

Academic Department Student Success Plan Annual Update: 2016-2019¹



Department: Earth and Environmental Systems

Department Chair: Amos Winter

Department Mission: The mission of the Department of Earth and Environmental Systems is to provide undergraduate and graduate education grounded in geosciences, geography and anthropology in order to prepare students for environmentally oriented careers and/or graduate studies. The department is committed to interdisciplinary studies of the environment, the earth, and human adaptation and interaction with the environment with an emphasis on experiential learning and community engagement.

Department Freshmen (1st year) Retention Goal(s):

Increase first year retention in the Department (freshman to sophomore) by 4% biennially.

Action Step² (with dates & person(s) responsible):

1. Arrange that each first-year major meet with volunteer faculty mentor in the department (other than their departmental advisor) to discuss their educational and career goals and interests to help them engage with the discipline and to have a faculty support network. Person Responsible: Undergraduate Program Coordinator and Departmental Faculty, Date to be Completed: This is a continuing effort.
2. Increase Environmental Science Club, Anthropology Club, and Gamma Theta Upsilon effectiveness and participation by majors. Environmental club is much larger than last year (10 students were enrolled last fall). There are now 20 active members and in the future enrollment should increase further. Person Responsible: Club Faculty Advisors, Date to be completed: This is a continuing effort
3. Offer tutoring for EES classes in the Science Tutoring Center for 10 hours per week. Explore the idea of requiring all ENVI110 students complete required tutoring sessions as part of their lab grade. We have arranged time blocks with Michelle Baltz-Knorr the coordinator of the Science Tutoring Center but have not yet worked out how to implement because of the increased load on EES ENVI 110 teaching assistants that tutoring would require. Person Responsible: ENVI 110 Lab Coordinator, Date to be Completed: Starting Spring 2016 and continuing each semester thereafter.
4. At the start of each semester departmental advisors and the Undergraduate Program Coordinator evaluate previous semester performance at the course level for majors in order to recommend or intervene regarding academic success. The intent of this review is to catch problems before they affect first-year retention. This meeting is required of all majors and be *in addition* to meetings with the University College advisors. This is on going well and so far we haven't found problems. Persons Responsible: Academic Advisors in the Department, Undergraduate Program coordinator. Date to be Completed: By end of 2nd week of Fall and Spring semesters, annually.
5. Department faculty will develop pedagogical experiences within, or through modification of, our current core curriculum which would serve to link department undergraduate majors with one another among and between

¹ Plan updates are due to your Dean by Nov. 4 as informed by your 2015-16 End-of-Year Report that is due to your Dean by Oct. 3.

² **Action Steps Defined:** The specific activities/actions taken to realize progress toward the goal. Such action steps should include not only student support type activities/actions but also student learning enhancement focused activities/actions.

class cohorts, and expose them to faculty interests across the range of environmental science approaches. EES has developed a majors only section of the Introduction to Environmental Science lab which now has a current enrollment of c. 16 students! This will provide students with an initial experience with our departmental faculty and hopefully lead to greater retention. Persons Responsible: Undergraduate Affairs Committee, Department Chairperson, Department Faculty. Date to be Completed: By end of Spring 2016 semester.

<i>Retention Benchmarks</i> (by latest department)	Fall 2013 Cohort: 54.84%	Fall 2014 Cohort: 62.50%	Fall 2015 target & actual: 66.5% 87.5%	
	Fall 2016 target: 68.5%	Fall 2017 target: 70.5%		
			Fall 2018 target: 72.5%	

Other Freshmen Retention related benchmarks of focal interest to department

Performance on pre-core program assessment instrument.

Department Persistence to Completion Goal(s):

1. Increase 4-year degree-completion rate by 2% annually

Action Steps (with dates & person(s) responsible):

1. Maintain 2-year class rotation and updated degree maps as currently established, with annual adjustments for critical classes to maintain 4-year graduation possibility. Person Responsible: Department Chair, Date to be Completed: January-February, annually (achieved via department class scheduling).
2. Allow advisors sufficient flexibility to substitute or petition for substitute for required courses whose learning goals are met by alternative courses. This includes cognate classes where changes to pass/fail designations have significantly changed 4-year graduation rates. The chair has signed a number of such requests but there has been no systematic data tracking so it has been hard to assess. We will ask each advisor to keep track of changes. Person Responsible: Department Chair, Date to be Completed: January, annually.
3. We will continue to evaluate potential barriers to 4-year graduation due to recent changes in the requirements to advance course sequencing in cognate courses required by our Earth & Environmental Sciences major. We will continue fruitful discussions with other cognate intensive disciplines as well as the Dean of University College and Associate Dean Ballard about math and science cognates. The outcome of past meetings was a revised degree maps such that cognate math and science courses are completed much earlier in the degree than before. This allows for retakes and remediation earlier, if necessary. For example MATH 130/131 are now available to Freshman (See ESH Career Map). Person Responsible: Undergraduate Affairs Coordinator, Department Chair. Date to be Completed: Spring 2017.
4. Continue to maintain quality advising by following advising center guidelines and following up with students after the first week of classes regarding their schedules. Person Responsible: EES Advisors, Date to be Completed: End of 2nd week of classes, each semester.
5. Follow-up with majors who have been identified as “not attending” after 3-week attendance reporting, and/or achieved “deficient” interim grades via (at minimum) e-mail or an in-person meeting. Advise students on best course of action in cases where deficient midterm grades may jeopardize on-time degree completion. Person Responsible: Department Chair and Departmental Advisors, Date to be completed: Week after interim grading periods, each semester.

<i>Completion Benchmarks</i> (by latest department)	Fall 2010 Cohort: 18.75%	Fall 2011 Cohort: 8.7%	Fall 2012 target & actual: 13.7% 25%	

Fall 2013 target:
15.7%

Fall 2014 target:
17.7%

Fall 2015 target:
19.7%

Other Persistence to Completion related benchmarks of focal interest to department

Score improvements between pre-core program assessment instrument and post-core program assessment instrument.

Other Goal(s), Action Steps, and Benchmarks of focal interest to department:

EES restructuring is currently moving forward. The primary motive of the restructuring plan is to streamline the curriculum and courses offered to students that will improve enrollment, retention and student success. We are placing greater emphasizing on our three core disciplines, Anthropology, Geography and Geology and considering changing the name of the Department to better reflect these directed course programs and our strengths.

EES is instituting a new committee made up of members of the Department: Enrollment and Retention Committee. One of the charges of the committee it to come up with innovative methods to improve student success and grow enrollments to help meet our targets for retention and persistence.