

TOPIC: PROPOSAL TO OFFER A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE IN SUSTAINABILITY/ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

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I. SUMMARY

The University of Northern Colorado (UNC) has submitted a proposal to offer a baccalaureate degree in Sustainability and Environmental Studies. This proposed program will allow students to develop expertise in several disciplines and practices, integrating knowledge to address environmental problems. They will also have the ability to understand the relevant science and the possibilities and limitations for mitigating or solving a problem through technological improvements.

II. BACKGROUND

The following is summarized from the University of Northern Colorado's request:

The B.A. in Environmental and Sustainability Studies is a holistic, interdisciplinary program, spanning a broad range of disciplines, reflecting the wide array of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to analyzing complex problems in environmental studies and sustainability. Its focus on interconnected issues of sustainability can lead to, and complement, any number of career paths.

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

This degree supports the role and mission of the University of Northern Colorado, The statutory mission states:

There is hereby established a university at Greeley to be known as the university of northern Colorado. The university shall be a comprehensive baccalaureate and specialized graduate research university with selective admission standards. The university of Northern Colorado shall be the primary institution for undergraduate and graduate degree programs for educational personnel preparation in the state of Colorado. The university shall offer masters and doctoral programs primarily in the field of education. C.R.S. 23-40-101

EVIDENCE OF NEED

Colorado is at the forefront of new sustainability thinking in technology, yet like the rest of the country, is still lacking in expertise on applying sustainability principles to everyday living. This program will be one of a handful of nationwide programs that will

serve this need. Our graduates will have the interdisciplinary background to understand environmental issues clearly as well as skills developed through one or two minors that fill out some professional emphases. An informal poll of the Environmental Studies students club (110 members) received unanimous support for the major. Most students state that they would have taken the major had it been available when they entered UNC. A smaller number said they will transfer to the new major if implemented in August 2010. Others stated that they are too far along in their current programs to transfer, but wish it had been an option for them earlier in their college studies. Several graduates with Environmental Studies minors stated that an Environmental Studies major would have been their preferred degree choice had it been available.

DUPLICATION/SIMILAR PROGRAMS IN THE STATE

There are several programs in Colorado that deal with environment and with sustainability, though most are technology-engineering focused or public policy focused. Only one college, Western State, has an environmental program that resembles the proposed UNC program. The main difference is that UNC will focus on sustainability principles as a way for better living overall through our science and social dimensions emphasis. Employers have stated that broader interdisciplinary skills with an understanding of sustainability are the new tools for success in the marketplace.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

Department staff have reviewed this proposed program to ensure that it meets the State's performance measures outlined in C.R.S. §23-5-129(6) (b). The program meets all performance measures set forth by the state.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Baccalaureate Degree in Environmental and Sustainability Studies is consistent with the University of Northern Colorado's campus role and mission. Staff recommend that the Commission approve this degree.

V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Copies of all relevant materials are on file in the Academic Affairs office and are available upon request.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-5-129(6) (b)