

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Program Assessment Plan

Fall 2013

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Introduction:

Chaminade's Environmental Studies Program was initiated as a new major at the University in the Fall of 2002, so the 2012 academic year marked the ten-year anniversary of our new program. The Program's very first program-level assessment: *Environmental Studies: Program Assessment Report* was conducted and written up in the Fall of 2009. Prior to that first Report course assessments and course assessment reports had been completed each year. It is the goal of the Program Director, Dr. Gail Grabowsky, to conduct program-level assessments every 5 years. The next full program assessment will be conducted and written up in the Fall of 2014. The interim five-year periods are used to develop, carry out and gather numerous kinds of assessment data. The 5-year periodicity allows enough time to react, through Action Plan items, to the findings of the prior program report and gather the data needed to determine if the Action Plans have resulted in program improvements. Since this assessment report is an interim report, it will describe the kind of data that will be gathered this year.

A special "supplementary" section of this assessment plan provides an atypical analysis: a summary of the course evaluations from the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 semesters compared to the Fall 2011 evaluations. This analysis is being conducted because Dr. Grabowsky was forced to go on medical leave for cancer treatment half way through the Fall 2011 semester and find replacements for her courses mid-semester as well as replacements for the Spring 2012 semester. A subsequent drop in evaluation scores was noted between those reported in the 2009 Program Assessment Report and those analyzed and reported on in the Fall 2012 Assessment Plan for the Fall 2011 semester. This comparison is presented again this year with the additional data from the 2012-13 academic year. This analysis was conducted this year in an effort to see if performance has improved now that Dr. Grabowsky and all the Environmental Studies professors are back teaching the classes they are accustomed to teaching and the students have not experienced any mid-semester instructor switches.

Ongoing Assessment Efforts:

The Environmental Studies Program's Student Learning Outcomes were developed through (1) the examination of over 40 existing environmental studies programs, (2) surveys administered to professionals with diverse careers in the environment, and (3) consensus decision-making among Chaminade's Environmental Studies faculty and our top-level academic administrators. Since its inception many courses within the program have been assessed a number of times. In 2006 we began to design program assessment vehicles for our freshmen, seniors and graduates. These assessment vehicles are the following:

- ENV 100 perceived learning and direct assessment pre and post-tests (baseline data)
- ENV course evaluations (summary data)
- ENV 400 perceived learning and direct assessment pre and post-tests (exit data)
- ENV 400 essays portfolio (exit data)
- ENV 485 senior research and reflection papers (exit data)
- ENV 485 multiple choice exit exam (exit data)
- Alumni Survey (reflection data)

Only a partial set of these data were gathered during the past two years due to the Program Director's medical leave during the 2011-12 academic year and her recovery during the 2012-13 academic year. Last year the

director worked the entire year but was between surgeries, her last surgery being in May 2013, and so her foci for the entire year were (in this order): (1) teaching well, (2) student advising, (3) program course scheduling. A minimal number of assessments were conducted. They include the ENV 485 research and reflection papers and the ENV 400 perceived and direct learning assessments. The ENV 100 surveys were not conducted and the alumni survey development was halted. All assessment efforts are resuming this 2013-14 academic year.

Supplementary Course Evaluation Summary

Table 1 below summarizes all of the student evaluation results for five key questions for all ENV-prefixed courses within the Environmental Studies major from the Fall of 2012 and the Spring of 2013. It compares these recent values to those for the Fall 2011 values and the 2006-2008 data presented in the Fall 2009 program assessment report. The five questions that were selected in 2009 were chosen because they spoke to issues deemed particularly important to WASC, Chaminade and the Chaminade Environmental Studies Program Director at that time.

Students are asked in the course evaluations to respond: “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Neutral”, “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” to each item. For the purposes of this assessment report “Strongly Agree” responses were given a numerical value of 5, “Agree” = 4, “Neutral” = 3, “Disagree” = 2 and “Strongly Disagree” = 1.

Evaluation Item	Mean	2012-13 Percent Strongly Agree & Agree	Fall 2011 Percent Strongly Agree & Agree	2008 Percent Strongly Agree & Agree
Course requirements were clearly stated	4.67	97.6% (N = 166)	80% (N = 92)	98.7% (N = 307)
Course requirements were challenging	4.57	91.6% (N = 166)	82% (N = 92)	92.3% (N = 288)
Quality of instructors teaching was high	4.62	94.0% (N = 166)	84% (N = 92)	99.4% (N = 303)
I gained significant knowledge from course	4.60	93.3% (N = 165)	82% (N = 92)	97.0% (N = 299)
Overall I feel this was a good course	4.60	93.4% (N = 166)	79% (N = 92)	98.0% (N = 304)



This past
academic year



The year the
program
director was ill



First program
assessment
report findings

Table 1. This table summarizes student Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 course evaluation responses and compares them to five key course evaluation items for all ENV courses from 2006-2008 and the 2011-12 academic year in which the program director was ill and course instructors had to be replaced and student advising had to be done by non-program faculty.

Results of the Supplementary Analysis:

The summarized values from 2006-2008 reflect an very high degree of satisfaction with courses and instructors, in every case being over 90% and for four of the five questions over 97% satisfaction. It was clear from the 2011

data that the students were less satisfied with the adjuncts in the Fall of 2011. It is very possible that much of their dissatisfaction was caused by their having to change instructors six weeks into the courses and is not a reflection of the skill of the adjunct replacement instructors. The adjunct replacements were all young, well-qualified, enthusiastic and had varying degrees of teaching experience. These data do not allow one to discern the cause of the lower values to that degree of detail.

The values for the Fall of 2011 were not satisfactory. So the program-wide goal in 2012-13 was to achieve 90% satisfaction with 90% of respondents choosing Agree or Strongly Agree for all evaluation questions. Since this situation did exist in prior years and it is a general benchmark in the Behavioral Sciences Division it seemed to be a good and reasonable goal.

The great news from this supplementary analysis is the Environmental Studies Program received much better evaluation scores in the 2012-13 academic year, returning scores similar to those reported for the 2006-2008 academic year. Ninety percent or more of responses for all five evaluation questions were favorable (Strongly Agree or Agree) and mean responses were all above a 4.50 on a likert scale. These data reflect that we have returned to our former state of quality teaching for the five questions analyzed. This is great news; it does not however, mean that there is nothing to work on to improve the Environmental Studies Program.

Assessment and Program Goals for the 2013-14 Academic Year:

In bulleted formatting, the Environmental Studies Program and assessment goals for this academic year are:

- The attempt to get back on schedule with the development and implementation of all of the Program Assessment Goals described in the beginning of this Plan and derived from the *2009 Program Assessment Report*. Due to the Director's illness these goals have not yet been met.
- Use the supplementary assessment and other data to persuade the administration that Environmental Studies needs another faculty member. Not only did the evaluations suffer in the Director's absence but there was no one to advise students, help them find scholarships and summer internships. The Dean of Behavioral Sciences kindly stepped in and helped out as did a number of professors who covered courses, but basically it was a scramble that did not serve the students well due to there only being one faculty member tenured to Environmental Studies. There are 28 Environmental Studies majors this 2013 academic year. Is it really alright for them to have one professor tenured to the program and acting as director? This is the only major in the university with one faculty member tenured to it (and it is not the smallest major).
- Expand the Environmental Studies Program's ideological reach on campus and connection to other programs with the goal of eventually initiating a Chaminade Environmental Center.