

Evaluation Report for Program Review Face to Face Meeting

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater: Environmental Science (BA, BS) Majors and Minors, 2022-2023

Date: 3/14/2023

Attended: Provost John Chenoweth, Dean Frank Goza, Dale Splinter, Margo Kleinfeld, Peter Jacobs, Edward Gimbel, Andrea Romero, Lynn Gilbertson

Overview of review team evaluation, program comments:

Program was commended for their efforts in developing the self-study and the impactful work that they are engaging in for the benefit of students in the program.

Discussion of Review Team's evaluation:

1 – Diversity remains a challenge in the program. Is it possible to more fully engage with a diverse student body in ways that do not require uncertain external grant funding?

Program provided additional initiatives/possibilities from a recent meeting such as engaging in STEM bootcamp, connecting with the McNair Program, and teaching BIO 120 in Spanish. The program has a rich history of faculty mentoring to support students at all stages of the program.

Dean provided commentary on future options related to budget and outreach.

Provost provided commentary supporting a shift in focus from diversity to inclusive practices, particularly highlighting the impact of efforts with existing students in the classroom setting.

2 – How are funds allocated to support student learning in the program? Provide an update on the external requests for equipment and resources.

Program reported that funds were sufficient, but limit in resources to expand and be creative. The biggest concerns were travel funding to engage students in rich field experiences and attaining more advanced technology. Currently the department is able to utilize the nature spaces near campus and existing equipment for field experiences. There seems to be a tricky balance between resources for rich experiences and high enrollments in single sections.

Dean expressed continued concerns about resources given existing budget situation and encouraged the program to craft a list of equipment needs.

Provost provided commentary regarding prioritizing needs and identified the necessity of communication to facilitate resource conversations with donors. The provost further highlighted the opportunity to tie needs to community to support investment and provided the Rock River watershed as an example. Dean and Provost encouraged the program to continue to communicate needs to administration so that needs are known and can be included in big picture needs/asks across campus.

Program and Dean expressed significant concerns with web presence in supporting awareness of program's exceptional work. Provost indicated web presence is part of an ongoing conversation with consideration for resources, freedom/control of content/updates, and currency/necessity of material.

3 – Provide information that demonstrates how your program is unique and/or valued in the region and state?

Program identified “uniqueness” as providing a breadth of coursework promoting the interdisciplinary nature of the field compared to other programs in the state that emphasize the hard sciences. Their focus is on undergraduate experiences with small courses and a strong tradition of faculty mentoring. There is great opportunity to highlight the exceptional experiences that the program provides.

Dean was incredibly proud of the department and expressed that the department has been nominated for department of the year, won a system diversity award, as well as many other individual accolades such as a recent Fulbright Scholar.

Program coordinator provided exceptional appreciation for the program advisory board and attributed the existence/maintenance of the program to their efforts.

Recommended Actions:

Recommended Action #1

Revisit the assessment plan for usability, feasibility, and sustainability. Consider a review of the SLOs to identify a number that can be evaluated in a 5-year cycle. Identify methods of assessment that already exist in the program to assess the SLOs (e.g., existing embedded assessments like the capstone).

Recommended Action #2

Identify strategies to increase underrepresented student representation and retention in the program.

Recommended Action #3

Work to secure funding for needed equipment.

Recommended Action #4

Continue work focused on raising the profile of these important programs by communicating the unique value of the program in the region, state, and/or nation. Consider updates to marketing materials, such as the program's website.

Recommended Result:

Continuation with minor concerns

Next Self-study and/or Progress Report Due Dates:

1 - Next FULL self-study will be due to the Dean on May 1, 2027 and to the Assessment Office on August 1, 2027

For a copy of the full evaluation report and detailed comments, please reach out to the assessment office: assessment@uww.edu.