



Department of Environmental Studies
Program Performance Review
Response to the Report of External Reviewers
March 18, 2024

We welcome our reviewer's reflections on our program's nimbleness, enthusiasm, diversity, flexibility, and cohesion. We agree that our strong partnerships across campus and the community, deep high-impact practices both in curricular and co-curricular offerings, committed faculty members and leaders, attentive advising, true interdisciplinarity, and the burgeoning employment opportunities for our students are all particular strengths of our Environmental Studies program.

We appreciate the reviewers' suggestions to extend our existing recruitment beyond our Southern California region, consider a Study Away course at the CSU Desert Studies Center (although we would aim for January, not the summer), and deepen our already-strong alumni engagement with activities targeted to support the second-year cohort.

Others of the reviewers' suggestions are tasks we are already doing, so their report highlights the need to better communicate our existing strengths. We already have faculty from the natural sciences regularly teach our core courses, especially ENST 510. We also already have a list of recommended cross-disciplinary courses for our students, shared on the TDA, Canvas page for ENST students, new Titan Audit pathways, and in announcements that our grad advisor emails every semester just before students' registration windows open. Our calendar of important deadlines is also shared every semester. To better communicate this, we will add a module on it in next year's orientation for new students and reflect on the reviewers' suggestion to streamline how we communicate information to our students.

We appreciate our longstanding partnership with the department of Geography & Environment, including sending our students to their classes in GIS and urban planning. We look forward to continuing to evolve together.

Building stronger relationships with the natural sciences is also a continuous goal of ours, already noted in the department's self-study. Faculty from the colleges of NSM, ECS, and/or HHD teach at least one course for us each semester, although, in the past 16 semesters, there have been 2 semesters without offerings by science professors, including this current semester, so that may have skewed the reviewers' impressions. We regularly reach out to department chairs across the university and students from Biology and Engineering regularly enroll in our classes. This semester our new graduate ambassadors have been visiting multiple sections of classes in Biology, Civil & Environmental Engineering, and Geology to recruit future applicants. Relationship-building is an ongoing task and we are particularly pleased by the enthusiasm of some of our newest affiliated



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faculty from the sciences. Seeking future leadership from the sciences is an excellent suggestion.

Until 2021, we required students to choose between a track in “Environmental Sciences and Technology” and a track in “Environment and Society,” but our faculty decided to eliminate those required tracks because, in practice, for students in our interdisciplinary program, the differences between tracks were unclear. We will revisit this issue with our advisory board.

Finally, we look forward to working with the Dean’s office to seek strategies to implement other of the reviewers recommendations, including:

- Better compensating faculty from other departments who serve on ENST committees and advise ENST master’s theses. Currently, ENST faculty service receives a largely-symbolic \$250.
- Finding staff to assist our overburdened program leadership with streamlining communication, supporting internships, producing social media, updating our website, and designing recruitment and outreach.
- Working with HRDI to reconsider bureaucratic hurdles in the hiring process for adjunct professors who teach for us on a two- or three-year rotation. Because our adjuncts are practicing professionals – including an environmental lawyer, environmental consultant, and environmental education leader – and because we do not repeat elective courses within a 2-year cycle, most adjuncts do not teach for us every year. This means that, each time they do teach, our adjunct professors are required to re-apply for their teaching jobs as if they are new employees. This can be a burdensome process, including writing a new statement of teaching philosophy and undergoing a lengthy background check. It is a burden on our adjuncts and our staff.
- Exploring a suggestion from CSUF undergraduate students to create a requirement focused on sustainability. This might take the form of a G.E. requirement akin to Ethnic Studies, perhaps in response to our loss of G.E. categories due to the implementation of Cal-GETC. It might also become a theme across courses, akin to Writing Across the Curriculum. It would require more conversations across campus, but undergraduates recognize that understanding issues of sustainability is becoming a requirement of educated citizenry.

We remain committed to our role as an interdisciplinary hub for sustainability across campus, preparing environmental professionals to address the global challenges of climate change. Our highest priority is to improve student recruitment through increasing our program’s visibility, including deepening our ongoing partnerships across campus and our region. We are also committed to continuing to foster a sense of community and shared governance among our affiliated faculty across five colleges of CSUF, while seeking to balance our curriculum’s breadth and rigor. We feel well-positioned to confront the vitally-important issues of environmental sustainability.

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