

Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate

MEMO

To: The UVM Faculty Senate

From: Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Colby Kervick, Co-Chair

Date: December 2, 2021

Re: Approval of a proposal from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences for a no-contest deactivation of the BS in Environmental Studies and Environmental Science degrees.

On December 2, 2021, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a proposal from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to deactivate the BS degrees in Environmental Studies and Environmental Science. The proposed deactivation is articulated within an MOU describing interrelated cross-unit curricular changes across CALS, RSENR and CAS that were agreed upon by faculty, Deans, and unit-level curriculum committees within each unit. The goal of the proposed deactivation of the ENVS and ENSC majors in CALS is to meet the Provost's charge to streamline offerings in the study of the environment at the undergraduate level and to transition cross-unit degrees in ENSC and ENVS to single degrees offered in RSENR and CAS as well as to build new synergies and opportunities across undergraduate education in the environment at UVM.

ENVS and ENSC faculty discussed the proposals at meetings on September 22 and 24. After those discussions, both sets of faculty were asked to vote to approve or reject deactivation proposals for the relevant degrees. The result of the vote in ENSC was as follows: in CAS, 6 in favor, 4 opposed. In RSENR, deactivating the ENVS major passed with 30 in favor, 1 opposed, and 5 abstentions.

CALS faculty voted on October 4, 2021, with majority of faculty voting in favor of deactivating both the ENSC and ENVS BS degrees in CALS. 1 Faculty voted against and there were no abstentions. The proposal was also approved by unanimous vote of the CALS curriculum committee on September 27, 2021, and was supported by the Dean. Zero public comment was received during the 30-day circulation. The CAC vote was 16 approve, 0 oppose and 1 abstain.

Rationale for Deactivation

Currently, the Environmental Studies and Environmental Sciences majors are offered in three different colleges. Each program offers a unique perspective to the study of the environment. However, the Provost and Admissions have voiced concern that such duplication creates confusion for incoming students interested in this area of study. This cross-unit structure further complicates curricular administration and flexibility given that changes to degree requirements, course offerings and staffing have to be approved separately by all three units. While CALS does have majors enrolled in both ENVS and ENSC their enrollment is lower than the number of majors associated with those degrees within CAS and RSENR.

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences will continue to be involved in the delivery of ENVS and ENSC courses and extracurricular opportunities for students in areas of our faculty expertise. They will also continue to provide interdisciplinary, natural and social science opportunities for students to study the environment in their existing majors, including Plant and Soil Science Department offering Agroecology and Landscape Design, Plant Biology, Community and International Development, and many other courses with an environmental focus.

There is no anticipated impact on faculty/staff as faculty who currently teach courses in ENVS and ENSC will continue to be able to do so across units as articulated in the MOU. All students currently enrolled in

either the ENVS or ENSC majors in CALS will be able to complete their degrees in their home unit. Courses in CALS with an environmental focus will be considered for cross-listing to make available to students in the ENVS major once relocated solely in CAS and courses with an environmental focus will be considered for catalog approval to fulfill concentration requirements for the ENSC major once relocated solely in RSENR. The university wide minor in ENVS will continue to be available to CALS students but will be administered through CAS and the co-directors of the ENVS major.

There are several key components of the negotiated agreement to note:

- Cross-unit teaching will continue
- Both ENVS (CAS) and ENSC (RSENR) will have co-directors, one from the new home unit and one from outside
- Both ENVS (CAS) and ENSC (RSENR) will have curriculum units that include faculty from across units who teach in those disciplines
- Advising plans are articulated in the MOU
- Program faculty designation will be available for faculty who are teaching regularly for a particular degree even if they are not assigned to the home unit of the degree.
- Re-envision the Environmental Program: Transition the current Environmental Program (as a home for the ENVS major) into a coordinating body to support environmental research, outreach, internships, course offerings, seminars and other opportunities for undergraduate students in environmental majors across campus and elevate the visibility of the UVM environmental brand.
- Create a UVM Green Team: Create clearer coordination at the highest levels of the university to bring together leaders of undergraduate academics, research, campus sustainability, community outreach and the Foundation in order to create common messaging, mission and outreach

In implementing these curricular changes, the MOU articulates the goal of budget neutrality. To monitor the budget impacts there is a plan articulated in the MOU to conduct yearly financial analysis involving the business managers from each unit to track and make necessary adjustments as needed for the next four years of the transition. The MOU also indicates plans to conduct yearly cross-unit review of the curriculum. Program Directors will prepare an annual report that assesses student success, persistence, and enrollment trends, in addition to student satisfaction. This includes a survey of undergraduate students to seek their input on their advising and satisfaction with the delivery of the degree program. In similar fashion, faculty will be asked to provide feedback on the new structure of the program on an annual basis until 2025. There will also be a comprehensive review at year 3.

If approved by the Faculty Senate the no-contest deactivation of both the ENVS and ENSC BS degrees in CALS would go into effect in Fall 2022.