

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAMS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA:
BACHELOR OF ARTS AND BACHELOR OF SCIENCE PROGRAMS IN
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND PLANNING**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to establish new Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science Programs in Environmental Policy and Planning in the Department of Geography in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Executive Summary: The proposed programs will respond to growing student interest and societal relevance in social science perspectives on environmental issues. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education. The proposed programs address the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to “provide educational excellence and impact as well as economic development and vitality” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

Background:

- ◇ **Description of program.** The proposed program will integrate current courses and focus on a coherent approach to the study of human dimensions of environmental problems. The consolidation of courses into a degree program will make graduates more viable as employees or candidates for graduate education. The proposed programs will be modeled on the interdisciplinary program in Environmental Science and will include the following components – core courses for all students; separate tracks or concentrations in areas within environmental policy and planning; and required and elective courses within each track. The programs will be administered by the Department of Geography but they will have an advisory panel with representation from multiple departments, including geography, anthropology, and political science.

The Bachelor of Arts Program will require 39-40 semester hours in the major; the Bachelor of Science Program will require 46-47 semester hours in the major.

- ◇ **Relationship to existing programs at SUI.** The University of Iowa has strong programs in the social sciences related to environmental policy and planning. The proposed programs will complement existing programs in the departments of anthropology, geography, and political science and in the interdisciplinary major of Environmental Science. Geography may lose student majors who transfer to the new programs which might lead to reorganization of the environmental studies track in the geography major. However, the Department of Geography would still have sufficient majors in its tracks. The proposed programs are likely to lead to increased enrollments in the Departments of Anthropology and Political Science.
- ◇ **Unique features.** The University of Iowa has a number of programs in social science that have addressed environmental policy and planning and are capable of offering a strong major. The human dimensions of environmental issues have been addressed in geography courses since the 1970s; a specific undergraduate track in environmental studies was implemented in geography in the early 1980s.

More recently, environmental courses were added in anthropology; environmental anthropology is now an emphasis area in that major. Courses in the School of Urban and Regional Planning are now available for undergraduates; individual environmental classes have been added in other departments, such as American Studies. Political Science will now have an opportunity to contribute relevant classes about policy and politics. Student advising will be shared by the three participating departments and will be assigned by the advisory board based on the relative enrollments of majors in departmental courses.

- ◇ Duplication. Iowa State University, the University of Northern Iowa, Mt. Mercy College, Briar Cliff College, Central College, Cornell College, Dordt College, Mount St. Clare College, Northwestern College, Simpson College, University of Dubuque, Waldorf College, Grinnell College, and William Penn University have Environmental Science/Studies programs. However, these programs are based primarily in the natural sciences without significant concentration in the social sciences.
- ◇ Student demand. Geography students have expressed interest in changing their major to one of the new programs. The proposed programs are likely to attract additional applicants to the University because this type of program is not currently available at the University.
- ◇ Need for proposed programs. Policy and planning studies involve issues of governance and decision-making and are clearly in the area of social science. There is an opportunity to complement existing university programs with an organized undergraduate curriculum in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The importance of culture in human affairs is widely recognized at the university. Cultural factors share understanding of the causes of environmental problems and the way society works to redress these problems. Socio-cultural groups with different values and priorities often enter into shared political arenas to formulate environmental policies at local, regional, national, and international levels. Appreciating how resulting conflicts and negotiations are shaped by cultural differences in the values, goals, and experiences of the various groups involved, and considering the historical contexts that inform their interactions, can enrich understanding of when and how to implement strategies for improvement.
- ◇ Workforce need/demand. It is expected that the existing demand will grow for graduates to fill a range of environmental policy and planning positions. The U.S. Department of Labor projects an annual growth rate of 4.7% in management, scientific, and technical consulting occupations and a growth rate of 15.5% in life, physical, and social science occupations through 2020. The Bureau of Labor Statistics now maintains a Green Career Information web page. The proposed programs in Environmental Policy and Planning will prepare students for a variety of entry-level careers in the environmental field, including environmental impact assessment and environmental compliance. The degree will also provide strong preparation for advanced study in related fields, especially in urban and regional planning and in law.
- ◇ Resources. No new faculty, facilities or equipment will be required to offer the proposed programs. Current faculty expertise in the Departments of Geography, Anthropology, Political Science, and Urban and Regional Planning will support the proposed programs.

- ◇ Cost. The proposed program will use classes that have seat availability; students will likely be shifted within the department. Therefore, it is anticipated that there will be no unique costs associated with the proposed program.
- ◇ Projected enrollment. The projected enrollment is 50 students in Year 1, increasing to 80 students by Year 7. The initial group of students may transfer from the environmental studies track in Geography at the University. The new programs may also attract other students who are seeking such a major. Students in Anthropology, Political Science, and Environmental Science may choose a double major in Environmental Policy and Planning.
- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. Goal I of the Strategic Plan of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is to “provide students a rich and challenging experience in General Education and in the undergraduate major” and to “educate students for success and personal fulfillment in an increasingly diverse and global environment.” A need exists to provide a focused program that will allow students to build a coherent background in the social science dimensions of environmental studies that can be easily communicated to an outside audience. The proposed programs will provide students with choices that correspond to current social needs and options for success in the workforce.