

TO: Sang-Hee Lee, Chair
Riverside Division

FR: Richard M. Carpiano, Chair
Executive Committee, School of Public Policy

RE: [Campus Review] Proposal: New Undergraduate Minor: Minor in Environmental Studies (ENST)

Date: November 22, 2023

The Faculty Executive Committee of the School of Public Policy reviewed the document “[Campus Review] Proposal: New Undergraduate Minor: Minor in Environmental Studies (ENST).”

In the course of our review and discussion, the following issues arose about the proposed curriculum:

1. Given the stated learning objectives that indicate the importance of students understanding ecological issues locally, nationally, and globally, it is crucial for students to have a thorough grounding in environmental science to comprehend the interplay between the natural world and human societies. A significant concern raised with the current curriculum proposal is its apparent lack of foundational science. Without a robust understanding of environmental science, discussing environmental governance and the scientific underpinnings of environmental inequities becomes challenging.

It is noteworthy that this curriculum lacks any lower- or upper-division courses in environmental science. The present focus seems to be predominantly on the human aspects of environmental issues, without sufficient emphasis on the scientific aspects. This imbalance could lead to a skewed perspective among students. Overall, the curriculum could be more effectively designed to integrate both natural sciences and social sciences, providing a comprehensive educational experience in this field. Currently, it seems that the curriculum is shaped more by disciplinary convenience rather than a commitment to interdisciplinary learning. This approach risks limiting the depth and breadth of education students receive, thereby hindering their ability to fully understand and address complex environmental issues that humanity faces, particularly in this concerning era of science denialism and less than ideal data literacy.

2. Page 9: Under “Affiliated faculty,” Ariel Dinar is retired from UCR. Hence, it is unclear how up-to-date this list is.
3. The Global and Community Health B.A. curriculum contains a requirement for one lower-division course in data analysis. Why does this requirement not exist for the Environmental Studies minor given that the two department emphases (Environmental Studies and Global and Community Health) are detailed in the two BA degree proposal documents as having considerable focal overlap, sharing some courses like the required methods course?
4. Page 14: Under the section header “Chairs’ approval to include their courses in the new curriculum (in 2021 or 2023),” SPP Associate Dean Bruce Babcock is listed. The phrasing of this header can be read in more than one way, so, just to be certain, this approval only pertains to the PBPL courses cross-listed with other units that are listed in this proposed curriculum document (i.e. ENGR 171/PBPL 171) and not any other PBPL courses. This specificity is indicated in the email exchange between SEHE representative Ellen Reese and SPP Associate Dean Bruce Babcock included in the appendix of the SEHE-submitted Environmental Studies BA proposed curriculum document (p. 66).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard M. Carpiano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" being the most prominent.

Richard M. Carpiano, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Professor of Public Policy