

Faculty Meeting
March 4, 2016

MOTION

The Curriculum Committee moves that Skidmore College create an Environmental Science Major as part of the Environmental Studies and Science Program.

Rationale:

There is significant difference in coursework, knowledge development, and skills to warrant two different majors.

1. The curriculums of the two tracks are very different. The Environmental Science majors take 9 science classes and three 3 social and cultural classes. The Environmental Studies majors take 3 science classes and 7 social and cultural classes. They
2. Our environmental science majors want to be labelled appropriately to distinguish them from their Environmental Studies counterparts. The environmental science faculty wholeheartedly support the change.
3. Visiting high school students interested in environmental science always ask at accepted candidates day will not have to wonder whether we offer a science degree. The new major will end that confusion
4. Having dual Environmental Studies and Environmental Sciences tracks is the new norm within the field. The main disciplinary journal is the Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences. The main association is the Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences. The vast majority of our counterparts renamed themselves as Environmental Studies and Sciences Program and offer separate Environmental Studies and Environmental Science majors.

It makes sense to keep the two majors in one program, the Environmental Studies and Science (ESS) Program. Both majors are very interdisciplinary. There is also significant knowledge overlap between the two majors (our environmental studies students need an understanding of natural science and our environmental science students need an understanding of policy, economics, etc.), hence both majors still belong under one program (ESS). The two majors will continue to share a common gateway (ES 100) and capstone (ES 375) courses, and significant overlap. We feel strongly that the Environmental Studies and Science Program name best describes our curricular offerings and majors.

Resource Implications

There will be minimal resource implications from creating a new Environmental Science major. ESS is different from other separations such PH+RE, MA+CS, PY+CH, EX+DA, SW+SO+AN, in that ES is already de facto two majors and thus there will not be any administrative, curricular, or personnel changes required to implement the double major.

1. Both majors will continue to be overseen by the ES Director. We do not foresee each major being overseen by a different directors and thus increasing the number of course releases.
2. There will be no increase in administrative staff. Both tracks will continue to utilize Carol Goody, our administrative assistant we share with Geosciences. She is already doing the budgeting, field trips, and other administrative track for both students. Similarly, our ES Program Coordinator, Anne Ernst, already plans speakers, study abroad, internships, and field trips for ES students in both tracks so her responsibilities will not change.
3. There will not be any curricular changes required to implement the new major. Both the Environmental Studies and Environmental Science majors will continue to share the gateway (ES 100) and Capstone (ES 374, ES 375) sequences and considerable overlap in the classes. The two tracks are already very distinct in structure, required classes, and number of credits. Thus, it's not the case that the creation of separate majors will unleash a burst of curricular change that will in turn drive immediate resource needs. Any curricular change and/or pressure on tenure track lines will be the same regardless of whether the programs remain as tracks or majors.