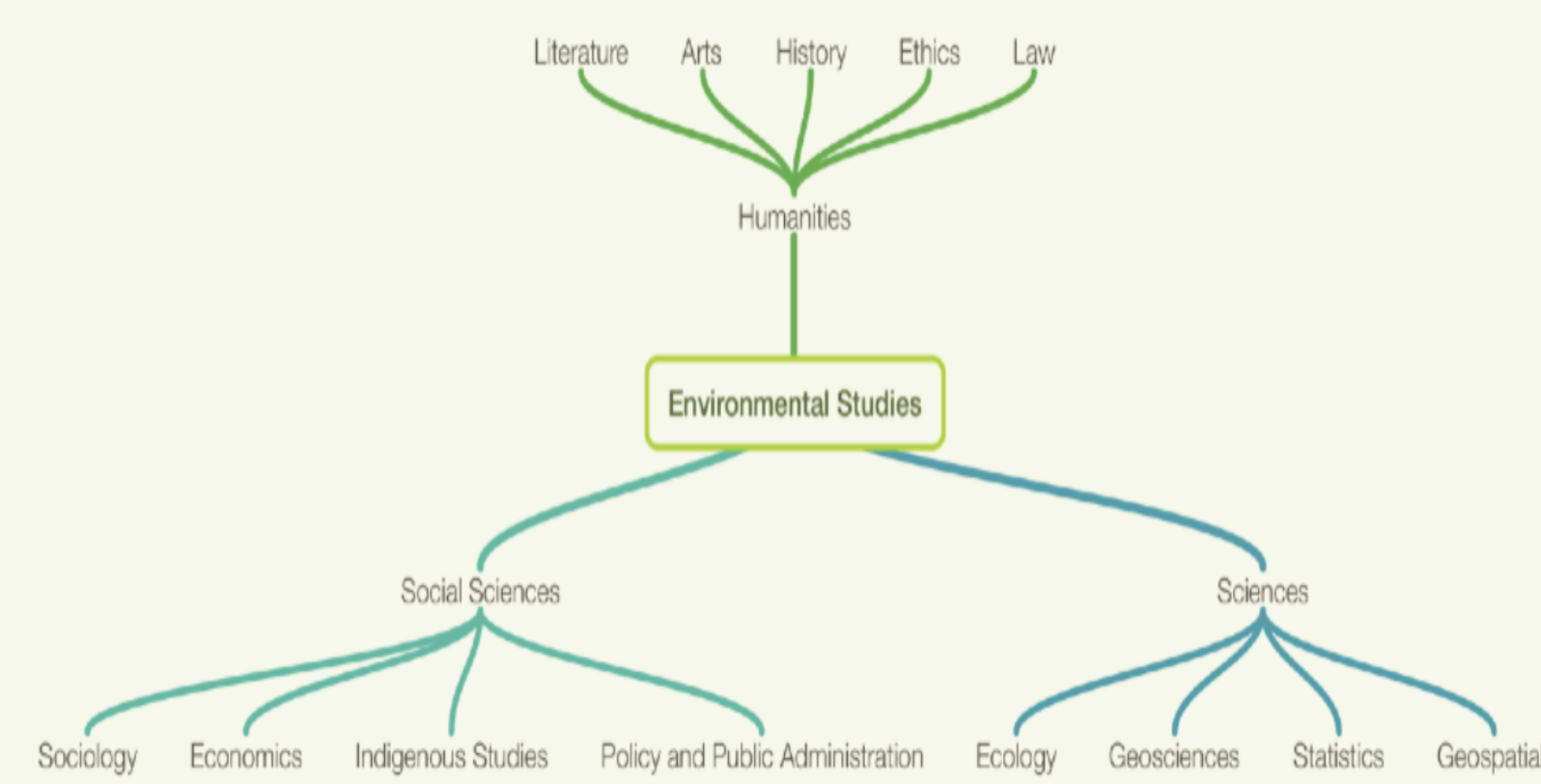


Applying an Interdisciplinary Knowledge Model in Environmental Studies

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Introduction & Motivations

- Interdisciplinary thinking, teaching, and research represent the foundation of the Environmental Studies Program (ESP) at the University of Kansas
- The integration of knowledge from many fields is necessary to prepare our students to solve many of the complex problems facing humanity today
- ESP has seen incredible program growth over the last 8 years, signaling a need to update program goals and curriculum



Goal #1: Global Environmental Sequence

- **EVRN 140, EVRN 142**
- Two-course series, co-taught by a core group of faculty (with representatives from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities)
- In the past, themes were taught consecutively rather than merged holistically
- Faculty has changed since these courses were originally designed, including addition of new faculty with new strengths and expertise
- Designed to provide students with practical, integrated, sustained set of experiences early in their academic careers that will enable them to efficiently complete their degrees (in whichever field) and become informed, active citizens

Goal #2: Environmental Studies Capstone

- **EVRN 615**
- Prepare Environmental Studies majors with the knowledge and experience to successfully work and communicate with diverse stakeholders when they graduate
- Integrate skills and knowledge base of our new faculty
- Prepare students to apply interdisciplinary problem solving in each of the Environmental Studies Learning Pathways



Implementation

1. Meetings moderated by CTE on course design and transformation, thinking especially about curriculum redesign and incorporating technology

2. KU to Oregon exchange, January 2019

- Peer institution according to our program review
- Program similarly structured (lots of joint faculty)
- Variety of majors
- Graduate program structure we can learn from

3. KU Environmental Studies Faculty Lunches. We took every faculty member in EVRN to lunch in small groups to talk about short- and long-term curriculum ideas.



IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

We created a peer mentor team (inspired by UO)

- First contact for advising
- Trained in university and program advising best practices
- Hold regular drop-in hours every day—students can receive advising anytime
- Course tip sheet
- Produce sense of program cohesion and student-to-student relationships across all levels of majors
- Advisors gain work experience



INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

We have drafted a proposal to create an ongoing pedagogical exchange with the University of Oregon's Environmental Studies Program as a direct result of the CIP grant. While funding remains an important issue there is excitement on both ends about potential teaching postdocs, state-specific immersion experiences for faculty and students, and a recognition of this kind of knowledge exchange outside of program reviews.



Curriculum Innovation #1: Global Environmental Sequence

How do we maintain and grow our 2-course introductory, integrative sequence while shifting from 3 faculty down to 2 faculty that makes the best use of the new interactive/active-learning space that also “previews” the rest of the major and our pathways?

- Create thematic modules based on a template that is:
 - Organized based on our pathways and expertise
 - Self-contained
 - Readings and reflection assignments
 - Interactive discussion prompts
 - Multimedia
 - Laboratory discussion materials
 - Faculty profiles and class offerings
 - Optional guest appearance
- Used by course coordinator to thematically connect modules



Curriculum Innovation #2: Environmental Studies Capstone

1. Expand what counts as a capstone including honors thesis, internships, study abroad experiences;
2. Aim for smaller capstone classes offered more often while continuing to creating an active learning atmosphere in new classroom space;
3. Expand the number of faculty that teach capstone (influenced by Portland State's model);
4. Consider creating a two semester capstone with multiple community partners.



Looking Ahead

In pursuit of seeing the world as our outdoor laboratory, the Environmental Studies Program looks forward to expanding course offerings that utilize the campus, Lawrence, Kansas, the United States, and the globe as our classrooms. This reflects not only our faculty's diverse interests and networks, but also aims to provide cutting edge and transformative education for students that values service, values, and collaboration. From Potter Lake and the KU Field Station to visions of a “Kansas Abroad” trip to increasing our study abroad offerings (with support from a new donor) possibly in Costa Rica, Cuba, and New Zealand among others, EVRN are committed to creating an innovative curriculum that reflects the needs of students in the 21st century.



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