

M.S. in Environment, Natural Resources, and Society (ENRS)

The Haub School submitted a feasibility study and pro-forma budget for an M.S. in Environment, Natural Resources, and Society to be reviewed by the Academic Planning Committee during fall semester 2020.

The proposed program seeks to fill the need of employers who are seeking employees with an interdisciplinary experience and essential skills in leadership, teamwork, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, and communication. The program proposes to provide an interdisciplinary experience in social science, law and policy, environmental science, natural resource economics, natural resource management, and environmental problem solving.

In a 2019 survey of Haub School alumni, 99 of 161 respondents supported establishing a standalone master's degree of the type proposed and 97 of 161 respondents supported a certificate or minor in natural resource collaboration. The interdisciplinary structure of ENRS will include opportunities for students to study in the areas of environmental science, environment studies, natural resource conservation, and outdoor recreation and tourism. The Gray Associate Demand Statistics scores for National, Laramie 360, Colorado, and Wyoming for these four disciplines indicate strong to moderate demand with scaled overall scores of 2-30.

The program estimates student demand to increase from eight students in the first year to 16 students per year after 4 years. Being a two-year program the total enrollment in the program is estimated to be about 30 students.

The cost of the program is estimated to be low. Several of the courses are one or two credit courses and will be taught by the current faculty and adjunct faculty in the Haub School. No new faculty are proposed to be hired and existing faculty can cover the additional courses being proposed. The proposed budget shows the increase in student tuition covering all costs for the program. In year four, the proposed budget shows a surplus of \$244,000.00.

If this proposal would have come to the Academic Planning Committee two years ago, the decision to approve the program would have been quite easy. The proposal was one that provided all the necessary information along with a solid rationale. There seems to be at least moderate demand for the program. With no new resources being requested the risk seems low for the University.

With the current budget reduction at the University of Wyoming, the Academic Planning Committee is hesitant to recommend a new program with limited enrollment when the university is currently identifying several low enrollment programs to be eliminated. The prospects for further budget cuts to come are also of concern. Having mentioned our concerns with the budget issues, the Academic Planning Committee did vote to approve the M.S. in Environment, Natural Resources, and Society. The vote was seven in favor of the proposal, zero negative votes, and three members of the committee absent. Our committee has not received any additional guidelines to evaluate new programs in light of the current budget situation and the program does meet our criteria for approval.