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Academic Affairs

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**Policy Title:**

Undergraduate Degree Programs in Environmental Science/Studies, New

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This policy item applies to:  
State-Operated Campuses

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**Summary**

These guidelines are intended to assist campuses in the planning of such programs in environmental science/studies and to make explicit operative criteria for the system level review of these program proposals.

The mission of the State University of New York (University) is to provide “a complete range of academic, professional and vocational postsecondary programs . . . through a geographically distributed comprehensive system of diverse campuses which shall have differentiated and designated missions” and “in fulfilling this mission, the state university shall exercise care to develop and maintain a balance of its human and physical resources...” (Chapter 552, Laws of 1985).

In articulating policy guidelines on undergraduate degree programs in environmental science or environmental studies, the formal mission of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and the University’s significant investment in that institution’s resources and expertise, must be acknowledged.

According to its statutory mission, the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, in addition to research and public service responsibilities, shall direct its efforts toward “Teaching in the science and practice of environmental science and forestry . . . including landscape architecture; environmental design; environmental and resource engineering; environmental and resource management; wildlife studies; biology, chemistry, ecology; the manufacture and marketing of forest products; and the technologies appropriate to these branches of environmental science and forestry...”

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**Policy**

These guidelines are intended to assist State University of New York (University) campuses in the planning and development of undergraduate degree programs in environmental science or environmental studies and related curricula in these specialized fields. The guidelines also constitute criteria for the system administration review of such new programs.

In general terms, the course of study for undergraduate interdisciplinary work involving study of the environment may take the form of either a professional or career program in the sciences (Environmental Science) or a liberal

arts-based program with a specific or generalized focus (Environmental Studies).

1. Environmental Science shall be the term to designate programs with a professional orientation, that is, having as a specific focus the preparation of graduates for immediate employment in a career field, or advanced study in a related area. It is a laboratory-oriented, science-based course of study. According to The American Institute of Biological Sciences: "...certain subject material should be included for the major to effectively prepare its students to be competent environmental scientists: ecology/environmental biology; environmental chemistry; earth science/physical geography; environmental policy, planning and law; and, environmental ethics." In most circumstances such programs will lead ultimately to the Bachelor of Science degree.
2. Environmental Studies shall be the term to designate programs based in the liberal arts and sciences and which have a more generalized focus and are designed to produce environmentally literate graduates for work in a range of activities or advanced study in a core area. Such programs would have minimal laboratory requirements taken as components of required science courses within the program structure. Instead they would integrate principles from the social sciences, the natural sciences and the humanities. In most circumstances such programs will lead ultimately to a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Environmental Studies and related programs will be clearly described in proposal documentation as well as catalog and promotional materials as interdisciplinary programs based in the liberal arts and sciences and not having a professional focus or leading to a particular technical or professional career.

Consideration will be given to proposals for new Environmental Science and Environmental Studies programs documenting:

1. effective use of qualified external reviewers in the development of the program, or inclusion of at least one external evaluation by an impartial expert, arranged at the initiative of the proposing campus, in the proposal;
2. meeting relevant professional and/or state accreditation standards and/or establishing a timetable for completing the accreditation process (or providing a convincing explanation for not seeking special accreditation);
3. inclusion in a periodic campus undergraduate program review process that includes indicators of performance and success;
4. lack of unnecessary duplication between the proposed program and other programs within the University;
5. demonstrable need for the program, as shown by, for example, employment potential for graduates or local applicability of program resources and activities; and
6. in the case of transfer programs in Environmental Science or Environmental Studies or a related curriculum, leading to the Associate in Arts or the Associate in Science degree, inclusion of clear demonstration of articulation with the specific course of study leading to a baccalaureate and appropriate titling to reflect the content of the Associate degree.

As a function of its legislatively mandated mission, the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry shall have primacy in the development of new Environmental Science/Studies programs. Such primacy involves:

1. The option to review (for quality, duplication, and/or articulation) in a timely manner new Environmental Science/Studies programs developed by other campuses. This review shall not constitute veto authority. To facilitate such review, system administration shall provide the College with copies of relevant program materials. Following any desired input or comments from the college, system administration shall retain the responsibility to make final determinations about program approvals.
2. Leadership in the development of collaborative arrangements with other campuses, which are encouraged to explore with the forestry college collaborative undertakings involving instruction at all levels, as well as

cooperative research and public service.

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## Definitions

There are no definitions relevant to this policy.

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## Other Related Information

There is no related information relevant to this policy.

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## Procedures

[Mission Review Procedure](#)

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## Forms

There are no forms relevant to this policy.

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## Authority

The following link to FindLaw's [New York State Laws](#) is provided for users' convenience; it is not the official site for the State of New York laws.

[NYS Education Law §6002](#) (Objects and Purpose)

In case of questions, readers are advised to refer to the New York State Legislature site for the menu of [New York State Consolidated](#).

Chapter 552 of the Laws of 1985

Memorandum to presidents from the office of the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, 00-1, dated June 30, 2000.

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## History

There is no history relevant to this policy.

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## Appendices

There are no appendices relevant to this policy.

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