



State University of New York

Memorandum to Presidents

Date: June 30, 2000 Vol. 00 No. 1

From: Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Subject: Guidelines for the Consideration of New Undergraduate Degree Programs in Environmental Science/Studies

To: Presidents, State-operated Campuses
President, Fashion Institute of Technology

The purpose of this memorandum is to promulgate a new policy document on the development of programs at State University campuses: "Guidelines for the Consideration of Undergraduate Degree Programs in Environmental Science/Studies." These guidelines are intended to assist campuses in the planning of such programs and to make explicit operative criteria in the system level review of these program proposals. This policy is a natural outgrowth of the State University Mission Review initiative. As part of that process, System Administration has been paying particular attention to issues of competition and unwarranted duplication of programs, as well as the synergies and quality enhancements made possible by appropriate review and ultimate collaboration.

We are well into an era when the magnitude of the impact of humanity on the natural environment, and the resulting effects on the future of our society, are not only widely understood, but also recognized as being an essential element of our governance and planning. It is without doubt one of the foremost duties of the academic community to be in a leadership position in this area, and it is the position of the State University of New York that our System is, and will continue to be, a model for universities worldwide. By adopting these guidelines, we are strengthening the resources and effectiveness of all our component parts, and better serving the people of New York — and of all society.

In December, this office circulated a draft policy to campuses for review and comment. Responses were received from 13 campuses. There was overall support for the draft. As for details, among the principal areas addressed by the respondents were title/definitional issues, the status of existing programs, and the role of any one campus in the overall SUNY program approval process. All responses were considered very seriously, and key suggestions have been adopted either wholly or in part. We are grateful for this feedback, the result of which is a policy that better reflects the historical role of environmental education and research at the State University, and the special role of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry within the System, while affording its institutions the flexibility they need to flourish in the current higher education environment.

Questions regarding this policy may be directed to Kathryn E. Van Arnam, Assistant Provost for Academic Programs (518-443-5496, vanarnke@sysadm.suny.edu).



Peter D. Salins
Provost and Vice Chancellor
for Academic Affairs

Attachment

Copy: Chief Academic Officers, State University of New York

This memorandum addressed to:
Presidents, State-operated Campuses
Deans, Statutory Colleges

Copies for information only to:
Presidents, Community Colleges
President Coll
President Rawlings

State University of New York

Guidelines for the Consideration of New Undergraduate Degree Programs in Environmental Science/Studies

These guidelines apply to the development of undergraduate degree programs in Environmental Science or Environmental Studies and to related curricula in these specialized interdisciplinary fields.

Policy Direction

The mission of the State University System 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 December 1995, the State University Board of Trustees in *Rethinking SUNY* reaffirmed its commitment to the 1985 legislatively articulated mission of the University and endorsed several propositions for its future, including a fundamental principle which supports policy guidance on mission and academic specialization:

- *Increased differentiation of campuses is fundamental to realizing the synergies achievable as a system.*

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..." (NYS Education Law, §6002 [1972])

Policy Guidelines for Environmental Science/Studies Programs

These guidelines are intended to assist State 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).

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.

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 State University System;

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:

- The option to review (for quality, duplication, and/or articulation) in a timely manner new Environmental Science/Studies programs developed by other State University 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.
- Leadership in the development of collaborative arrangements with other State University campuses, which are encouraged to explore with the College collaborative undertakings involving instruction at all levels, as well as cooperative research and public service.

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These guidelines are effective immediately and apply to all State University of New York campuses.