

PROGRAM UNIT ACTION PLAN

RESULTING FROM EXTERNAL REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM (SWG) AND UNIT RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

June 2009

Following the release of the External Review Report, the Environmental Studies unit submitted their response to the review. This document constitutes a further reflection on the review recommendations and presents an Action Plan to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations. It must be emphasized, at the outset, that the implementation of these review recommendations will be contingent on resources being made available to the unit by the College. Some of these recommendations make a case for additional materials and supplies, for more workload for the unit faculty and staff, for increased workload for students, and for increased collaboration between other related college programs. Thus, the successful implementation of this Action Plan relies on factors that both internal and external to the unit.

Recommendation #1 – Discuss coordination of course content for courses offered by Environmental Studies and sister programs (e.g., Environmental Science, Tourism, Sustainable Resource Management).

Action

Invite the Chair from Environmental Science and the Chairs from the two new Social Science Programs, Tourism Studies and Sustainable Resource Management to begin dialogue on the merits of integration of courses and or course content within and between programs.

Recommendation #2 & 21 – Investigate further the notion of a “School of the Environment”

Action

Meet with the Division Heads from Science and Social Science, as well as the appropriate program Chairs and pick up where we left off last spring (2008). The plan is to have a proposal for a School of the Environment drafted by May 2009 for presentation to the College Academic Planning Committee. These plans are consonant with very recent developments by Senior Administration at the College, to move forward with a proposal for a “School of the Environment,” and to include that in the Strategic Plan being put before government. In aid of

this, a meeting has been held with the Senior Administration as well as Chairs and Heads of relevant programs and divisions.

Recommendation #3 – Undertake a cooperative review of the first year courses in Environmental Studies and Environmental Science with a view of introducing a comprehensive course suitable for both programs.

Action

This is closely related to Recommendation #1. It is proposed that the respective Unit Chairs and Division Heads meet with the Vice-Principal to look for common ground on which to develop a first year course suitable to both the Environmental Studies and Environmental Science programs. If the process moves along in a timely fashion a new course could be in place by fall 2009. This issue of a common first-year course has also been raised in the discussion of the “School of the Environment” model – such a structure would make closer collaboration and discussion easier.

Recommendation # 4 – The Environmental Studies Unit should offer required courses every year, especially the third year GIS course.

Action

Action has already been taken to make sure that all required Environmental Studies core courses will be offered on an annual basis.

Recommendation #5 – Increase efforts to eliminate timetable conflicts between courses in Environmental Studies and Environmental Science.

Action

The Chair of Environmental Studies will meet with the Chair of Environmental Science to review the fall 2009 schedule. This meeting will be scheduled on a regular basis at the beginning of each subsequent semester.

Recommendation # 6 – Develop additional course options at the 3000 and 4000 level.

Action

As of winter semester 2008 an effort has been made by various unit members to introduce Special Topics courses. This action will continue with an eye toward developing some of them into regular Environmental Studies courses. For example, in winter 2009, we were able to offer a 3rd-year elective as a special topics course, partly in response to the student need for such electives.

Recommendation # 7 – Consider the development of a course in research methods designed specifically for the EVST program.

Action

Discuss developing a Special Topics 3000 level course that will introduce EVST students to the variety of research methods and techniques that are common tools in the environmental disciplines.

Recommendation # 8 –Explore the possibility of an Honours degree.

Action

Strike a committee to investigate the feasibility and desirability of establishing an Honours B.A. degree in Environmental Studies

Recommendation # 9 – Investigate the possibility of increasing opportunities for student qualification / certification in sea kayaking, canoeing and wilderness first-aid.

Action

Plans have already begun in earnest to have a unit member acquire the necessary instructor level courses to provide certification opportunities to students. The college administration needs to continue providing financial and logistical support for this development, as the cost of achieving these certifications is not insignificant for the instructors.

Recommendation # 10 – The expedition course should be modified so it can be available to all students with an interest in the environment.

Action

The unit has already initiated discussion of the feasibility of increasing the student intake to the expedition courses. There are, however, safety-related issues which need to be addressed if we broaden the student intake for these courses. In addition, if there are more students, we will need to hire more instructors, in order to maintain an appropriate instructor/student balance. Such an action will mean additional cost to the college. It should be noted that the additional load will not be caused by Environmental Studies program demands, but by an attempt to make the expedition courses more accessible to non-EVST students.

Recommendation # 11 – The unit should consider widening the scope of outdoor pursuits and include field trips that would broaden the student experience in environmental studies.

Action

In order to broaden the scope of outdoor pursuits and include field trips, the college senior administration will be asked, to formulate a group transportation plan by winter 2009 and to provide more support in terms of class scheduling, additional instructors and additional equipment to support the increase. It should be acknowledged that a recommendation such as this can have significant associated costs.

Recommendation # 12 – Faculty advisors should make clear to students that a broad environmental education does provide a basis for gaining usable skills, for being able to critically evaluate issues, for making ethical decisions, and for gathering information , etc.; also a work-study option.

Action

This recommendation is actually two-fold. To cut to the chase, a work-study option is not feasible at this time with our current staffing issues. However, the unit members can encourage our students to volunteer and engage themselves in activities undertaken with local NGO's and government agencies.

Recommendation # 13 – Students should be required to take Philosophy 2561 or Religious Studies 3880.

Action

The unit will thoroughly discuss this issue and if there is a consensus within the unit an application will be sent to SWGC Academic Studies to make the appropriate change by fall 2009.

Recommendation # 14 - Strong consideration should be given to developing a course in Environmental Thought.

Action

The unit will thoroughly discuss the benefit of developing a course in Environmental Thought as it appears to fit recommendations # 1 and 3, or be included as one of the options mentioned in Recommendation #13. The appropriate procedure will be undertaken by Fall 2009.

Recommendation # 15 – The Environmental Studies Program should explore the possibility of developing a for-credit work-study course option for students in their third or fourth year.

Action

The feasibility of following through with this recommendation needs to be thoroughly discussed by our unit members. Logistically a faculty member would need to be assigned to administer the course and evaluate the students. Furthermore, it is not clear how this initiative will impact student timetables. (Throughout their program, they are taking many non-Environmental Studies courses as well.) The main question to be addressed is how much value will this initiative really add, and at what financial cost? Discussion will be initiated on this and an appropriate decision will be made by fall 2009.

Recommendation # 16 – A systematic plan for acquiring and upgrading equipment should be developed and implemented on an annual basis. Priority should be given to safety equipment. Moreover, equipment needs to be identified as a priority item in Grenfell’s annual budget submission.

Action

Convince the senior administration to support a regular replacement cycle for the major items such as sea kayaks, canoes, tents and skiing equipment. This procedure has already been initiated in the "Cost of Autonomy Document" circulated by the college vice-principal. In addition, this is included in the regular budget submission for 2009-10. However, whether it will be acted upon is now outside the purview of the Environmental Studies unit (apart from various formal and informal lobbying efforts).

Recommendation # 17 – Administration of SWGC should make provision for a dedicated storage space to house and maintain equipment associated with Environmental Studies. If space is not identified within current college plans, then Environmental Studies should take steps to construct a facility in support of its program.

Action

As of May 2009, the SWGC senior administration has committed storage space for EVST in the RecPlex facility

Recommendation # 18 – A project room should be identified and assigned to Environmental Studies students. Avoiding the perception of double standards among the student population is essential to the health and success of the program. The Chair of the program along with the members of the unit should act as strong advocate on this issue.

Action

The program chair and unit members will continue to lobby SWGC senior administration assertively on behalf of our students to acquire a designated student project room. Budget submissions from the Division of Social Science have included a request for student project room space for all of the Division's degree programs.

Recommendation # 19 – Tourism 3210, 3010, Sustainable Resource Management (SRM) 4003 and 3002 should be included as course options for both concentrations.

Action

Inclusion of the above courses will be discussed at our Environmental Studies Unit meetings during winter 2009. As mentioned in our Initial Response document, the Tourism Studies and SRM faculty will also need to be consulted, since these courses have prerequisites. During the winter 2009 semester a blanket waiver will be presented to our Academic Studies Committee permitting Environmental Studies students to choose these Tourism or SRM courses as course options for both concentrations.

Recommendation # 20 – The college administration should continue to work towards breaking down barriers that exist between Environmental Studies and Environmental Science. A concerted effort should be made to integrate or align environmental programs so that SWGC can harness its full potential. Much discussion and planning is needed among the various units. In particular, Chairs of Environmental Science and Environmental Studies in collaboration with colleagues in Tourism and SRM programs should aim to jointly develop an environmental agenda for SWGC. This agenda should strive to integrate teaching and research interests to take advantage of all available assets.

Action

Our response to this is included in earlier sections, in relation to our participation in the development of a model for a “School of the Environment,” which will allow a structure to promote such alignments.

Recommendation # 21 - The college administration should, in the near future, establish a “Centre/School for the Environment” as an umbrella structure that will bring together all interested and relevant parties at the College as a centre of environmental excellence.

Action

Similar to the Action Plans for Recommendation #1 and 2, a meeting will be held during the fall 2008 semester with the Chairs of the affiliated programs and the vice-principal and associate-vice principal of SWGC. The purpose of the meeting and proposed subsequent discussions will be to examine avenues where our respective programs can integrate and align our common initiatives and develop a comprehensive environmental agenda for SWGC. In order to move on these initiatives will require a substantial mind shift involving considerable cooperation among the various affiliated units.

Recommendation # 22 – Students in the Environmental Studies program should be made more aware of the opportunities afforded by its partners. Opportunities should be made available to students to engage in undergraduate and graduate research projects and to consult with researchers working within these units.

Action

Beginning winter 2009, personnel in the local environmental non-government organizations (NGO's) and government agencies will be invited to our Environmental Studies 4950: Independent Research Project student seminar. This will promote better communication between our students, faculty and staff and researchers from various external agencies. In turn there will be more opportunities made available to students to engage in undergraduate and future graduate projects.

Recommendation # 23 – SWGC administration should take steps to formalize its relationship with all its on-site partners.

Action

(See response to Recommendation 24)

Recommendation # 24 – Immediate steps should be taken by the unit to appoint CFS scientists and other qualified personnel in non-academic units as adjunct professors to Environmental Studies. A pro-active effort by the Chair of the program is required to initiate this process.

Action

As previously stated in the Initial Response document Recommendation # 22, 23 and 24 are all interrelated and they refer to the availability of expertise within the Environmental Studies Unit. As we stated then:

“Before any definitive decisions are made, there will have to be considerable discussion between our program, the administration, ES, SRM and TS. Although these recommendations have a great deal of merit, it would not be an ideal situation for

Environmental Studies to move in isolation of the other programs. In addition, some of these items are well beyond the purview of the Environmental Studies Unit”.

In lieu of the comments above and the present circumstances involving the program the Chair will:

- (1) Take immediate steps to solicit qualified personnel to be appointed as adjunct professors in the Environmental Studies Unit.
- (2) Oversee the development of a plan to ensure that the Environmental Studies Unit has a sufficient number of full-time tenured or tenure track faculty to properly deliver the B.A. program (including the offering of the proposed Honours degree) taking into account expected retirements in the near future.
- (3) Determine, in consultation with the Master’s in Environmental Policy (MEP) Program Committee, the number of additional faculty that will be required to offer the proposed (MEP) degree; including course offerings, release time for supervision of thesis, and responsibility for the internship option, while maintaining the capacity of the Unit to offer the B.A. program.

Recommendation # 25 – A faculty member with a strong research background should be assigned to be a graduate studies advisor and be responsible for posting both print and electronic material about graduate studies in environmental studies and related areas.

Action

This recommendation is not workable, for logistical and workload issues, among others. Such a position is needed at SWGC and this will become even more evident as Environmental Studies and other programs develop graduate programs; perhaps this initiative would operate best out of Student Affairs as a full time staff employee.

Recommendation # 26 – The Chair should dialogue on a regular basis with the School of Graduate Studies (MUN) and keep the unit abreast of developments and opportunities arising within Graduate Studies at Memorial.

Action

An adjunct of our unit, the new Environmental Policy Institute, is currently working on various graduate studies issues and it would be counterproductive to duplicate efforts. The Institute will report on their progress in regularly planned meetings with Environmental Studies.

Recommendation # 27 – The committee recommends that ‘the greening of the campus’ project be supported both in volunteer/service clubs and through credit courses. Where appropriate, courses should contain applied projects involving campus sustainability.

Action

The Environmental Studies Unit will continue to encourage and support all environmental committees on campus. In particular, the Unit encourages our campus to fully commit itself to the Talloires Declaration and become an environmentally sustainable institution for post-secondary education.

Recommendation #28 – Establish an information bulletin board as a first step for resolving the concern regarding more connection with members of academic communities outside of SWGC]. Longer term possibilities include promotion of on-line academic interest groups and electronic networks.

Action

At an Environmental Studies meeting in winter 2009 this concern will be discussed and it is expected that a member of the unit will volunteer to look after a bulletin board and investigate other longer-term possibilities such as on-line academic interest groups. As previously mentioned in the Initial Response document, the SWGC Learning Centre already does some activities related to student postgraduate opportunities and career opportunities; so for the sake of clarity and consistency the Learning Centre will be included in the planning process.

Recommendation # 29 – A concerted effort should be made to establish a distinct identity for the Environmental Studies program. The responsibility for providing leadership in this effort lies with all members of the unit.

Action

Personnel from the Registrar's Office will be invited to an Environmental Studies Unit meeting during the 2008 / 09 academic year to discuss the current student perception of our program. Subsequent Unit meetings will then be called to investigate and construct a distinctive image.

Recommendation # 30 – Courses in the Perspectives and Outdoor Pursuits areas should be integrated with the new programs in SRM, TS and Business Administration. As well, courses from other institutions (e.g., College of the North Atlantic) should be fully utilized and not duplicated within the program.

Action

An initial meeting was held during the winter 2008 semester with other Social Science Division Program Units. One of the primary items to come out of that meeting was the necessity to follow up with more meetings and discuss the common ground between the various programs; particularly, the similarity between some courses and the need to eliminate unwarranted redundancies between courses in all related programs.

In terms of our relationship with other external institutions, such as the College of the North Atlantic, an annual meeting will be scheduled with the appropriate personnel from their institution to discuss our articulation agreement and other program related issues pertaining to courses etc.