Environmental Science Program Review Report

Prepared by the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee
May 10, 2011

The Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (CEPC) welcomed Dr. Nelson Ham to the April 7 meeting for his presentation of the program review on behalf of the Environmental Science discipline. The CEPC discussed and reviewed the report and oral presentation on April 7, April 21, and May 5. This report presents a summary of the strengths, observations, concerns and recommendations offered by the CEPC.

Strengths:
The program provides a valuable interdisciplinary perspective that serves the mission of the College.

The faculty are active scholars in their respective fields.

The program provides a valuable contribution to the General Education Area 11 by bringing the unique perspective of the interdisciplinary program to the students.

There is clear evidence of substantial successful grant seeking by program faculty.

Observations:
The program does not include the learning outcomes and objectives that should be part of the actual report not simply an addendum.

The report could have better articulated best practices for Environmental Science programs.

The program does not make clear how, or to what extent, it engages in co-curricular activities. This process may aid with the retention of students by engaging them in the program outside of the classroom.

Concerns:
The discipline could have better explained why the size of the major, 17 courses, is necessary.

Recommendations:
While the senior thesis assessment rubric is a valuable tool, the discipline may seek to consider more developmental assessment practices. If the discipline concludes that the thesis should be eliminated, it must provide a new meaningful assessment process.
The discipline should analyze the nature of the program and provide justification for the size of the curriculum and the courses that comprise it. The CEPC agrees with the assessment of the program regarding the specific issues discussed in the report and recommends studying the future viability of the program.

The Environmental Science program should consider a strategic plan to implement the capstone course.

The faculty should divide the administrative work more equitably, including program review.

The program should consider building the theme of diversity into the entire program through the discussion of the disparate impact of environmental change on varied communities.