

**Florida Gulf Coast University Board of Trustees
April 21, 2009**

SUBJECT: New Degree Program Proposal: M.A. Environmental Studies

PROPOSED BOARD ACTION

Approve new Master of Arts (M.A.) in Environmental Studies program.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FGCU is requesting permission to offer a Master of Arts (M.A.) in Environmental Studies as described in the Executive Summary.

Supporting Documentation Included: Executive Summary

Prepared by: Acting Associate Provost Cathy J. Duff

Legal Review by: General Counsel Vee Leonard (April 6, 2009)

Submitted by: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Ron Toll

Florida Gulf Coast University

New Degree Program Proposal Executive Summary March 31, 2009

Degree: Master of Arts (M.A.)
Major: Environmental Studies
Concentrations: None
College: Arts and Sciences
Department/Division: Marine and Ecological Sciences
Anticipated Implementation Date: Fall 2009
Suggested CIP: 03.0103

Program Description

The proposed M.A. in Environmental Studies provides the foundation necessary for understanding the complex, cross-disciplinary problems faced by environmental policy decision-makers. The curriculum is drawn from both the natural and social sciences. Topics include human populations and their interactions with the environment; the effectiveness of environmental analysis and protection institutions; and the analysis and resolution of environmental issues faced by modern society.

The purpose of the proposed program is to provide advanced education that will prepare graduates for careers and leadership positions in a variety of fields both within and outside of Florida. Career areas include public policy analysis in environmental agencies, environmental protection decision-making and planning, environmental design, and resource management. The program will be an effective terminal degree for students seeking entry to these fields at a high career level. It will also provide advanced training to enhance the skills of practitioner-professionals. Further, it will serve as an entry-level research degree for those who wish to pursue additional graduate education at the doctorate level.

There are no concentrations, tracks, or specializations within the proposed degree program. The curriculum consists of 36 graduate student credit hours distributed as follows: (a) 18 hours of required courses, (b) 3 hours of electives selected from courses related to practical application, (c) 3 hours of electives selected from methods courses, (d) 6 hours of restricted electives, and (d) 6 hours of thesis. Students gain a thorough grounding in natural sciences, applications, and methods. Program components include (a) 9 hours of required core fundamentals in the areas of advanced ecological science, cultural ecology, environmental policy, and environmental design; (b) 9 hours of environmental management applications; and (c) 9 hours of research methodology including geographic information systems.

This program provides a needed complement to the existing M.S. in Environmental Science, which emphasizes scientific research of the natural world. Students in the M.A. program will benefit from the course offerings and faculty specializations in the natural sciences offered through the M.S. At the same time, students in the M.S. program will benefit from coursework and faculty advisement in the fields of policy analysis and management decision-making.

The curriculum has been approved by both the college curriculum team and the university-wide Graduate Curriculum Team. The proposed program is consistent with the criteria for new academic program authorization adopted by the Florida Board of Governors on March 29, 2007.

Consistency with FGCU Mission and Strategic Plan

The proposed program is consistent with the FGCU Mission and Strategic Plan (Source: http://www.fgcu.edu/planning/files/SP04_05.pdf). The proposed program promotes respect for the environment. The program also directly supports Strategic Directive 3 which calls for “applied master’s degrees appropriate for the region.” The program further supports Strategic Directive 5, which calls for research and service that will contribute to “economic growth, environmental sustainability, and cultural richness of the region.”

Need and Demand

There are no strictly comparable degree programs at the graduate level elsewhere in Florida. Many degree programs focus on one or more aspects of environmental science. These are for the most part M.S. degrees. The University of Florida has a graduate degree program in environmental policy, and the University of South Florida has a program within geography that integrates environmental science and policy (but with little focus on the aquatic environment). There is substantial demand for graduate-level training in the professional field of environmental studies, environmental management, and environmental policy. Many resource agencies in Southwest Florida have large numbers of employees who seek continuing education as they advance in their careers to decision-making positions. The same agencies seek entry-level employees with baccalaureate or graduate-level training.

A 2004 survey resulted in responses from 25 alumni and 30 environmental professionals/employers in Southwest Florida. The survey asked about (a) interest in pursuing a graduate degree in this field, (b) perceived demand for such a degree, and (c) specific skills most beneficial to graduates and employers. There was unanimous support from each respondent group indicating a desire for a M.A. in Environmental Studies.

Enrollment

Fourteen students (8 full-time and 6 part-time) are expected to enroll in the M.A. in Environmental Studies in the first year. As the program becomes established, enrollment is expected to grow steadily

to a headcount of 26 (16 full-time and 10 part-time) in the fifth year. The large number of anticipated part-time students is consistent with the program's expectation to serve many professional employees of local environmental and resource agencies.

Resources

All resources needed to implement the proposed program are already in place in the College of Arts and Sciences and no additional funding is necessary. The program will make extensive use of faculty, library resources, facilities, and other resources currently in use by the M.S. in Environmental Science, also housed in the Department of Marine and Ecological Studies. Those resources include three recent hires with specialties in environmental and natural-resource management. An additional new hire in the field of environmental design will be supported entirely by an existing endowment established for this purpose. Costs in Year 1 are projected to be \$16,500. Costs in Year 5 are projected to be \$24,751. These costs are associated with new courses offered to serve the needs of the students in the major.