programmatic policies or procedures. These goals are very well aligned with the goals of the 2015-2025 FAU Strategic Plan, which identifies the Environmental Sciences as one of the four institutional pillars focused on creating knowledge that benefits society.

Strategic Goal I. Build interdisciplinary faculty expertise in Environmental Science

The current ES faculty has considerable academic and research experience with the aquatic ecosystems in the Greater Everglades region, including Florida Bay, Caloosahatchee Estuary, Indian River Lagoon, the freshwater Everglades and the human interactions with these ecosystems. However, the relatively small number of ES faculty is a limitation to further growth and the ability of the program to build and maintain research relationships with non-university partners. Action plans that the ES Director and faculty will implement to address this goal in the short-term include 1) providing input and support for departmental appointments of Affiliate Faculty with expertise in wetland, riparian and estuarine science and 2) seeking guidance from FAU administration to enhance program success by optimizing metrics for the allocation of resources to academic units.

In the longer-term, the ES Director and faculty will continue to work with the Dean and faculty and staff from other academic units to develop a proposal for university-wide restructuring of governance and funding for environmental scholarship and research (e.g. a School for the Environment). A new administrative structure for environmental science could provide the support for: incentives for departments to prioritize interdisciplinary program needs and build

expertise in wetland, riparian and estuarine science when making strategic hires; creation of a Visiting Fellows program to bring in senior researchers and faculty with expertise wetland, riparian and estuarine science; establishment of a sabbatical program to encourage national and international collaboration in interdisciplinary environmental research.

Strategic Goal II. Capitalize on the multi-campus structure of the ES Program

The action plans that address this goal will build and maintain a critical mass at both HBOI and Davie in order to facilitate interaction between faculty, students, and researchers. At the same time, the ES will maintain a strong presence on the Boca Raton campus to sustain critical administrative connections and to facilitate interaction with students and relevant faculty from all colleges and schools. The ES will also make use of the multi-campus structure to increase recognition of the breadth and depth of environmental activities at FAU by supporting the expansion of the pool of Affiliate ES Graduate Faculty based at different campuses; this will help to develop a cadre of professionals to serve as adjunct faculty and build connections among students and faculty with working professionals. To foster inter-campus connections, the ES retreat, which has been held at the Boca Raton campus since 2009, will be held twice annually at alternating campuses in the future.

The ES will also explore the establishment of graduate TA positions for students based at all campuses that support groups of distance learning courses offered by faculty from any campus.

Strategic Goal III. Improve and strengthen scholarship and research and build a sense of community in the ES Graduate Program.

Small graduate stipends and lack of benefits, compared to other Universities in the region, have made it difficult to attract and matriculate top ES graduate students. The ES will continue to make the case to administrators to increase baseline stipends, and will evaluate the feasibility of alternative cost structures, such as fewer graduate stipends with higher baseline amounts. The terms and conditions of teaching assistantships across campuses will also be revisited to ensure workload equity.

In the future, the ES Retreat will be held semi-annually at alternating campuses to bring together all ES faculty and students during the fall and spring semesters. Attendance at the retreats will be mandatory for students; graduating students will give oral or poster presentations of their thesis or DIS research and all students will have the opportunity to interact informally with ES faculty. Student achievement and success will also be enhanced by holding an orientation session for new students at the beginning of every fall and spring semester to clarify expectations and introduce students to the use of the ES Blackboard site. Enhancements of the ES website are an important component of the actions plans for this goal, and include the addition of current profiles of all ES faculty and graduate students, maintenance of an up-to-date dated rolling two-year schedule of core course availability on ES website, and website access to a downloadable online manual with all of the information that is currently accessed through the ES Blackboard site.

The ES Director will also evaluate the availability of faculty to teach a weekly colloquium or seminar series on a year-around basis, to serve as the venue for student thesis presentations, faculty research talks, job candidate presentations, and visiting speakers. To

evaluate the need and feasibility of a Ph.D. in Environmental Science, the ES will continue to monitor the Integrative Biology Ph.D. in Environmental Science.

Strategic Goal IV. Improve and expand undergraduate scholarship and research in Environmental Science

There is currently no undergraduate degree in Environmental Science at FAU that could meet growing demand and provide a conduit of top students into the ES graduate program. However, an accelerated BS-MS in Environmental Science has been approved, and will be revised to meet SACS accreditation requirements of 150 total credits, with 30 minimum credits at the graduate level.

The existing undergraduate ES Certificate will be strengthened by action plans to improve procedures for timely identification of ES Certificate students and promote increased faculty and student participation in Undergraduate Research and Inquiry in environmental science. In addition to evaluating the need and feasibility of a BS degree in Environmental Science, the ES will evaluate the demand for a stand-alone certificate in Environmental Science that is not attached to an academic degree from FAU.

Strategic Goal V. Increase visibility and outside funding of environmental research and scholarship

In Spring 2015, Environmental Sciences was approved as an institutional pillar in FAU's Strategic Plan. This clear evidence of administrative support for environmental science will boost the effectiveness of ES action plans to increase the visibility and outside funding of environmental science at FAU. The ES Director will work with FAU administration to increase funding for outreach education to attract outside funding for short courses and workshops to industry, agencies, non-profits and other interested individuals. Outreach could be offered through the CES as the outreach arm of a School for the Environment.

The ES Director will work with the Office of Institutional Advancement to accomplish this goal, evaluating options such as outreach to attract funding for short courses and workshops and collaboration on K-12 education initiatives with the College of Education and Pine Jog Environmental Education, keeping in mind constraints on faculty time for service.