Proposal for a Major in Environmental Sociology

This proposal is for a major in Environmental Sociology that includes two courses in Earth and Environmental Sciences. It meets a pressing curriculum need in the college and can be accomplished with existing resources at no cost.

Checklist

Checklist for proposals:

[x] Pages 2-5. One to two-page rationale for proposed new academic program or revision of an existing academic program (major/minor).
[x] Page 6. Tallied and dated vote of faculty in the department or program
[ ] Entire current Catalog section, with insertions, additions, and deletions clearly marked. NOT APPLICABLE.
[x] Pages 7-12. Proposed new Catalog section, incorporating all changes. The changes shown in current Catalog section must correspond precisely to the proposed new Catalog section.
[x] Pages 13-14. Table translating old (3-digit) into new (4-digit) course numbers. Please combine these five items (rationale, vote, marked-up Catalog copy, clean Catalog copy, and table of course numbers) into a single file.
[x] Pages 15-17. For proposals for new majors/minors, detailed information about leadership, staffing, resources, etc. (See points 5 and 6.)
[x] For proposals affecting other departments and programs, approvals from department chair(s) and program director(s). (This is discussed on page 7, and there is a letter in Appendix 2.)
[ ] For proposals for new international and study abroad programs, appropriate approvals. (See point 8.) NOT APPLICABLE
[x] Pages 18-19. For proposals for new majors or revisions of existing majors, a new or revised assessment plan (reviewed by Jonathan Bremer.)

Additional Material:
Page 20. Appendix 1: Comparison Programs at Other Elite Universities
Page 22. Appendix 2: Additional Letters of Support
Rationale

Electronic Signatures: Katharine Donato (Chair, Sociology Department), David Hess (Director of Undergraduate Studies, Sociology Department), George Hornberger (Chair, Earth and Environmental Sciences), Dan Morgan (Director of Undergraduate Studies, Earth and Environmental Sciences)

Summary

Environmental problems are among the most significant faced by human societies in the twenty-first century. Climate change is no longer a distant threat; for many areas of the world it is amplifying already existing problems of heat waves, drought, disease vulnerability, poor land-use decisions, and flooding. Furthermore, many other pressing environmental issues are affecting the stability of livelihoods throughout the world, including habitat depletion, mass extinctions, persistent toxic chemicals in the biosphere, air and water pollution, and food and water shortages. Environmental problems reconfigure and exacerbate existing problems of persistent inequality, a topic that has been central to sociology for more than a century. The problems pose a need not only for practical, applied research projects but also for new theoretical frameworks and empirical research.

Environmental sociology is an established subfield of sociology and is represented by the Section on Environment and Technology within the American Sociological Association. The field examines a variety of topics, including environmentalism as a social movement; the ways in which inequality is related to environmental hazards, health, and other conditions; the relationship between population dynamics and the environment; and how politics, political systems, and policies affect environmental conditions and changes. Therefore, this subfield involves the study of intersections among environmental issues and inequality, migration, social movements, social change, and politics and policy. Because environmental sociology also includes understanding of the design and consequences of technology, it necessitates some understanding of earth and environmental sciences. However, it is different from environmental science, which is only based in the natural sciences, and environmental studies, which includes courses from a very wide range of disciplines.

The College of Arts and Science at Vanderbilt has begun to respond to this challenge with curriculum innovation. In 2012 the Committee on Educational Programs approved a minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies, which was launched in the fall of 2012. The minor graduated two students from the class of 2013 and four from the class of 2014, and it currently has 7 students from the class of 2015, 4 from the class of 2016, and 1 from the class of 2017. The Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences has recognized student interest by developing curriculum in the environmental sciences, and the Sociology Department has led efforts among the humanities and social sciences to develop curriculum in this area. The growth of interest is not a local phenomenon; at colleges across the country, undergraduates are enrolling in increasing numbers in environmental programs and courses.

Although Vanderbilt has options for students who wish to pursue an environmental major with a focus in the sciences or engineering, it continues to have limited options for an environmentally oriented major for students who wish to focus in the social sciences. Leaders from the student organization SPEAR (Students Promoting Environmental Awareness and Responsibility) have continued to request a major that addresses this need, and in the absence of such a major, students with an environmental interest have created independent majors. For example, four students graduated under the option in the spring of 2014, and three students petitioned for this option during the same semester.

Given the student interest in an environmental curriculum in the social sciences, the Sociology Department has developed new curriculum, and the department is willing and able to fill this void by
proposing a new major, “Environmental Sociology.” This proposed major does not entail any costs because existing Department of Sociology faculty and staff would absorb the additional responsibilities. Therefore, our goal is to offer a major that responds to students’ needs and that requires no start-up costs from Vanderbilt. In the future, development of an interdisciplinary major in Environmental Studies may be possible, but it would be a larger undertaking that would require additional faculty commitments from across the college and university. Sociology now has the capacity to offer this proposed new major immediately. In addition, the Sociology Department is actively involved in relevant cross-campus research collaborations with earth and environmental scientists, including Katharine Donato’s work on the Navy-sponsored Bangladesh climate change project and David Hess’s work on the NSF-sponsored VIEE water conservation and cities project. This is a growing interest area in the department, and several faculty are also supervising graduate students who have interests in environmental sociology.

Benchmarking and Other Universities

Vanderbilt’s Cumberland Project (ended in 2012) represented a strong catch-up effort for environmental curriculum development. The project offered faculty development workshops in support of environmental and sustainability studies in all fields, and it helped to spur course development that led to the interdisciplinary minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (https://my.vanderbilt.edu/environmental/). Notwithstanding these efforts, the College of Arts and Science is behind the curve with respect to curriculum in the environmental social sciences and humanities. For students who wish to major in the environmental social sciences, Vanderbilt has no curricular options other than traditional majors or individually constructed interdisciplinary majors.

Appendix I shows that many other elite universities now offer a full-fledged major that addresses student demand for study in the environmental social sciences. These programs vary widely, both in name and in curriculum, but all of them have a combination of requirements in the natural sciences and social sciences. Thus, benchmarking shows that there is a wide range of curricular options at other elite universities. Our proposal fits the Vanderbilt context, where students are looking for options that are weighted toward the social sciences. Vanderbilt students already have options for majors or minors in Biology, Earth and Environmental Sciences, and Environmental Engineering should they wish to pursue a double major or a minor with a more technical focus.

Proposed Name for the Major

We propose the name “Environmental Sociology.” We choose this name because our major is based on a core of general sociology courses in addition to courses in environmental sociology and earth and environmental sciences. This name is closest to the major in “community and environmental sociology” at the University of Wisconsin. Another option that is close to our curricular content and somewhat more common is “Environment and Society” or “Society and Environment.” This name is found at U.C. Berkeley, the University of Alaska, the University of Toronto, St. Thomas University, the University of Saskatchewan, and other colleges and universities. We think the term “Environmental Sociology” is most appropriate for our proposed curriculum and governance structure. We do not propose the term “environmental studies” because it is reserved for more interdisciplinary programs that are housed in environmental studies departments or in interdisciplinary units, both of which would require significant investments at Vanderbilt.

Why Sociology

Since 2011, the Sociology Department has increased its commitment to environmental sociology. The department became the tenure home of the director of the Program in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (Hess), and it offers courses in environmental sociology, political sociology,
and demography, which are important and well-recognized subfields in sociology that form the foundation for the major in environmental sociology. By combining the strengths of the Sociology Department’s curriculum with several courses in the environmental sciences, it is now possible to offer a major that meets student needs.

The Sociology Department offers the following environmentally oriented courses (last names of faculty teaching these courses are in parentheses):

- SOC 102 (Social Issues). This introductory survey course is now available in concentration areas, and one option offered is Social Issues: Environment and Society. Although we will encourage students to take this section, we will count any section of SOC 102 toward the major. (Sana and Spetalnick)
- SOC 207. Climate Change and Society (Hess and Donato).
- SOC 208. Environment and Development (Bandy).
- SOC 220. Population and Society (Sana and Donato). Redesigned to focus on environment and population issues, offered at least once a year and often twice a year.
- SOC 221. Environmental Inequality and Justice (Bandy).
- SOC 249. American Social Movements (McCammon). This course includes a case study of the environmental movement and will be offered every two years.
- SOC 252. Law and Social Movements (McCammon). This course includes the environmental movement’s attempts to change legislative law and radical environmentalists’ ideas about what constitutes legal activism. The course will be offered every two years.
- ENVS 278. Seminar in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (Hess). Thus, there is now a critical mass of faculty interest within Sociology to offer a home for a new major.

Curriculum Rationale

We believe that Environmental Sociology should be a separate major rather than take another form, such as a track within the Sociology Department, for several reasons. First, students have been requesting a major in the environmental social sciences; they want a degree that has the word “environmental” in it because it recognizes their study of, and work in, the field of environment and society. These students intend to go into environmentally oriented careers, and they are passionate about environmental issues. With an Environmental Sociology major, undergraduate students who graduate will have the name “Environmental Sociology” on their transcripts. Second, although in theory Vanderbilt could develop a Department of Environmental Studies, it would require substantial resources. Even if this type of investment were feasible, it would take a number of years to develop such a major. An Environmental Sociology major is a good way to address this pressing student need and to do so in a budget-constrained environment. Third, the major has a unique curriculum that is distinct from the existing Sociology major. Although students will be required to take the methods course that Sociology majors take (Soc 211), they will also take an additional statistics class (Soc 127), and they will be required to take two earth and environmental sciences courses, which offer background in environmental science and are not required of Sociology majors. In addition, Environmental Sociology majors will not be required to take other courses that satisfy the substantial distribution requirement for Sociology majors. Thus, Environmental Sociology majors can focus on studying environmental issues, with some background in earth and environmental sciences. On the whole, these students will receive strong social science training coupled with background in earth and environmental sciences.

The proposed major is based on an existing model in the College of Arts and Science that allows a department or program to offer more than one major. In this model a single department offers more
than one major within the area of expertise of the department. These programs range from 30 to 33 credit hours:

- Biological Sciences offers three majors: Biological Sciences (32 credits); Molecular and Cellular Biology (32 credits); and Ecology, Evolution, and Organismal Biology (32 credits)
- Classical Studies offers three majors: Classics (32 credits), Classical Languages (30 credits), and Classical Civilization (30 credits)
- Germanic and Slavic Languages offers two majors: German (30 credits) and Russian (30 credits)
- Spanish and Portuguese offers two majors: Spanish (30 credits) and Spanish and Portuguese (33 credits)

Program Components and Rationale

After examining programs at other elite universities (see Appendix I), we propose a 33-credit-hour program that is built on the curriculum for the current sociology major. Our proposed major is appropriate for the Vanderbilt context, but it is also consistent with “environment and society” majors weighted toward the social sciences. The sociology courses will be 27 credit hours and the environmental science courses will be 6 credit hours.

The program will have the following components:

1. Foundation sociology courses (6 credit hours). The first course (SOC 102) introduces students to central concepts in sociology. The second course (SOC 201) provides an important introduction to social theory, from classical to contemporary theorists.

2. Foundation environmental science courses (6 or more credit hours). These two courses include a requirement that at least one course address climate-related issues. An adequate number of courses is available without prerequisites, such as EES 101, 103, 108, 114, 115, and 205.

3. Research Skills (6 credit hours). This sequence introduces students to social science research methods (SOC 211) and statistical analysis via SOC 127. In SOC 211, students will be able to develop a research literature review on environment and society. The DUS of Environmental Sociology will notify the instructor which students are ES majors.

4. Sociology concentration requirement (15 credit hours). This is a menu of all sociology courses in the environment, currently offered. These courses provide students with a solid background in the sociology of the environment, population, and environmental social movements. For the standard track, the possible courses students may take include an internship and seminar. Honors students have their own track with an honors thesis requirement.
History and Vote Tallies

The proposed major was approved in a meeting of the Undergraduate Committee in the Sociology Department on August 28, 2014, with a vote of 5 faculty in favor and none opposed. The entire faculty in the Department of Sociology met on September 5, 2014, discussed the proposal, and then voted 18 faculty in favor and none against. On October 8, the chair of Sociology Department (Donato) and director of undergraduate studies of the Sociology Department (Hess) met with the faculty of Earth and Environmental Sciences to review the major. The department voted 11 in favor and none against.

Also on October 8, the chair of the Sociology Department and director of undergraduate studies of the Sociology Department met with the advisory committee for the program for the minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies. The committee consists of permanent faculty who are in different departments and many regularly teach courses for the interdisciplinary minor. In attendance were Joe Bandy (Center for Teaching/Sociology), James Frazer (Peabody), Teresa Goddu (American Studies/English), Dan Morgan (Earth and Environmental Science), Beth Conklin (anthropology), Dana Nelson (English), Betsey Robinson (Art History), and Alistair Sponsel (History). Three faculty were unable to attend. There was no vote on the proposal for the major in Environmental Sociology because the committee’s jurisdiction is only for the interdisciplinary minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies. Instead, the focus of the discussion was to seek feedback on the proposal, to make improvements in it, and to coordinate the proposal with efforts to develop interdisciplinary environmental curriculum across the campus consistent with the strategic plan. Most committee members supported the proposal for a disciplinary major in Environmental Sociology. A few members of the committee noted that students would benefit from a range of choices for environmentally oriented majors and minors, and several committee members recognized the pragmatic value of a no-cost proposal in the current, budget-constrained environment. Hess noted that although the current level of course development across the disciplines can support a minor, much more would be needed to sustain a full interdisciplinary major program in environmental studies. The committee agreed that students would benefit from more interdisciplinary courses in environmental studies, especially in the humanities, and it agreed to put together a proposal for trans-institutional program development to encourage more course development across the disciplines.
Proposed New Catalog Section with Old Course Numbering

Sociology, the study of social inequality, consensus, conflict, and change, offers students a better understanding of society and the meaning of social interaction. The department’s courses cover a wide range of sociological themes including arts, culture, religion; cities, states, and political economy; deviant behavior and social control; gender and sexuality; health and the life course, race, ethnicity, and immigration; social movements, politics, and power; environment and society; and work, labor, and occupations. Undergraduate courses in sociology prepare students for graduate work or provide further preparation for a career in law, medicine, business, the ministry, nursing, social work, civil service, or teaching. Two major programs are available. Students may declare only one of the majors offered by the Department of Sociology; double majors within the department are not permitted.

Program of Concentration in Sociology [unchanged]

Program of Concentration in Environmental Sociology

Environmental Sociology is the study of the relationship between modern societies and the environment at a variety of scales, from households to global relations. It includes issues such as public understanding of environmental issues, the environment and inequality, environmental social movements and social change, and analysis of environmental reform and adaptation. Environmental Sociology is different from environmental science, which is based in the natural sciences, and environmental studies, which includes courses from a wide range of disciplines, including engineering and the humanities. The department’s program in Environmental Sociology includes a solid introduction to sociology and sociological methods as well as foundation requirements in environmental science. The program prepares students for careers in government, the law, management, research and teaching, and the nonprofit sector.

Students majoring in Environmental Sociology are required to complete 33 credit hours of coursework. The major consists of four types of courses: foundation social science courses, foundation environmental science courses, research skills, and environmental sociology courses.

Program I (Standard Track)
A total of at least 33 credit hours as follows:

(1) Foundation Courses in Sociology
- SOC 102 or 102W
- SOC 201

6 credit hours

(2) Foundation Courses in Environmental Sciences
- *Requires EES 101 and the lab EES 111 as prerequisites.

**115Fs require permission of the DUS of Environmental Sociology.

at least 6 credit hours

(3) Research Skills
- SOC 127 (or other statistics course approved by the DUS of Environmental Sociology)

6 credit hours
followed by or concurrent with

- SOC 211 (or HOD 1700 for students who double major in sociology and HOD)

(4) Environmental Sociology Core Courses

15 credit hours selected from the following:
SOC 206, 207, 208, 220, 221, 249, 252,
280a,* 280b,* 296*; ENVS 278
(*as approved by the DUS of Environmental Sociology)

Program II (Honors Research Track)

A total of at least 36 credit hours as follows:

The Honors Research Track offers superior majors in Environmental Sociology the opportunity to pursue intensive work through an independent research project. Students interested in pursuing the Honors Research Track in Environmental Sociology should contact the DUS of Sociology for more information.

To be considered for the Honors Research Track in Environmental Sociology, a student must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.3 and a minimum GPA of 3.3 for courses that count toward the Environmental Sociology major. Students who are recommended for the program by the DUS of Sociology will typically begin the program in the first semester of their junior or senior year.

The Honors Research Track in Environmental Sociology requires:
1. Successful completion of requirements 1 through 3 in the Standard Track, for a total of at least 18 credit hours.
2. At least 12 credit hours from requirement 4 in the Standard Track.
3. Successful completion of at least two semesters of SOC 296 (Honors Research). The first semester of 296 (Honors Research) is a 3 credit hour seminar in which students develop the literature review and research plan for the honors thesis. In the second semester of 296 (Honors Research), also for 3 credit hours, students must complete the research and data collection, data analysis, and initial write-up of results of the thesis. Students may elect to take a third or fourth semester of 296 during their senior year, when they may, for example, work on revisions of the project and/or on publication. Students who begin the Honors Program in their senior year may also take more than 6 credit hours of 296, up to a maximum of 12 credit hours.
4. Successful defense of the completed thesis through an oral defense attended by the chair and reader of the thesis; this oral defense typically takes place during the second semester of the student’s senior year. In order to earn honors in Environmental Sociology, students must successfully complete and defend an honors thesis before graduation.
Comprehensive Exam

To graduate with an Environmental Sociology major, students must take a comprehensive exam during their senior year. The exam is not graded, and no grade will appear on the student’s transcript. The purpose of the exam is to test the extent to which majors are retaining core aspects of the Environmental Sociology curriculum.
Catalog New Catalog Section with Course Renumbering

Sociology, the study of social consensus, conflict, and change, offers students a better understanding of society and the meaning of social interaction. The department’s courses cover a wide range of sociological themes including arts, culture, religion; cities, states, and political economy; deviant behavior and social control; gender and sexuality; health and the life course, race, ethnicity, and immigration; social movements, politics, and power; environment and society; and work, labor, and occupations. Undergraduate courses in sociology prepare students for graduate work or provide further preparation for a career in law, medicine, business, the ministry, nursing, social work, civil service, or teaching. Two major programs are available. Students may declare only one of the majors offered by the Department of Sociology; double majors within the department are not permitted.

Program of Concentration in Sociology [unchanged]

Program of Concentration in Environmental Sociology

Environmental Sociology is the study of the relationship between modern societies and the environment at a variety of scales, from households to global relations. It includes issues such as public understanding of environmental issues, the environment and inequality, environmental social movements and social change, and analysis of environmental reform and adaptation. Environmental Sociology is different from environmental science, which is based in the natural sciences, and environmental studies, which includes courses from a wide range of disciplines, including engineering and the humanities. The department’s program in Environmental Sociology includes a solid introduction to sociology and sociological methods as well as foundation requirements in environmental science. The program prepares students for careers in government, the law, management, research and teaching, and the nonprofit sector.

Students majoring in Environmental Sociology are required to complete 33 credit hours of coursework. The major consists of four types of course: foundation social science courses, foundation environmental science courses, research skills, and environmental sociology courses.

Program I (Standard Track)
A total of at least 33 credit hours as follows:

(1) Foundation Courses in Sociology
- SOC 1020 (102) or 1020W (102W)
- SOC 3001 (201)

6 credit hours

(2) Foundation Courses in Environmental Sciences
- Two courses from EES 1510 (101), ** 1030 (103), 1070 (107), 1080 (108), 1140 (114), 1111 (115F), **
- 2010 (201), * 2510 (202), * 2050 (205), 3220 (220), *
- 4680 (268), * 4750 (275), * 4820 (282); *

at least 6 credit hours

at least one of which must address climate-related issues
(EES 1080 (108), 1140 (114), 2010 (201), * 2510 (202), *
2050 (205), 4680 (268), * 4820 (282), * or another EES course
as approved by the DUS of Environmental Sociology).

(*Requires EES 1010 (101) and the lab EES 1110 (111) as prerequisites.)
**1111s {115Fs} require permission of the Director of Environmental Sociology.**

(3) Research Skills

- SOC 2100 {127} (or other statistics course approved by the DUS of Environmental Sociology) followed by or concurrent with
- SOC 3002 {211} or HOD 1700 {1700} for those majoring in HOD

(4) Environmental Sociology Core

15 credit hours selected from the following:
- SOC 3311 {207}, 3312 {208}, 3313 {206}, 3314 {221},
- 3321 {220}, 3604 {249}, 3605 {252}, 3881 {280a},*
- 3882 {280b},* 4981 {296};* ENVS 4101 {278}
(*as approved by the DUS of Environmental Sociology)

Program II (Honors Research Track in Environmental Sociology)

A total of at least 36 credit hours as follows:

The Honors Research Track offers superior majors in Environmental Sociology the opportunity to pursue intensive work through an independent research project. Students interested in pursuing the Honors Research Track in Environmental Sociology should contact the DUS of Sociology for more information.

To be considered for the Honors Research Track in Environmental Sociology, a student must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.3 and a minimum GPA of 3.3 for courses that count toward the Environmental Sociology major. Students who are recommended for the program by the DUS of Sociology will typically begin the program in the first semester of their junior or senior year.

The Honors Research Track in Environmental Sociology requires:

1. Successful completion of requirements 1 through 3 in the Standard Track, for a total of at least 18 credit hours.
2. At least 12 credit hours from requirement 4 in the Standard Track.
3. Successful completion of at least two semesters of SOC 4981 {296} (Honors Research). The first semester of 4981 {296} (Honors Research) is a 3 credit hour seminar in which students develop the literature review and research plan for the honors thesis. In the second semester of 4981 {296} (Honors Research), also for 3 credit hours, students must complete the research and data collection, data analysis, and initial write-up of results of the thesis. Students may elect to take a third or fourth semester of 4981{296} during their senior year, when they may, for example, work on revisions of the project and/or on publication. Students who begin the Honors Program in their senior year may also take more than 6 credit hours of 4981 {296}, up to a maximum of 12 credit hours.
4. Successful defense of the completed thesis through an oral defense attended by the chair and reader of the thesis; this
oral defense typically takes place during the second semester of the student’s senior year. In order to earn honors in Environmental Sociology, students must successfully complete and defend an honors thesis before graduation.

Comprehensive Exam
In order to graduate with an Environmental Sociology major, students must take a comprehensive exam during their senior year. The exam is not graded, and no grade will appear on the student’s transcript. The purpose of the exam is to test the extent to which majors are retaining core aspects of the Environmental Sociology curriculum.
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Staffing and Resources

Administration and Governance of the Major

The proposed new major in Environmental Sociology will be administered by and governed by the Sociology Department under its standard processes for undergraduate programs and curriculum. The director of undergraduate studies (DUS) the proposed new major in Environmental Sociology will be the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) of the Sociology Department or another faculty member appointed by the chair. At present they will be the same person, but the department chair may decide at some later point to have the roles filled by two different faculty members. Thus, the wording in the catalog copy retains this flexibility by referring to the “DUS of Environmental Sociology” where appropriate and the “DUS of Sociology” where appropriate. The current DUS for Sociology is David Hess, who supports the development of this new major. He agrees to serve as the inaugural DUS of Environmental Sociology. Any future changes in the curriculum that affect the environmental science requirement will be made in consultation with the Earth and Environmental Science Department to ensure curricular coordination.

The Program in Environmental and Sustainability Studies will remain an independent entity that governs the interdisciplinary minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies and any funds associated with the program. There is no conflict with the interdisciplinary minor because students who pursue a major in Sociology as Environmental Sociology or a major in Earth and Environmental Sciences may also opt to add the interdisciplinary minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies to their curriculum. Only one of the courses in the major can be counted toward the minor, so students would still need to take 15 credits in the minor. This is possible because the minor is interdisciplinary and offers courses from across the campus each semester.

Frequency and Availability

Table below shows the past frequency of the main courses offered for the proposed major.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Env Science Courses:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EES 101 Dynamic Earth</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES 103 Oceanography</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES 108 Earth &amp; Atmosphere</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Gilligan and Bennartz)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EES 114 (DeSantis)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EES 115</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EES 201 Global Clim Change</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Gilligan)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EES 205 Science, Risk, Society</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Gilligan)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EES 220 Life Through Time</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES 275 Sust Systems Sci (Ayers)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Env Soc Concentration:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SOC 206: Health &amp; Env (Hess)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SOC 207: Climate Change &amp; Society (Hess)</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Future Frequency

The Earth and Environmental Science requirement is based on frequently offered courses, most of which do not require a pre-requisite or require only EES 101. We have reviewed the proposal with the department and have the department’s endorsement and assurance that the menu of courses will continue to be offered with adequate frequency in the future. The core first-year course EES 101 is offered nearly every semester.

For the Sociology Department, there are two kinds of courses: the foundation courses and the advanced options courses. The foundation courses are offered with high frequency by the full range of departmental faculty. Thus, there is no problem accommodating students with this new major. Specifically, there are multiple sections of SOC 102 every semester, and SOC 201 is offered every semester. SOC 102 is an introductory course that covers general Sociology but also has a focus area. One of the areas is environment, and Prof. Spetalnick or Hess will offer at least one section with an environmental focus every year, and Prof. Sana will offer a course with a focus on population and environment. SOC 127 and Soc 211 are offered once a year, but in some years they have been offered twice a year. Both can accommodate additional majors. Thus, we anticipate no problems anticipating increased enrollments in these foundation courses. We emphasize that in addition to the faculty devoted specifically to the environmental sociology courses, the major will involve the participation of all faculty in the department, who share in the teaching of Soc 102, 127, 201, 211, and the honors courses. Thus, the proposal is supported generally by the full range of faculty in the department.

The second type of sociology course, the upper-level sociology concentration courses, will be offered on the following schedule:

- Climate Change and Society (Hess and Donato) every year once per year. Donato will rotate with Hess and will begin teaching it in spring 2015.
- Sociology of Health and Environmental Science (Hess) every two years alternating with Climate Change and Society.
- Environment and Development every two years alternating with Environment Inequality and Justice (Bandy). Prof. Spetalnick has taught environmental justice before and is able to rotate with Prof. Bandy on this course.
- Population and Society (Sana and Donato) every year and in some years twice a year. (The Sociology department has several other demographers who can also teach this course, such as Tyson Brown and Evelyn Patterson.)
- American Social Movements (McCammon) every two years. This course will have a segment devoted to environmental movements.
- Law and Social Movements (McCammon) every two years. The course will have a segment devoted to the environment and law.
- New course on Environment, Migration, and Society (Donato). Prof. Donato is working on migration and population in the Bangladesh project (a $5 million multi-departmental research
effort on environment and society issues), and she has confirmed that she will develop a new course in the program in the future.

Thus, we now have 7 courses for the upper-level concentration option that will be offered with adequate frequency to provide a good menu of options for the 4-course requirement. We have coordinated curriculum in the courses to avoid overlap. We have four tenured faculty members (Donato, Hess, McCammon, and Sana) who are committed to providing the core concentration courses. In addition, Prof. Bandy, an environmental sociologist who is the Assistant Director of the Center for Teaching and Lecturer in Sociology, welcomes the opportunity to offer his two courses on a rotating basis once per year. Lecturers can also be reassigned to courses in this area pending demand. For example, Prof. Spetalnick, a senior lecturer in the department, will also contribute to the curriculum as described.

At present each 200-level class has a cap of 35 students, most of whom are not sociology majors and are not environmental and sustainability studies minors. If necessary, we can restrict the courses to sociology majors, environmental sociology majors, and to environmental and sustainability studies minors. At present the restriction is for about 10 students out of the 35 total; these 10 students must be sociology majors or environmental and sustainability studies minors, and the restriction has been adequate. We could easily increase it, if needed.

Honors students may take SOC 296, which currently has room to accommodate more honors students.

Potential Program Size

We expect that by the third year of operation there will be approximately 10 majors per year (a total of 20-40 majors including sophomores, juniors, and seniors). Because Vanderbilt undergraduates have a strong interest in pre-medical and health issues, we do not expect that this program will grow at an explosive rate in a pattern similar to the growth of MHS. Rather, we expect that the growth in the minor is suggestive (about 12 students total, with 7 graduating seniors, in the program’s third year). Statistics from other comparison universities are also suggestive. Yale’s science-focused program has been in existence since 1985, and it has approximately 30 graduating seniors in 2013. Brown’s program has been in effect since 1978, and the graduating class size for 2013 was 44 students. The data from comparison universities suggest that there will be demand for the program, but that growth will be gradual and manageable. The age of programs at comparison universities also suggests again how much catch-up work needs to be done at Vanderbilt.
Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan

The Sociology Department Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan (LOAP) measures four different learning outcomes through four distinctive assessment strategies. Two outcomes are measured annually and two are measured every other year in rotation. (See Table.)

LOAP Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Assessment Strategy</th>
<th>Order in Rotation</th>
<th>Years Performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Knowledge of environmental issues as demonstrated in research paper or senior thesis.</td>
<td>Evaluate papers from 200-level environmental sociology courses and from environmental sociology honors theses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2016, 2018, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Critical understanding of classic and contemporary sociological theory.</td>
<td>Evaluate seniors’ answers to final exam essay questions administered in SOC 201, the theory course required of all majors and minors.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2015, 2017, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Broad knowledge of environmental sociology principles, concepts, and findings.</td>
<td>Administer a mandatory “comprehensive exit exam” to all senior environmental sociology majors that is specific to the focus on environmental sociology.</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Student self-evaluation of the Environmental Sociology program’s learning outcomes.</td>
<td>Focus group meeting by the DUS of Environmental Sociology with students to discuss the major and to understand how it can be improved.</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Annually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For LOAP 1 years, a team of faculty from the undergraduate committee is provided an anonymous copy of each paper from the courses described above. Without knowledge of the grade assigned or student names (codes are assigned), the undergraduate committee reads and scores the papers on a three-point scale—agree (1), neutral (2), disagree (3)—on the following five criteria:

1. All students: The student can frame a researchable problem or issue via a literature review essay.
2. All students: The student can employ and evaluate environmental sociological theories and concepts in the evaluation of an environmental sociology problem.
3. All students: The student can analyze data from the peer-reviewed literature and can interpret research findings.
4. Honors students: The student can develop an appropriate research plan for an environmental sociological investigation, including the use of an appropriate methodology for collecting data, and write a scholarly research paper that is organized and coherent.

For LOAP 2 years, the same method of evaluation will apply but for the Soc 201 exams. The undergraduate committee faculty evaluates the following three criteria scored on a three-point scale – agree (1), neutral (2), disagree (3):

1. The student can accurately identify the arguments made by key sociological theorists.
2. The student can thoughtfully compare/contrast two (or more) theories and make a case for why one theory explains a social phenomenon better than alternative theories.
3. The student can write a scholarly sociology essay that is organized and coherent and that employs references properly (e.g., citations and bibliography).

Each essay is scored independently by two members of the UPC. The DUS of Environmental Sociology will then the two sets of scores for each student.

The third learning outcome assessment is based on a focus group meeting held with graduating seniors every year to discuss the program, the curriculum, and possible improvements.

The fourth learning outcome, broad knowledge of environmental sociology, is assessed every year. The exam is a specific exam for Environmental Sociology. It will cover general social theory, sociological methods, and questions specific to environmental sociology. Our benchmark goal is for 75% of students answer correctly at least 75% of the answers. We intend to revise this benchmark, drawing on data from the exam, for future years’ assessment.

The undergraduate committee (of faculty) will review the evaluation procedures and make changes on an annual basis.
Appendix I  Comparison Programs at Other Elite Universities

Analysis of other programs at elite universities indicates that there are six basic components of a major in the environmental social sciences:

1. Foundation science and mathematics courses. (These are covered at Vanderbilt with AXLE requirements.)
2. Foundation environmental science courses. These are included in the proposed major.
3. A methods requirement (usually statistics). Two methods courses are included in the proposed major.
4. Foundation social science courses. These are included in the proposed major.
5. An advanced concentration option. In an interdisciplinary environmental studies major, there are various tracks for the concentration option, some in the sciences and some in the social sciences. Our major is focused on environmental sociology.
6. A capstone requirement. This is included in the proposed major for the honors track with options available for the standard track.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Name of Major</th>
<th>Science Foundations</th>
<th>Environmental Science</th>
<th>Soc Sci Foundation</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Seminars &amp; Capstone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>Society &amp; Environment</td>
<td>2 Science 1 Methods</td>
<td>1 course 1 methods</td>
<td>3 courses</td>
<td>7 in concentration area</td>
<td>1 capstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>Environmental Studies</td>
<td>1 Bio or Geo 1 Methods</td>
<td>1 core + up to 3 electives</td>
<td>1 course + up to 3 electives</td>
<td>5-course clusters (includes a social science concentration option)</td>
<td>1-2 semester capstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>Env. Studies</td>
<td>1 Methods</td>
<td>3 courses</td>
<td>2 core intro</td>
<td>6 courses</td>
<td>1 colloquium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
<td>1 Science 1 Methods</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 Sust Dev Foundation , 2 social sci</td>
<td>2 analysis &amp; solutions 2 skills &amp; actions 2 electives</td>
<td>1 practicum 1 capstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartmouth</td>
<td>Env Studies</td>
<td>1 Science 1 Math</td>
<td>1 course</td>
<td>4 courses</td>
<td>3 courses</td>
<td>1 culminating experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Env Sci &amp; Policy</td>
<td>1 Ecol/bio 1 Methods</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 foundation</td>
<td>5 courses</td>
<td>1 capstone experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emory</td>
<td>Env Studies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 Env Sci</td>
<td>2 foundation</td>
<td>4 courses</td>
<td>1 independent study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Earth, Society, &amp; Environment</td>
<td>2 + Statistics</td>
<td>2 Earth Sci, GIS</td>
<td>3 foundation</td>
<td>3 courses</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Program/Department</td>
<td>Courses</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Field Experience</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins</td>
<td>Global Env. Change &amp; Sustainability</td>
<td>2 courses</td>
<td>7 core</td>
<td>10 courses</td>
<td>1 capstone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Program in the Environment</td>
<td>3 Earth Sci</td>
<td>4 foundation</td>
<td>3 courses</td>
<td>1 practical experience</td>
<td>1 capstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYU</td>
<td>Env Studies</td>
<td>1 core</td>
<td>1 elective</td>
<td>1 foundation</td>
<td>3 electives + minor in another field</td>
<td>1 internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Toronto</td>
<td>Society &amp; Environment</td>
<td>General Ed Requirement</td>
<td>5 foundation (1 method)</td>
<td>3 advanced</td>
<td>1 internship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington U</td>
<td>Env Policy</td>
<td>1 Bio</td>
<td>2 Methods</td>
<td>1 Earth &amp; Env</td>
<td>4 courses</td>
<td>4 courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Env Studies</td>
<td>1 Phys Sci</td>
<td>1 Ecol Sci</td>
<td>1 Hum, 1 Soc Sci</td>
<td>5-course concentration</td>
<td>1 field experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Community &amp; Environ Sociology</td>
<td>2 Statistics</td>
<td>2: intro, theory</td>
<td>6 community soc 6 environmental soc</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale</td>
<td>Env Studies</td>
<td>2 Chem, 1 Bio, 1 Lab, 1 Math (pre-requisites)</td>
<td>3 courses</td>
<td>2 courses</td>
<td>6-course concentration option (individually tailored)</td>
<td>1 departmental seminar, 1 senior project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other universities: Several elite universities offer a science-based degree with a social science or policy component, and details on the degree concentration are not included here. For example, Cornell offers environmental science and sustainability, Harvard offers environmental science and policy, Penn offers environmental studies within the Earth & Environmental Sciences Department, and Stanford offers an interdisciplinary “earth systems” major.
Appendix 2: Additional Letters and Memos of Support

October 10, 2014

FROM: George Hornberger, Chair, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences
Dan Morgan, DUS, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences
TO: Karen E. Campbell, Senior Associate Dean, College of Arts and Science
SUBJECT: Proposal for new major in Environmental Sociology

We are writing to you to support the proposed new major in Environmental Sociology. The faculty in the department of Earth and Environmental Sciences voted unanimously in support of this proposal (11 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions) on October 7, 2014. The proposed program will require students to take two EES courses, and any increase in enrollment in these classes can be accommodated. This proposed major is a good opportunity for collaboration between our department and Sociology. We have existing research collaborations between our departments, and we look forward to the opportunity to further develop this at the undergraduate level.
Hello Dr. Hess,

On behalf of Students Promoting Environmental Awareness and Responsibility (SPEAR), we would like to offer our most enthusiastic endorsement of the proposal for a program of concentration in Environmental Sociology within the Sociology Department.

As there are currently no formal majors offered in Environmental Studies, distinguished from Environmental Sciences, this new program of concentration would help fill a critical gap. Through our experience, there is a decently high demand for majors in the broad field of environmental studies, with many past and present SPEAR members having created their own interdisciplinary majors in environmental studies. We would view the creation of the Environmental Sociology concentration as a major step forward in Vanderbilt's sustainability education efforts.

Since the Cumberland Project, Vanderbilt has made major strides in offering environmentally themed courses. We support the program of concentration in Environmental Sociology as a continuation of this progress.

Sincerely,

Michael Diamond and Morgan Goldberg
SPEAR Presidents
October 12, 2014

David Hess
Department of Sociology
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, TN
Sent Electronically

Dear David:

Thank you for passing along your proposal for a new major at Vanderbilt in environmental sociology. As a former chair of my department (Community and Environmental Sociology), I believe I can speak with some authority on the proposal and the area of environmental sociology more generally.

It looks to me like you and your colleagues have thought carefully about the courses necessary to provide undergraduates with the tools to examine environmental issues from a social science perspective. Students clearly need basic theory and methods courses, and they must also have courses with a specifically environmental focus. You and your colleagues have nicely matched these kinds of courses. Your foundation and methods courses are of the type typical in sociology and appear to provide the same type of grounding that my department and frankly sociology departments across the country offer. Upon this grounding, you intend to have your students build with a mixture of environmental science and environmental sociology courses. Again, this is much like what we do, and environmental studies majors typically provide the kind of mix of science and social science courses you intend to offer. Finally, you have your students round off their major with a capstone course/experience, and this is widely viewed as “best practice” in undergraduate education.

There is no question of the breadth of interest among undergraduates in exploring environmental questions from social science perspectives. From its founding until 2009, my department was called Rural Sociology. At the time, we were a very low enrollment major, with under 20 majors. When we changed our name to Community and Environmental Sociology, our number of majors jumped, and we now have nearly 100 majors. In our case, we didn’t really change our course offerings. Our new name simply signaled to students our orientation, and this drew in many interested undergraduates.

I have no doubt that the program you propose will fill an important niche in for Vanderbilt’s undergraduates. You outline a compelling program, and student demand will likely be substantial.

Good luck. Please let me know if I can provide you with additional information.
Sincerely,

Daniel Lee Kleinman
Professor
Associate Dean of the University of Wisconsin—Madison Graduate School
October 8, 2014

Dear Professor Hess,

I have read with great interest the proposal prepared by members of your department for a new major in Environmental Sociology (ES). Overall, the proposal is comprehensive and compelling. A new major will fill a pressing need at Vanderbilt to institutionalize environmental social sciences and the growing demand for such among the undergraduate study body. As designed, the proposed curriculum can provide students with solid training in core theory and methods in the environmental sciences and social sciences and a diverse menu of ES-related electives. The latter, in particular, leverage faculty expertise in substantive ways. There is a truly impressive concentration of department faculty who will contribute courses to the major and I am convinced that doing so in no way stretches beyond the faculty’s intellectual interests and capacities. Instead, the new major stands to capitalize on and enhance existing research and teaching interests in new and productive ways. Given that teaching often directly influences the kinds of research we undertake, it is exciting to anticipate Vanderbilt Sociology emerging as a new center of high-level ES scholarship as well.

Thank you for sharing the proposal with me. I’m really impressed by the plan and wish you the best in this effort. Please keep me posted.

Scott

--
Scott Frickel
Associate Professor of Sociology and Environment and Society
Chair-elect, American Sociological Association section on Science, Knowledge and Technology (2013-15)

Department of Sociology
Maxcy Hall
Brown University
Box 1916
108 George Street
Providence, RI 02912

office: 401.863.2139
e-mail: scott_frickel@brown.edu
RE: CEP decision on proposal for Environmental Sociology

Dear Professors Hess and Donato,

The Committee for Educational Programs convened on December 10th to complete review of the proposal for a new major within the College of Arts and Sciences in Environmental Sociology. The CEP reviewed your carefully prepared rationale/proposal, proposed catalog copy, and Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan. Regarding the rationale, the committee reflected very high enthusiasm for enhancing the curriculum in environmental related studies and recognized a broad interest in this area distributed throughout departments in the College across campus. The committee also generally agreed that a major in Environmental Sociology was complementary to the Sociology major and helps meet an increasing interest from undergraduates in environmental studies. As I have communicated with you, there was also some discussion in the committee regarding how this new major may influence a future multidisciplinary major in Environmental Studies. Your comprehensive written response to these questions was helpful to these discussions, and the committee’s conclusion was generally supportive of the proposed major with approval expressed from all three non-voting members and with four voting members voting in favor and one abstention.

The committee also identified some very minor technical points in the catalog copy that need correcting prior to submission. I will forward the ‘redline’ of this document to the Faculty Council along with CEP approval after which, pending their approval, your proposal will proceed to A&S Faculty vote. Please let me know if I may be of any further assistance.

Best Regards,

Brian O. Bachmann

cc: Karen Campbell
To: Brian Bachman  
Fr: David Hess and Katharine Donato  
Re: CEP Proposal for Major in Environmental Sociology  
Da: Nov. 10, 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the questions raised by the CEP. We address each of the questions. Although we tried to answer most of the questions in the proposal, we attempt to be clearer, whenever necessary, below.

(1) Please elaborate on the rationale for why the proposed Environmental Sciences program should be a major rather a track within the Sociology Department;

We already have a concentration track in the existing Sociology major that contains the word “environment” in it. We request a separate major in Environmental Sociology for two reasons. First, students are requesting a separate social science major in Sociology because they want their degree to have the word “environment” in it. Majoring in Sociology with a concentration that includes environment (as well as other subjects) does not offer this to students. A major in Environmental Sociology recognizes a special focus of the Environmental Sociology curriculum and the students who successfully complete its requirements. Second, the Environmental Sociology is a curriculum that is different from that for Sociology. We discuss the differences between the two majors in the answer to question #3. (For more information, see page 4 of the proposal under curriculum rationale.)

(2) Clarify the omission in the current draft of the capstone course that was initially proposed in earlier drafts;

This was not an omission. After our proposal was reviewed by Professor Campbell and the pre-review committee, we were requested instructed to submit it with a standard track and an honors track. In the current Sociology major, the standard track does not have a capstone requirement because the capstone requirement is only for the honors track. The proposal for Environmental Sociology follows the same pattern. The standard Environmental Sociology major does not have a capstone requirement, but the honors program in Environmental Sociology does. However, students in the standard track may take one or more capstone courses because we include capstone experiences as an option in the standard track (280a, 280b, 296, or ENVS 278). For these students, taking a capstone course is not a requirement.

(3) Comment on the degree of overlap between the proposed major and the existing Sociology major – we noted 27/33 credit hours are shared.

In our pre-review, Associate Dean Campbell suggested that a proposal for a major with the term “Sociology” should have mostly courses in the Sociology Department. Although you noted that 27 out of
33 credit hours are shared across the Sociology major and the proposed Environmental Sociology major, this not entirely accurate. Only 3 courses are shared (SOC 102, 201, and 211). Here are the differences:

a. The standard track for the existing Sociology major does not require SOC 127, but the standard track for Environmental Sociology does require it.

b. The existing Sociology major requires 3 200-level courses in different core areas of Sociology, but these requirements do not exist for the Environmental Sociology major. This is because it focuses on environmental courses. Therefore, the proposed Environmental Sociology major instead requires the Earth and Environmental Science courses and 5 core courses in Environmental Sociology. See page 7 of the proposal.

c. The existing Sociology major has open free electives, whereas the Environmental Sociology major has electives only in a menu of relevant courses. This menu of courses is described on page 7 of our proposal.

Thus, only 9 credit hours overlap completely with the existing Sociology major.

(4) If possible, can you please comment about how this major may interface with any future plans for a trans-institutional major in Environmental Studies. Some questions were raised about how a major in Environmental Studies might affect future initiatives in this area.

We fully support having a range of environmental majors, and we think students will benefit from more, not fewer, choices. We agree that an interdisciplinary (and potentially trans-institutional) major in Environmental Studies would be desirable, and we are working with the advisory committee of the Program in Environmental and Sustainability Studies to develop a TIPS proposal that would support faculty development in Environmental Studies. However, a major in Environmental Studies at Vanderbilt is a long-term project that is likely to be years away. In the meantime, students need options now, and the Sociology Department is proposing to provide one option now, without any additional resources. The proposed Environmental Sociology major, we believe, expands Vanderbilt’s curricular options on the environment immediately, and if successful, it will help support a larger, long-term effort to develop a future major in Environmental Studies.

Recently, several members of the faculty at Vanderbilt have been talking about the need for an Environmental Studies major, and we are among them. However, we are still years away from having both the faculty and administrative support necessary to make this happen. There are three main barriers to developing a major in Environmental Studies in the short term:

1. Faculty interest. The advisory committee of the Program for the Minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ENVS) has worked on, and continues to work on, developing faculty interest and support for a major. However, not enough courses are taught at the 200-level in the social sciences and humanities to support an interdisciplinary major in Environmental Studies. (We have statistics from the ENVS minor that document the number of courses taught.) Sociology is offering the lion’s share of current courses; Sociology faculty have taught one-third of all social sciences and humanities courses,
and two-thirds of all social science courses, on the environment during the last two years. Unfortunately, some faculty in other departments who committed to teaching in this area as a result of the Cumberland Project training grants have had to shift to other courses, making long-term solid faculty commitments elusive. The current level of faculty teaching in the social sciences and humanities is workable for a minor, but an interdisciplinary major in Environmental Studies requires more consistent courses at a higher volume.

2. Core social sciences and policy courses. For Vanderbilt to offer a major in Environmental Studies, there would have to be a strong backbone of courses in the social sciences. Environmental Studies is a field, and we need faculty who have the competence to teach core concepts in environmental social sciences and policy. It is relatively easy to find such competence in a large public university; however, at Vanderbilt the Economics and Political Science Departments have shown only limited interest in courses in the environmental social sciences. In contrast, the Sociology Department has taken on the task of developing a coherent group of social science courses. Thus, we believe that creating an institutional space for continued development of the Environmental Sociology curriculum, which the proposed major in Environmental Sociology would accomplish, is a crucial precondition for a future interdisciplinary major.

3. Investment in resources. Although Earth and Environmental Sciences could provide an institutional home for an interdisciplinary major, it prefers to remain focused on the natural sciences. The Vanderbilt Institute for Energy and Environment is another potential trans-institutional home, but it is has a limited budget and is focused on cross-school sponsored research rather than teaching. Other universities (Stanford, Duke, Columbia, and Cornell) have very large endowments that support curricular offerings for, and faculty hires in, environmental institutes. Put simply, a coherent and high-quality major in Environmental Studies worthy of the Vanderbilt name would require additional resources that have not yet been allocated. A major in Environmental Studies would require at least one introductory course in environmental studies, a group of core courses that are offered annually, methods courses, and tracks of courses in the natural and social sciences and policy, and potentially also in the humanities. At present, Vanderbilt’s minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ENVS) has no support, not even a course release for its director. As a result, the minor is workable only at its present scale (approximately six minors per year), and a major would require a substantial financial commitment from the university.

Given Vanderbilt’s existing budgetary constraints and limited faculty capacity, we think that our proposal for a major in Environmental Sociology is a wonderful opportunity to expand curriculum options on the study of the environment and to do so at no additional cost. The proposed major in Environmental Sociology will expand curriculum development in the study of the environment, and we view it as one step in a larger effort that supports a major in Environmental Studies in the future.
Dear Jonathan,

Attached you will find the application materials for a proposed Major in Environmental Sociology, approved by the Committee for Education Programs on December 10, 2014. We are recommending this for consideration by Faculty Council.

Best Regards,

Brian Bachmann

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