

2022-23 ENVA Assessment

1. Names of all programs and degree types assessed:

Environmental Studies major, Environmental Studies minor

2. Names and contact information of the faculty coordinating the assessment of each program and report:

Adrienne Johnson, lead contact, <ajohnson21@usfca.edu>; David Silver, <dmsilver@usfca.edu>

3. Your Mission Statement; note any changes since last report:

Although the Environmental Studies Program has not formally adopted a mission statement, we operate the major and minor in accordance with the following statement:

The Environmental Studies Program is interdisciplinary in nature, reflects the current state of the field, recognizes the relationship between human behavior and nature in ecological issues, and responds to the Jesuit call to promote environmental justice and ethical stewardship of the natural world.

4. Your PLOs; note any changes since last report:

PLOs for the Major:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the roles of humans and institutions in creating and responding to environmental issues;
2. Integrate perspectives of multiple disciplines to understand the complexities of human-environment interactions;
3. Apply scientific principles to environmental problems;
4. Critically analyze socio-culturally appropriate strategies to address environmental problems; and
5. Connect environmental problems to issues of social justice through study and community engagement.

PLOs for the Minor:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the roles of humans and institutions in creating and responding to environmental issues;
2. Apply scientific principles to environmental problems; and
3. Connect environmental problems to issues of social justice.

5. Your current Curricular Map; note any changes since last report:

ENVA Curricular Map					
REQUIRED COURSES (30 units)	Integrate perspectives of multiple disciplines to understand the complexities of human-environment interactions	Demonstrate an understanding of the range of environmental issues and the roles of humans and institutions in responding to them	Analyze critically and develop socio-culturally appropriate strategies to resolve environmental problems	Connect environmental problems to issues of social justice through study and community engagement	Apply scientific principles to develop solutions for environmental problems
ENVA 109 Environment and Society	I	M	I	I	
ENVS 110 Introduction to Environmental Science w/Lab	I	I	I		M
ENVS 210 Ecology and Human Impacts w/Lab	M				M
ENVA 285 Nature Immersion + Campus and Community Projects				M	
ENVA 310 The Commons: Land, Air and Water	A	A	M	M	
ENVA 355 Methods and Approaches in Environmental Studies	M		M		M
ENVA 367 Environmental Justice	A	A	M	M	
ENVA 450 Capstone Practicum in Environmental Studies		A	A	A	

6. Your assessment schedule between APRs: a year by year list of PLOs assessed since your last APR and those to be assessed before your next APR:

- 2021-22 - APR
- 2022-23 - PLO 3: "Apply scientific principles to environmental problems"
- **2023-24 - PLO 1: "Demonstrate an understanding of the roles of humans and institutions in creating and responding to environmental issues"**
- 2024-25 - PLO 5: "Connect environmental problems to issues of social justice through study and community engagement"
- 2025-26 - PLO 4: "Critically analyze socio-culturally appropriate strategies to address environmental problems"
- 2026-27 – PLO 2: "Integrate perspectives of multiple disciplines to understand the complexities of human-environment interactions"

7. Description of the assessment methodology:

On October 30, 2023, Adrienne Johnson and David Silver met for several hours to engage in Assessment of Program Learning Outcome #1, **"Demonstrate an understanding of the roles of humans and institutions in creating and responding to environmental issues."** To assess this PLO, we gathered work products in the form of essays from Adrienne's *Environmental Justice* (ENVA 367) Spring 2023 course. This course is a required course for all ENVA majors and an optional course for ENVA minors. The essay question required students to examine how uneven power relations between two or more groups have enabled an environmental injustice to occur. Overall, this course was selected because its content

examines the roles various actors play in altering, transforming, and governing the environment at local, national, and global scales.

We jointly created a rubric which captured varying degrees of student comprehension when it comes to understanding different actors and institutions involved in the production of environmental problems and governing solutions to them. The assessment criteria was **Exceptional, Proficient, Approaching Proficient; or Below Proficient.**

A random sampling method was employed where out of 24 essays, every 3rd one was selected for analysis. A total of 8 essays were assessed according to the rubric included below. The essays came from both ENVA majors and minors. After each faculty had read and rated 2 student work products, an informal discussion was held to question whether those products appeared to match expectations for a 300-level course, and what sorts of challenges could be had, if any. This discussion was repeated again at the end when all 8 essays were read.

8. Rubrics (and other instruments, if applicable)

We assessed each work product according to 3 criteria and used a scale of Exceptional, Proficient, Approaching Proficient, and Below Proficient.

2. Demonstrates an understanding of the range of environmental issues and the roles of humans and institutions in responding to them						
Criterion	Exceptional	Proficient	Approaching proficient	Below proficient		
Articulates complexity and range of environmental issues	Thoroughly formulates problems and possibilities associated with one or more significant environmental problems	Coherently formulates problems and possibilities associated with one or more significant environment problems	Provides limited description of one or more significant environment problems	Does not show evidence of understanding environmental problems and their complexity		
Demonstrates an awareness of how humans and institutions are hindering, worsening, or reinforcing environmental problems	Thoroughly demonstrates how humans and institutions exacerbate environmental problems, on multiple planes	Coherently demonstrates how humans and institutions exacerbate environmental problems on one or more planes	Provides limited description of how humans and institutions exacerbate environmental problems	Incomplete, misleading, or misguided presentation of how humans and institutions exacerbate environmental problems		
Demonstrates understanding of how humans and institutions are addressing environmental problems and driving solutions forward	Provides in-depth examples of how humans and institutions are addressing environmental problems and driving solutions forward	Provides only cursory examples of how humans and institutions are addressing environmental problems and driving solutions forward	Provides only a single example of how humans and institutions are addressing environmental problems and driving solutions forward	Fails to provide a coherent perspective on how humans and institutions are driving solutions forward		

9. Description of your results, noting any significant findings from the data or assessment process:

The student' scores were the following: For criterion #1, 12.5% of students fell under the Exceptional category with the remaining (87.5%) scoring Proficient. For criterion #2, 50% were Exceptional, 12.5% were between Exceptional and Proficient, 25% were Proficient, and 12.5% were Approaching Proficient. For criterion #3, 25% were Exceptional, 12.5% were between Exceptional and Proficient, and 62.5% were Proficient.

Overall, we found that both major and minor students have a very strong comprehension of the various actors and institutions involved in environmental justice debates. The students' work tackled a range of issues such as agricultural workers' rights and COVID-19, waste colonialism in the global south, and urban housing issues in downtown Los Angeles. Through these case studies, students demonstrated in-depth knowledge and multi-scalar understanding of the

actors and institutions driving ecological harm and how these same actors might be involved in solutions going forward. Several areas for improvement or more discussion are noted below:

- 1) **Complexity and Nuance** - while the majority of students ranked Proficient when it came to criterion #1, we felt this may have been because many of them showed range in environmental issues but not necessarily depth in complexity and nuance. For example, many of the case studies examined by students divided key actors into civil society, corporate, or government actor categories with less attention paid to those who may fall outside of these groups such as illicit actors. Similarly, in the conclusion sections of some of the essays, we found that some students identified 'winners' and 'losers' without sufficiently discussing those whose status may not fall into either category or whose interests may have been met halfway.
- 2) **Solutions-building** - while many students demonstrated knowledge of creative and innovative solutions to environmental injustices, we found that the conclusion sections of the essays (where most solutions were articulated) were quite short and could have benefitted from a more thorough exploration into pathways forward. For the solutions that were provided, several of them focused on resistance efforts (great!) or court decisions but some did not engage to a large degree with promising scientific or technological solutions.
- 3) **Humanities approaches** - one of the essays was written in a nonconventional way and blended together literature and social science insights to discuss the problematic narratives which guide American goals and prospects when it comes to profit (at the expense of the environment). It was an extremely innovative submission which dealt with many of the key PLO themes of our major and minor. This made us think of the importance in highlighting the value of humanities approaches in examining and communicating environmental problems, alongside social science approaches.

10. Description of how the results were shared with faculty and how your department/program responded to the results. This is where you should lay out any plans for future improvement or assessment of your program indicated by the results.

We shared the results with our fellow ENVA faculty and devised the following actions:

- 1) **Revision of Course Content / Changes in Pedagogical Practice** - Pedagogically-speaking, course content can be revised to include more case studies where 'winners' and 'losers' are not so easily identified and more nuance can be injected into the material that is covered. A way forward would be to spend more time examining the different kinds of 'justice' (distributive, procedural) but also other forms such as healing and how harmed groups can experience justice and injustice simultaneously and on multiple planes. Also, new readings can be included which examine the intersection of environmental harm and race, gender, and class along with other axes of power such as caste (which students tend to be less familiar with).

In the context of helping students develop more well-rounded and sophisticated solutions to complicated environmental problems, more time in ENVA 367 can be dedicated to thinking through what climate change justice would like from various standpoints including judicial, political, social, but also technological and economic. Also, it was suggested that more guest speakers from various spheres can also help bring more nuance and complexity to discussions on different actors and institutions in environmental debates. These changes will be implemented in ENVA 109 and ENVA 367 immediately. On a related note, it is hoped that our ENVA Speaker Series will restart in Spring 2024 or Fall 2024 and thus will bring different activists, employees, and representatives to speak to students about their approaches to solving environmental issues.

- 2) **Uplifting Environmental Humanities Approaches** - we discussed the importance of lifting up the humanities as another pathway to examining the various roles of actors and institutions in environmental contexts. The reliance on cultural, artistic, and literary texts can open up opportunities for students to examine environmental topics from new vantage points. Emerging areas of study including the 'Blue Humanities' - an area which examines water from historical, philosophical, and cultural perspectives - can inspire new conversations and deeper examination into the geographies of water and other environmental elements thus illuminating new players and contexts in case studies. Our program will start to look into different grants that might help to elevate this work. For example, there was a recent call for USF faculty to apply for a Mellon Humanities multi-year grant. While this opportunity may be a bit premature, we will continue discussing how we can continue to provide our students with superior social science and humanities education and how this can aid in their discovery and identification of environmental complexity.

11. Discussion of any significant feedback from your previous year's report and how your program responded to that feedback:

We are grateful for the feedback provided to us on last year's report. Major points included:

- 1) Directly assessing PLO #3 in ENVA courses rather than relying on ENVS faculty and student experiences in ENVS courses to assess this.
Response: This suggestion is well-taken and we believe assessing this PLO in the future using our course, ENVA 355 (as suggested), is quite possible. However, we also acknowledge that because Environmental Studies is an inherently interdisciplinary field that encompasses science, social science, and the humanities, it therefore may be difficult to find an ENVA course that demonstrates scientific principles in a rigorous way. We will continue to discuss this point.
- 2) Our last assessment did not mention students completing the ENVA minor
Response: We will make sure that every subsequent assessment (including this year's) will include both our ENVA majors AND minors in our results.