

Program Review – Annual Program/Discipline Update  
**Administrative Response and Follow Up**  
Winter 2021-2022

**Program/Discipline:** **Environmental Studies**

SAC Chair(s): **Valance Brenneis**

SAC Administrative Liaison (Director or Program Dean): **Dr. Ken Friedrich** (outgoing interim 2021-2022) & **Dr. Linda Fergusson-Kolmes** (incoming from March 2022 forward)

Other Dean(s) or Director(s):

Department Chair(s): Sandy Neps, Aaron Payette, Liz Rodrigues, Jennifer Hill

Date: **16 March 2022**

**This section is for Administration to provide feedback.  
To be prepared by Program Dean(s) and reviewed by Pathway Dean and AVPs.**

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Because this response comes to you during a transitional period, this response is a collaboration between Dr. Kenneth Friedrich (outgoing Interim Temporary Program Dean for Sciences), Dr. Linda Fergusson-Kolmes (incoming Program Dean for Life Sciences and Biotechnology), and Dr. Alyson Lighthart (Pathway Dean for Sciences, Computing, and Engineering). First and foremost your deans who support ESR would like to acknowledge the time and effort that went into preparing this Annual Discipline Update (ADU) for PCC, which occurred on top of your primary / priority work of supporting your students through year 2 of a global pandemic. We would also like to commend you for your use of data in your ADU. It is clear that you spent time digging into the data and assessing your program from multiple angles.

**1. Strengths and successes of the program as evidenced by the data, analysis and reflection:**

Your analyses show that the ESR courses have grown as a proportion of the classes that are successfully run at PCC in the last two years since COVID forced us into remote teaching modalities. We have watched ESR classes fill very quickly relative to other science courses at PCC long before that as well. This tells us a few things: 1) that students are interested in taking ESR, and we can't seem to offer it fast enough, 2) that we need more faculty to be able to offer more classes (otherwise a single retirement at one campus wouldn't have such a huge impact on enrollments, as we'd just be able to offer the class with another instructor), and 3) that the

flexibility offered by not being tied to a campus, and particularly to the Rock Creek campus which is a multi-bus route away from many of our students, has been a boon for our students. We appreciate that you are willing to keep at least one section functionally remote (whatever that terminology will look like in our future) for the sake of flexibility for the students. We also know that sciences, and field-sciences in particular, are best taught in an interactive hands-on environment. How can we offer more ESR in more locations, so that it's available to the students who want it in a way that they are able to access it?

The One College model should help you have access to more faculty capable of teaching ESR classes, as you are able to pull easily from all the sciences through the [life-sciences-group@pcc.edu](mailto:life-sciences-group@pcc.edu) and [physical-sciences-group@pcc.edu](mailto:physical-sciences-group@pcc.edu) listservs. Additionally, as ESR is now uniformly housed with biology FDCs across all 4 campuses, thoughtful scheduling and planning will maybe come a little easier. Also, with the adoption of the Ad Astra scheduling system, some of the datasets that you request will likely become accessible to you, which will help determine the best times and locations for opening new sections. We applaud your plan to develop a coordinated annual schedule of offerings. This will be beneficial for students as well as for planning for staffing.

Over the course of the coming year, much will be determined regarding the role of FDCs within the reorg. Your deans are aware that ESR would benefit from having its own FDC. What's stopping us this year is that Val will be on sabbatical, and the new hire in ESR will be brand new. We feel it would not support success for the new hire to give them FDC responsibilities in their first year, and when they will not have FT colleagues to provide context and mentoring. We don't know how the FDC roles will change by the time of the next ADU, but as the roles and responsibilities are clarified we do recognize that ESR will continue to need more focused support.

We want to acknowledge that the ESR SAC has exceptionally high success rates for students across all demographic parameters. We suspect that the sense of belonging that you are able to build in field- and lab-based classes that are focused on the very planet that we all share contributes to your high success rates. This suspicion is borne out by the fact that your two non-lab-based courses are the two with the lowest success rates (which, admittedly, are still higher than in many other science courses at PCC). Additional factors may impact the success rates in these non-lab courses, such as the offering times on Friday (which allows for late adds).

We know that your faculty represent a variety of disciplines from many SACs, and we wonder if the cross-pollination of ideas that comes out of that interdisciplinary background might also engender your strong success rates. In any case, please accept our commendations for your work in supporting students. In other ADU responses, we have asked other SACs to reach out to you to try and duplicate your successes. *When they come to you, please literally give them some version of pages 12 and 13 of your ADU.* You are doing great work. We would like to see the successes that you see expanded to students in other STEM courses.

It is excellent to hear that the four campuses are embracing the One College model in their scheduling of ESR courses. The college's move to a single dean to support the life sciences should provide additional support for the direction your SAC is already moving. The hiring of a second FT faculty member in ESR will add additional capacity for coordination and collaboration in the coming years. The timing does correspond to the sabbatical leave of the other one FT faculty member though, and we expect that this coming year the focus will be on maintaining an excellent set of course offerings as the new person is onboarded. Fortunately, you start from a very strong place. In any case, between two FT faculty going forward, and a whole dean, you can expect more attention to your programs in the coming years.

## **2. Areas of challenge or concern, if any:**

We really like the idea, which admittedly is only given as an example, of Val teaching the majors courses on an east-side/west-side rotation. In our One College format, it is easier for us to offer classes to FT faculty at whichever campus has the greatest need for instruction, particularly if it meets the needs and wants of the instructors. At the same time, we will be careful to ensure that the PT faculty are considered as we look to expand what's possible for ESR at PCC. You mentioned the staffing issues for ESR 141 and the impact of a retirement on the ESR 171 offerings at RC. These observations should be considered as you build a strategic plan to staff ESR courses across the college. Please take into consideration the timing of course offerings to meet student needs as you build on your existing plan.

Likewise, as former (and newly returning) science faculty, we understand that the line between lecture and lab can be blurry. We're not sure whether the lec/lab proposal for changing the nomenclature is viable within the Oregon system, but we *are* sure that you need flexibility in how and what you teach. Please work with your Program Dean to figure out what is the best approach to solving this issue. In the continually (albeit slowly) evolving world of higher education, it makes sense that you continue to review and revise the nature of your course offerings as well as the specifics of the topics within each course and the locations and modalities of each.

PCC recognizes that the laptop carts that we had before COVID have been mostly pillaged to support remote teaching and learning *during* COVID, and that upgrades were needed even before that. Please talk to your new Program Dean to determine the level of need (how many carts at how many campuses, and containing what kind of hardware to support what kind of software). This is not a promise that we can meet this need but the first step is to parametrize the need so we can plan for the future.

We hope that your SAC will explore culturally responsive teaching with regard to course design. This is as much about having students be able to see themselves in the sciences (a mirror in your classroom) as about seeing the possibilities of sciences in their lives (more like a window to the world). We note the innovative partnerships that are being developed with the Beaverton School District's Native Education Coordinator, local indigenous leaders and local non-profit

organizations, with the goal of integrating these community partnerships into the curriculum. Please communicate with your deans to identify resources that may be needed to support community partnerships that will enhance curriculum development, particularly those that will support culturally responsive pedagogy. By way of example, local indigenous guest speakers would truly help students see the mirror, but rather than take advantage of their kindness, PCC should perhaps create a line item to support small stipends for guest speakers (or find out what other resources PCC might have to support same). We cannot promise the resources will be available but identifying the needs will be important for creatively developing a plan to support this work. We also acknowledge that part of this work is also offering flexibility to students in how they meet the CCOGs. Consider for example [this article](#) from the Chronicle of Higher Education about alternative approaches to high stakes testing (that coincidentally are plagiarism-proof!).

Late in Winter term you were offered the opportunity to join a science-only cohort of professional development training around equity and inclusion. The goal of this training is to build a foundation to enhance our collective understanding of racial equity, in order to better understand and respond to racially-charged situations. If you are able to join this cohort, you will work with an excellent trainer to:

- build a glossary of shared terms (something which I've recently come to discover we really do not have yet in the sciences, even when (or perhaps especially if) we think we do);
- understand implicit bias, structural racism, and microaggressions;
- understand our own power, privilege, and identity by looking at our place in the world through a variety of lenses; and
- understand oppression, and how it impacts us all.

We are particularly excited about that first goal of building a common language across the college and within our pathway. We hope that as all our faculty come together in understanding these concerns, we can also come together in making our classrooms a safer space for our students.

### **3. Reflection on goals and resources:**

We are excited for the return to campuses, and the concomitant return to the field that this will enable. As restrictions around COVID lift and as the pathway budgets are finally re-aligned, we will have a much better sense of what's possible. Your continued advocacy for field courses is appreciated, and we will figure out a way to better structure it into the new budgets, once we have them. We recognize that budgeting for vans would go a long way to bringing students to equity, as the current system (where some students can make it to field sites easily and some cannot make it at all) is markedly uneven. As budgets and COVID compliance rules change, we will keep field trips in the discussion going forward. The incoming interim dean for physical sciences is exploring intergovernmental agreements with other entities that manage fleets, to see if an agreement can be made to share those resources at a cost that is much less than

purchasing and operating our own. We will be working across the pathway to ensure that all our field-based courses are included in these discussions.

Since we're on the topic of budgets, please know that we continue to hold the goal of getting the campuses to parity in their resources. To that end, we would like to share with you this [spreadsheet](#) to collect your ideas to better support ESR across all 4 campuses, and help get us to truly be One College. The ADU describes many known inequities between campuses, and the historic reasons for those inequities. Val has spoken eloquently of them as well, and begun a list that might be pulled into the new spreadsheet. Please use this spreadsheet to give us the bottom-line actual physical or human resources that would make a difference for the one ESR program as manifest on four campuses.

Please as you have that conversation consider also that we have centers at Newberg and Hillsboro that would love to take on science classes. Are there ESR lab classes that are *not* materials intensive that might work there? Or could there be a portable set of lab supplies that could be moved from place to place? Does anyone in your SAC live near those centers, such that it wouldn't be a huge thing to ask you to teach there?

You also mentioned living labs and the learning gardens. While the learning gardens are no longer under the purview of the Sciences, Computing, and Engineering Pathway on any campus, our pathway did support continuity of care for the learning gardens at Cascade and Southeast campuses by transferring a portion of our budget to support the Learning Garden Coordinator for CA & SE. This seemed particularly important at these two urban campuses, which don't have the same access to forest resources that RC and SY campuses both have. Related to that, your deans will continue to communicate with FMS as we advocate for mindful care of the forests at RC and SY. Please communicate with your deans to develop a plan for continuity during Val's upcoming sabbatical given the stewardship responsibilities and the release that she has for the Rock Creek Environmental Studies Center. Please continue to let us know where there are issues, so that we can lend our time and care to finding resolutions that support the infrastructure, the environment, and student learning opportunities. Please also work with your Learning Garden coordinators at each campus to explore the possibilities around digging holes and other research that your students could do in their spaces.

#### **4. Recommended next steps:**

**\_ \*\*\* \_ Proceed as planned on program review schedule**

**\_ \*\*\* \_ Follow up conversation needed with SAC, Dept Chair(s) and Dean**

Follow-up conversations are needed in order to bring many of your recommendations into reality. These conversations should include at least the Program Dean for Life Sciences & Biotechnology and the Pathway Dean for Sciences, Computing, and Engineering.

**5. Additional comments/questions:**

We want to thank the ESR SAC, and especially the part-time faculty who continually step up to make a difference for PCC, for your continued hard work in support of PCC students. We also want to acknowledge you as a group for all the time you have put into professional development. This is clearly paying off in terms of your students' success rates.

We know these past two years have not been easy, and you have done great work in supporting your students and each other. Please always feel free to reach out to your Pathway or Program Dean for assistance as needed, as we begin our long-awaited transition back to campuses.