

FINAL SUMMARY REPORT OF PROGRAM REVIEW

Undergraduate Program	Center for Environment and Sustainability
Degrees Offered	Undergraduate Program in Environmental Science
Program Description	Environmental Science at Western is a discipline within the Faculty of Science and not a Department. Students completing Environmental Science modules will earn a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science. The Environmental Science programs are offered through the Centre for Environment and Sustainability.
Date of Site Visit	March 6, 2012
Evaluation	Good quality with report in one year

Summary:

The program review was completed by Dr. Michael Moss and Dr. Stephen Murphy, following a close scrutiny of the department's self-assessment, accompanied by a day-long site visit on March 6, 2012, accompanied by Dr. Grant Campbell as the SUPR-U Internal Reviewer, and Jessica Habib as the student reviewer.

The review involved interviews with the Director and Undergraduate Chair, academic counselors, the Associate Dean, Academic, the Undergraduate Advisory Committee and Upper Year Instructors, followed by a lunch with five students in the program. Further interviews included the Vice-Provosts of both Academic Planning and Academic Programs and Students, first-year instructors, teaching assistants, and undergraduate chairs from the partner departments of Biology and Geography.

In their final report, the reviewers praised the high level of commitment shown both by the faculty and the staff, and the high levels of commitment, dedication and enthusiasm shown by the students. They also praised the considerable ingenuity with which all involved navigated the complexities of an interdisciplinary program that draws on human and physical resources from multiple sources to combine them in imaginative intellectual ways.

The reviewers noted three primary concerns:

1. The Center needs to integrate its program into a clearer and more entrenched context of environmental studies in the wider academic community, through:
 - Involvement with the Canadian Universities Environmental Science Network (CUESN);
 - Further involvement in professional associations;
 - Seeking accreditation;
 - Aligning its curriculum more closely to national curriculum guidelines for undergraduate environmental studies programs.

In their response to the report, Dr Greg Thorn and Dr. Gordon Southam expressed general agreement. The Center intends to rejoin CUESN, seek accreditation, and initiate a service-learning component to the program to foster professional involvement. They felt, however, that the reviewers overestimated the Center's deviation from the national curriculum guidelines, pointing out that extensive course counseling enables the students to exercise their freedom under the Academic Choices model while selecting modules that are appropriate according to national guidelines.

2. Although the reviewers applauded the energy and ingenuity of the seconded faculty and staff, they emphatically insist that the program cannot sustain any long-term momentum without:
 - Securing a recognizable home base to foster a sense of identity among the students and faculty;
 - Resolving whatever problems have impeded the hiring of a Director with a firm 3-5-year contract;
 - Converting some of the existing sessional positions to permanent positions.

3. Funding is a distinct concern for two reasons:

- All of the recommendations, particularly the accreditation initiative, will involve financial support; the administration will need to be an “angel investor,” by allocating funds ahead of increasing enrolments;
- There appears to be confusion among the faculty and administrators interviewed about the nature of the funding for interdisciplinary programs such as this one. Given that many of the program’s courses are offered in other departments, it is unclear whether the BIU allocation is weighted upon program enrolment, or if it is weighted to the specific department offering the course. If the BIU allocation goes to CES, departments offering instructional and TA support are doing so merely through good will; if allocation goes to the departments, CES could be starved of funding.

The reviewers made five formal recommendations; no information for responsibility, resources or timelines was supplied. These are listed at the beginning of their report. Culling from the reviewers’ report and the Center’s response, these can be more tangibly expressed as the following recommendations:

Recommendation	Responsibility
Hire a Director	Program Director, Faculty
Rejoin CUESN	
Seek accreditation	
Introduce a service learning component into the program	
Submit a business plan that reflects accurate consensus from all parties on funding model, including a plan for growth and the conversion of limited-duties positions into long-term appointments.	