

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

REQUEST FOR A NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
BACHELOR OF ARTS PROGRAM IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to establish a new Bachelor of Arts Program in Environmental Sciences which will be administered by the Department of Biology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Executive Summary: The proposed program will provide a more flexible alternative to the existing Bachelor of Science Program in Environmental Sciences. 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 program addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority (1.0) to “ensure high-quality educational opportunities for students.”

Background:

- ◇ **Description of existing program.** The Bachelor of Science Program in Environmental Sciences was established in 1997 to provide students with rigorous interdisciplinary training in the scientific study of the environment and to promote an understanding of the earth as a complex network of interacting organic and inorganic systems. Students in this program focus on one of four tracks, biosciences, chemical sciences, geosciences, or hydrosciences, and engage in intensive course work within that track.
- ◇ **Description of proposed program.** The proposed program will provide an overview of the field rather than a specialized knowledge of one technical area. It will require fewer semester hours and can be completed within four years. The proposed program will appeal to students who want a career in the educational and service side of environmental issues. It will also complement the University’s Sustainability Certificate and will serve as a second major for students in such fields as journalism, sociology, and political science. Students will complete requirements in four areas – science and mathematics foundation; environmental sciences foundation; environmental sciences field study; and environmental sciences tracks. Students will select one course from three of four tracks – biosciences, chemical sciences, geosciences, and hydrosciences.
- ◇ **Duplication.** The Department of Geography at the University of Iowa offers an Environmental Studies Track, which includes both Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science Programs. The name is similar but the focus and requirements are different than the proposed program. The Environmental Studies Track emphasizes human-environmental interactions, whereas the proposed program will focus on environmental analyses based on data from biological, chemical, geological, and hydrological systems.

Iowa State University offers a Bachelor of Science Program in Environmental Science which is comparable to the proposed program. The focus of both programs is environmental analyses and the requirements include foundations in science, mathematics, and environmental sciences. However, ISU’s program does not specify tracks and does not include a field study course as an explicit requirement.

The Environmental Studies Program at ISU focuses on human-environmental interactions in contrast to the focus on environmental analyses of the proposed program. Furthermore, ISU's program is a secondary major that can be taken only as an addition to a primary major in another field.

The University of Northern Iowa offers a Bachelor of Arts Program in Geography with Environmental Emphasis. The focus is on human-environmental interactions, and the requirements are different from those of the proposed program. UNI also offers a Bachelor of Science Program in Geology and Chemistry with Environmental Science Emphasis. Both programs are more similar to SUI's Bachelor of Science Program than to the proposed program.

There are a number of other colleges and universities in Iowa that offer an undergraduate major in environmental science/studies, including Upper Iowa University, Briar Cliff College, Central College, Cornell College, Dordt College, Mount St. Clare College, Northwestern College, Simpson College, University of Dubuque, Waldorf College, William Penn University, and St. Ambrose University. However, none of these institutions posted a concern about the proposed program on the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post High School Education listserv.

- ◇ Support for proposed program. Both the University of Northern Iowa and Iowa State University expressed support for the proposed program and indicated that it is different from their programs.
- ◇ Student demand. The proposed program will prepare students for positions in environmental assessment; environmental interpretation and education; and pollution control and hazardous waste management. It will also provide a foundation for students who anticipate enrolling in graduate or professional school. With the current emphasis on environmental issues, the University anticipates that there will be a continuing need for graduates to fill positions relating to the environment.
- ◇ Unique features. The proposed program will complement the existing Bachelor of Science Program in Environmental Sciences and will use existing resources at no additional cost.
- ◇ Resources. The University anticipates that no new faculty, facilities, or equipment will be needed for the proposed program. All the requirements for the proposed program will be met with existing courses and laboratory space.
- ◇ Cost. The University has indicated that there will be no additional costs associated with the proposed program.
- ◇ Projected enrollment. The proposed program is expected to appeal to a broader segment of students because it requires fewer semester hours and can be completed on the four-year graduation plan. It provides greater flexibility than the existing program which should appeal to transfer students, students who are interested in a broader background in environmental sciences, and students who choose a double major in environmental sciences. The projected enrollment is five students in Year 1, increasing to 19 students by Year 7.
- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. The proposed program addresses SUI's goal "to create a University experience that enriches the lives of undergraduates and helps them to become well-informed individuals, lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and productive employees and employers."