**Contact: Rachel Boon**

## REQUEST TO TERMINATE THE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES SECONDARY MAJOR AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

**Committee Action Requested:** Recommend to the Board approval of the request to terminate the Environmental Studies secondary major in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Iowa State University.

The Council of Provosts and Board office staff reviewed the proposal and recommend approval.

**Description of the program**: Environmental studies is a university-wide, secondary major. As a secondary major, environmental studies cannot be taken as a standalone major but is instead designed to augment primary majors across a broad array of disciplines. The curricular philosophy underlying ISU's environmental studies major recognizes the relevance of environmental issues to a broad array of professional pathways and is designed with sufficient flexibility to integrate with any major offered at ISU.

**Reason for proposed termination:** In September 2011, ISU approved a new minor in sustainability with the support of the environmental studies program. The program cooperated in the development of this minor, and a significant number of the courses allowed in the minor are environmental studies courses. Environmental studies does address issues related to sustainability, and there is some overlap with the new minor.

Enrollment in the environmental studies major has declined steadily following the launch and rapid growth of the sustainability minor in 2012, from a peak of 101 in 2011 to only 19 students in 2025. The continued decline in the environmental studies major with the maturation and success of the environmental science major and sustainability minor suggested a need to reassess the role of the secondary major. Three years ago, an external review team suggested that the "secondary" major structure was outmoded and that the program should consider alternatives such as a certificate. In contrast to the major, enrollments in the environmental studies minor have increased over the past five years, and it appears that student needs can be met by discontinuing the environmental studies secondary major and only retaining the minor.

**Effect on current students**: Applicants and admitted students will be allowed to complete an environmental studies major and continue to have the option of the environmental studies minor. All courses in the major are taught by cross-listing departments, and no courses would be eliminated as part of this discontinuation.

**Enrollment and Completion Trends**:

| | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Majors | 48 | 31 | 25 | 22 | 19 |
| Graduates | 24 | 15 | 11 | 11 | 14 |

**Impact on resources**:
No cost savings or faculty/staff reductions are expected from the discontinuation of the environmental studies secondary major. However, modestly reduced administrative and advising load are expected to benefit the associated environmental science major and the sustainability minor, which continue to grow.

**Impact on workforce**: There are no anticipated effects on workforce needs in Iowa. ISU will continue to offer the environmental studies minor as well as the sustainability minor and the environmental science major.

**Alternative programs:** As a secondary only major, environmental studies at ISU is unique. However, ISU will continue to offer the environmental studies minor as well as the sustainability minor and the environmental science major.

**Date of Implementation**: Upon approval of the Board.