

Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate

MEMO

To: The UVM Faculty Senate
From: Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Laura Almstead, Chair
Date: April 1, 2021
Re: Approval of a request by the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, to change the name of the Agroecology major to the Agroecology and Landscape Horticulture major.

On April 1, 2021, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a request from the Plant and Soil Sciences (PSS) Department in the College of Agricultural Life Sciences to change the name of the existing Agroecology major to the Agroecology and Landscape Design major. This request accompanies a request to establish two new concentrations in the Agroecology major – Agroecology and Landscape Design – and a no-contest termination request for the Sustainable Landscape Horticulture major. Both proposals were also approved by the CAC (see separate memos). There are no accompanying changes to course prefixes; all Plant and Soil Science courses have the prefix PSS. A new major code of ALD was requested to replace the current AGRO designation. The name change request was approved by department faculty, the CALS Curriculum Committee, CALS faculty, and Dean of CALS, Leslie Parise.

In 2004, PSS faculty proposed splitting the then-single major of “Plant and Soil Science” into two separate majors: “Ecological Agriculture” (renamed in 2019 to Agroecology) and “Sustainable Landscape Horticulture.” This change allowed for more directed focus by students on food vs. ornamental horticulture, respectively. Since then, faculty have developed research programs that focus on multifunctional and ecological farming and land use, and the divisions that existed in 2004 when the previous Plant and Soil Science major was split are not as clear. Research programs of PSS faculty listed below clearly bridge the agriculture and landscape nexus. Additionally, PSS faculty work collaboratively on research projects across campus and integrate these research programs into their undergraduate courses.

- UVM Farming and Climate Change Program studies design and engineering solutions for treatment of agricultural wastewater and best management practices for control of nonpoint source pollution, and field scale hydrology and water management in agricultural landscapes
- Agroecology and Livelihoods Collaborative uses a transdisciplinary approach to study and seek solutions to problems across the food system
- Ecological Landscape Design Laboratory spans disciplines within the fields of landscape architecture, ecological design, restoration, and planning

The proposed name, Agroecology and Landscape Design, reflects shared curricula between the previous majors and highlights the department's transdisciplinary approach to teaching and research across the areas of agriculture, food production, community, and natural landscapes. Importantly, PSS faculty feel the name change, along with the proposed establishment of a single major with two concentrations, will reduce confusion among students who often do not see clear distinction between the two current majors. As the only program among New England land grant universities with a specific focus on the intersection of agricultural, ecological, and broader landscape design elements, the department also feels the changes will provide the ability to improve marketing to prospective students.