

## University of Alaska New Program Approval

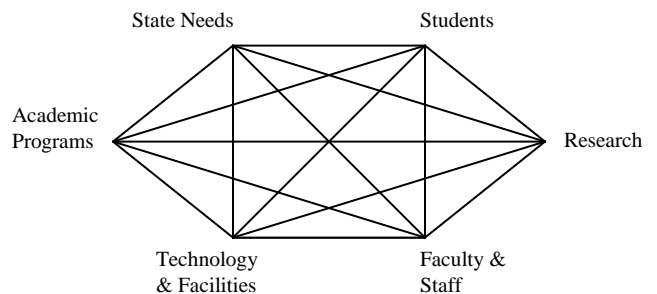
### Board of Regents Summary Form

University of Alaska Anchorage

College of Arts and Sciences

Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science in Environment & Society

**Target Admission date:** Fall 2009



#### Title and brief description

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) proposes to offer a **Bachelor of Arts** and a **Bachelor of Science in Environment & Society**. Graduates will take a core of classes in departmental offerings in environmental studies as well as an interdisciplinary core of classes in environmental studies and techniques. Each student will then focus studies on one of the following emphases: Life Science, Natural Science, or Society & Environment.

The interdisciplinary degree in Environment & Society prepares students to be informed citizens, and for careers in environmental advocacy, policy setting and analysis, education, urban and resource planning, and graduate studies in a variety of disciplines.

The curriculum will educate students about the fundamental role of interconnected, natural/living systems in supporting life and social well-being, the key threats to these systems, and the challenges society faces in meeting these threats. In addition, students are exposed to the key methods and tools they will need to engage as professionals and citizens to promote long-term health and vitality of ecological, social, economic, and cultural systems and to make informed decisions about environmental issues. The program will be delivered by members of the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies and affiliate faculty members.

Curriculum in the major places an emphasis on skills in community engagement, the development of advanced skills in public science writing, geographic information systems, and environmental impact assessment.

#### Relation to the Academic Mission of the University of Alaska and State Needs

A degree program in Environment & Society would meet job needs in the state that are not currently met by programs such as environmental sciences, biology, or geology. There is an increasing need for professionals who are trained in an interdisciplinary manner and are able to address and manage human systems as they interact with physical resources. These include the growing need for professionals who can fill agency employment in the fields of transportation planning, commercial fisheries, recreation, fish and game, and the development of mineral, oil and gas resources. Additionally, professions related to policy making, education, land use planning, environmental law, and community planning and advocacy would greatly benefit from this degree program.

#### Current university response to needs

Degree programs currently exist in the University of Alaska that address environmental issues, especially the environmental and related sciences (UAS and UAF programs in Environmental Sciences, in particular). The proposed program is unique to the UA system in that it integrates strengths from a broad range of disciplines including, but not limited to, environmental studies, geography, philosophy, economics, biology, geomatics, civic engagement and learning, geology, sociology, liberal studies, and anthropology. Hence the program builds on existing UAA strengths to develop an approach to environmental issues that is unique to the UA system and advantageous to the development of the state's workforce.

This proposed program was reviewed by two focus groups of environmental professionals who recommended modifications and changes to the plan and encouraged the working group to pursue its plans in light of the demand for qualified professionals.

### **Student opportunities**

The degree prepares students for a wide array of post-graduate opportunities. Students will be capable of working in a wide array of jobs related to environmental assessment and oversight, as well as resource development. In addition, students will be prepared to work in environmental advocacy, planning, and policy settings. Students might also choose to pursue post-graduate education to prepare for more in-depth training in a variety of disciplines including applied aspects of environmental science and engineering, resources planning, and urban and regional planning.

### **Student Outcomes – BA & BS in Environment & Society**

Graduates of the program will be able to:

- Describe the fundamental role of natural/living systems in supporting life and social well-being and the key threats to these systems.
- Explain the central importance of interconnections and relationships among people and the natural world in understanding the environmental and related challenges facing society.
- Apply appropriate methods and tools to engage as professionals and citizens to promote the long-term health and vitality of ecological, social, economic, and cultural systems.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically about the relative merits of arguments, anticipate consequences of actions, and to make informed decisions about environmental issues.

### **Enrollment projections**

These projections are considered conservative given the existing interest in the Environmental Studies minor and evidence of student interest in a major in Environment & Society.

**Table 1—Enrollment Projections**

|           | Academic Year 09-10 | Academic Year 10-11 | Academic Year 11-12 |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Majors    | 5-10                | 10-15               | 15-20               |
| Graduates | 0                   | 0                   | 5-10                |

### **Research opportunities**

Student research is incorporated into many of the courses used for the degree. In particular, the final Environmental Impact Assessment for the capstone course of the major provides students the opportunity to synthesize and apply skills and knowledge. Both the department and many affiliates in Environment & Society have a proven record of using civic engagement in their coursework. Students will have ample opportunities work in community settings and engage in community-based research.

### **Impacts on existing Technology & Facilities**

The program will be delivered on the main UAA campus using existing classrooms, including the department laboratory, which is currently underutilized. No new facilities will be required for the program.

### **Program Budget**

The College of Arts and Sciences will support the program with existing Geography and Environmental Studies resources. This program takes maximum advantage of existing, regularly offered disciplinary courses. The program is likely to generate significant tuition revenue by attracting students who might otherwise have attended another university to pursue a similar degree program.