The More Things Change...

By Richard York,
Program Director

Dear members, alumni, and friends of the Environmental Studies Program:

The past year has seen many changes in the Environmental Studies Program. I was honored to become the Program's new Director in the summer of 2015, after Alan Dickman retired from the role after nine years of exemplary service. At the same time I began my new role, Monica Guy became our Office and Budget Manager after her predecessor, RaDonna Koble, who served the Program valiantly for many years, retired from the position. Our Director of Graduate Studies, Matt Dennis, also retired from his position, having served our graduate students and the rest of us well, and was replaced by Pat McDowell, a long-standing member of the Environmental Studies faculty. Additionally, Ted Toadvine, a valued member of our faculty, accepted the position of the Director of the Rock Ethics Institute at Pennsylvania State University, so is no longer at the UO.

Despite Ted's departure, our Program continues to grow. We hired four new tenure-track faculty members last year, three of whom – Alexandra Rempel, Lucas Silva, and Kory Russel – started here this fall, and one, Lauren Hallett, will start in fall 2017. It is wonderful to have these talented scientists join our ranks! We also expanded our PhD program, admitting five new doctoral students who began this year. This expansion was aided by extra funding lines provided by the Graduate School, which identified Environmental Studies as having one of the strongest and most successful graduate programs at the UO.

Although there have been many changes recently, the best aspects of the Program have stayed the same. Environmental Studies continues to be composed of outstanding scholars, teachers, students, and staff, who are curious, engaged, dynamic, thoughtful, open-minded, tolerant, kind, and generous. We are a community dedicated to intellectual and scholarly excellence. We are a community that loves to learn and to teach. We are a community that values diversity. We are a community that cares about the well being of each other and of all the creatures of the world. I am proud to be a member of our community and am glad that you are one of us.

Sincerely,

Richard York
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2015-2016 Donors

Thank you for your generous contributions!

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Graduate Student Achievements

Keyyana Blount spent 12 weeks with a paid internship at the University of Michigan’s Environmental Fellows Program, working with an environmental group in Philadelphia.

Sierra Deutsch traveled to Myanmar and Cambodia as a Yale Fellow to assess the two countries’ approaches to natural resource management.

Jean Faye was awarded the prestigious International Dissertation Research Fellowship, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Shane Hall, Stephen Siperstein (PhD Candidate, English), and Prof. Stephanie LeMenager co-authored a new book, Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities, the first-ever textbook to guide the teaching of climate change in university-level humanities classes. The book is anticipated to hit the shelves in winter 2017.

Jared Pruch was awarded the David S Easley Award, which supports outstanding master’s and doctoral students pursuing degrees related to environmental conservation and preservation.

Kirsten Vinyeta was the lead author on a new USDA Forest Service publication, “Climate Change Through an Intersectional Lens: Gendered Vulnerability and Resilience in Indigenous Communities in the United States”. Kyle Powys Whyte of Michigan State University, and Kathy Lynn of UO were co-authors.

Andrea Willingham was awarded the Margaret Wise Graduate Research Award, which supports graduate student research related to preserving the culture, language, or artifacts of northwestern Native Americans.

Core Faculty Achievements

Peg Boulay, Galen Martin and Nicole Morar were among 16 faculty selected to participate in the 2016 UO Working Group on Active Teaching and Learning organized by the Teaching Effectiveness Program, Center for Media and Educational Technologies and Yamaeda Language Center.

Mark Carey and Kathy Lynn co-organized the 4th annual Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples Symposium in April at the Many Nations Longhouse. The symposium examined the intersection of tribal sovereignty and rights in the face of climate-induced impacts on indigenous peoples and homelands.

Katie Lynch was invited to join the statewide Advisory Board to the Outdoor School Common Measures Project (funded by the Gray Family Foundation), which is developing a common measurement system for capturing the diverse outcomes of outdoor schools.

Kathy Lynn was featured in the summer issue of Oregon Quarterly, UO’s flagship magazine. The article, “A World Aflame”, tells the story of Lynne’s founding of the Tribal Climate Change Project and how it explores the effects of climate change on Northwest Tribes.

Stephanie LeMenager was featured in an episode of Science Friday, a weekly radio broadcast show. The episode, “Telling the Story of Climate Change — In Fiction”, can be streamed online at http://bit.ly/1StVoAT.

Erin Moore was invited to contribute to the art, media, design, and architecture area of the United Nation’s first “Experts’ Summary Report on Harmony with Nature Addressing Earth Jurisprudence,” which was presented to the United Nation’s Division for Sustainable Development in September. She also chaired a session at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris on “Citizenship, Ecology, and the Built Environment” for the symposium State of the Community: Citizens, Communities, and Multilayered Identities hosted by the Dillard Marty Foundation.

Nicole Morar was selected to receive a 2016-17 Robert F and Evelyn Nelson Wulf Teaching Professorship in the Humanities. He will use his Fellowship to design a new course in Clinical Ethics that explores ethical dilemmas as they emerge in a hospital setting.

Brook Muller stepped down as Interim Dean of the School of Architecture and Allied Arts (2014-2016) and returned to the Environmental Studies and Architecture faculties. His article “A Machine is a Watershed for Living In (Reconstructing Architectural Horizons)” appeared in The Pluralist: Official Journal of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy. Through a grant awarded by the United States Embassy in Egypt, he co-led a conservation course “Training and Research on Integrated Solutions to Rising Groundwater In Historic Settings,” in Cairo in association with Megawra/Built Environment Collective.

Kari Norgaard was highlighted in the Two Rivers Tribune for her expertise and research linking the health of the Klamath River to the health of members of the Karuk Tribe, in January. Shortly after, her article ‘Climate Change Is A Social Issue’ was published in The Chronicle Review.

Josh Roering’s group, with support from the National Science Foundation and the US Geological Survey, is using radiocarbon dating, tree rings, and airborne LIDAR data to determine if the 1700AD Cascadia subduction zone earthquake triggered landslides in western Oregon.

Lucas Silva’s paper in the journal Science was featured in Around the O. “New UO researcher finds surprise growth in Tibetan forest”, https://around.uoregon.edu/content/new-uo-researcher-finds-surprise-growth-tibetan-forest. He was awarded a National Science Foundation grant to reconstruct links between precipitation regimes and forest expansion in Brazil over the past several thousand years using cave and soil samples.

David Sutherland was awarded a National Science Foundation CAREER award to study the movement and melt of icebergs around Greenland.

Sarah Wald published her first book, The Nature of California: Race, Citizenship, and Farming Since the 1800s, in association with the University of California Press. The book focuses on the paradoxical ways that farmers and farmworkers in California have been represented from the 1930s to the start of the twenty-first century.

Stephen Wooten served as a member of the Scientific Organizing Committee for the International Symposium on Food History at Moscow State University. He also presented a paper at the forum entitled: “The ‘Pulse’ of West African Agriculture: Cowpeas from Past to Present”.

Richard York received the Honorable Mention for the Lewis A. Coser Award for Theoretical Agenda Setting from the Sociological Theory Section of the American Sociological Association.
ELP: Making a Difference

By Peg Boulay

The Environmental Leadership Program’s (ELP) mission is to provide undergraduates with an integrative capstone experience and graduate students with project management experience, while engaging with the community to address real needs. In 2016, ELP developed and implemented six projects. The Restoring Connections and Canopy Connections teams developed place-based curricula for elementary and middle school students, respectively. Their curricula linked to Next Generation Science Standards and included interactive classroom lessons and inspiring, engaging field trips.

The Stream Stewardship and Riparian Restoration teams helped restore the health of a small creek and used a variety of methods to monitor plants, animals and floodplain characteristics. The Climate & Phenology team conducted original experimental research on the effects of climate change on plant bloom time. The Explaining Estuaries team developed informative, interesting interpretive museum panels. To learn more about the students’ many accomplishments, check out their webpages, http://envs.uoregon.edu/pastprojects/.

A few other 2016 highlights were: six teams presented their projects at the UO Undergraduate Symposium, the 2015 Aspen Adventures team presented their findings at the Society for Ecological Restoration regional conference, and the 2015 Reflections on Water team exhibited their photography at the UO Museum of Natural and Cultural History.

Tribal Climate Change Project

By Kathy Lynn

Since 2009, the Tribal Climate Change Project (TCCP) has grown within the UO Environmental Studies Program and fostered work with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes throughout the Pacific Northwest to address the impacts of climate change on indigenous sovereignty and culture. Collaborative partners involved with the TCCP include the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station and the North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative. The TCCP offers undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Oregon with opportunities to engage in research related to the current impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples in the United States, and projects focused on highlighting tribal leadership in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

In 2016, the TCCP co-organized the 4th Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples Lecture at the University of Oregon in the Many Nations Longhouse. The lecture featured keynote speakers Maxine Burkett, from the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and Elizabeth Kronk Warner, University of Kansas Law. The lecture focused on tribal sovereignty, traditional knowledges and climate-induced change among Indigenous peoples in the United States and examined climate-induced displacement and relocation and climate change impacts on tribal sovereignty and tribal treaty and reserved rights. University of Oregon Law Student Meghan “Sigvanna” Topkok served as a respondent to the keynote speakers, providing her own perspectives and fostering dialogue between the speakers and the audience.

This past year, the TCCP also created a searchable online database to make information about climate grants, programs, resources and other information more accessible to tribes in the region and around the nation. The Tribal Climate Change Funding Guide is intended to provide up-to-date information on grants, programs and plans that may assist tribes in addressing climate change through a broad range of sectors. The Guide also includes a searchable list of climate scientists focused on a range of climate change issues, as well as information on climate-related jobs and events that may be of interest to tribes in the region.
Food Studies Program

By Jared Pruch

The Food Studies program celebrated the launch of a new Undergraduate Minor in Food Studies on a warm spring afternoon in May, hosting an ice cream social with Red Wagon Creamery. The Minor integrates foundational courses in natural science, social science, and the humanities with practicum experiences through study abroad, Urban Farm, or local food and agriculture internships.

The Graduate Specialization continues to enroll new students and attract the attention of prospective participants from around the world. This year’s Graduate Student Research Grants in Food Studies are supporting work on social justice in school garden curriculum, farmland access for beginning farmers and ranchers, and more.

Food Studies convened partners from across campus to form a Student Food Security Working Group, concluding the year with a food security “teach in” with national, state, and local presenters.

Finally, the monthly “Food Talks” lecture series presented discussions on corn and political violence in Mexico, a folklorist’s take on Midwestern Green Bean Casserole, and Eugene’s “Ant Farm” collaborative farming project.

Undergraduate Advising

By Taylor West and Peg Boulay

The Environmental Studies Program launched the Student Advising Center in 2011, and the Center continues to be a central hub for fostering a cohesive interdisciplinary community for the 700+ undergraduate majors and minors. We have a team of five undergraduate peer advisers (the SAs) who assist current and prospective students, faculty and staff, and community members.

Students within the Program’s two undergraduate majors—Environmental Studies and Science—and two undergraduate minors—Environmental Studies and Food Studies—drop in for advising on a variety of topics including major/minor/university requirements, registration issues, and learning experience opportunities such as internships, study abroad, and the Environmental Leadership Program. On average in 2016, the Advising Center assisted around 50 students per week, with our busiest day serving a whopping 30 students!

As part of an effort to bolster career development services to students, the ENVS Program launched a LinkedIn page and held a “Ducks Make a Difference” panel focused on public service with Americorps, Peace Corps, Teach for America, and Food Corps representatives. In partnership with the Career Center, we hosted our third annual Environmental Connect, our signature networking event in which students could meet with 17 organizations to learn about volunteer, internship and career opportunities, as well as practice networking skills. More than 70 students attended this year’s event, and we have started planning 2017 Environmental Connect!

Summer Academy to Inspire Learning

By Katie Lynch

During summer 2016, the Environmental Studies Program partnered with UO’s Summer Academy to Inspire Learning (SAIL) to launch our first environmentally-themed summer camp. SAIL is UO’s largest pathway program aimed at increasing enrollment and success in college through early exposure and exploration. Priority is given to students who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch programs.

Spearheaded by Katie Lynch and involving 15 ENVS faculty and graduate students, our week-long camp introduced 17 rising high school freshmen to our interdisciplinary, hands-on approach to environmental topics. Students waded into the millrace to collect macroinvertebrate samples, planted winter crops at the Urban Farm, and climbed into the canopy of an old-growth forest. We explored how climate change is impacting local tribes, how people relate to animals, how to farm sustainably, and how nature is portrayed in pop culture.

Our hope was to highlight the relevance of ENVS and inspire the next generation to join us in learning how to promote an environmentally-sustainable and socially-just world.

ENVS 201: Connecting with the Community

By Avni Pravin

Through Classroom-Community Connections, students combine academic learning with community service to apply their new knowledge and help the community. For example, in a discussion section for Galen Martin’s Introduction to Environmental Studies: Social Sciences (ENVS 201), students learned about how urban gardens both build community and grow nutritious food. The group went to Buena Vista, a Spanish immersion elementary school in Eugene.

Currently, the school is working to expand its organic school garden that children can work in (family members can also help out). UO students visited the garden in mid-November to help prepare it for winter by thinning and replanting crops, weeding, and piling leaves on top of the chard plants to keep them warm through the winter. Students from the class also worked in groups to solicit garden tool donations from donors and garden centers. Other students took steps to research and apply for a grant which gives funds for educational institutes.

Students overall felt that the trip was a great way to bond with one another and be further immersed in local Eugene communities.
New Faculty Join ENVS

By Richard York

I am pleased to announce that we have three new tenure track faculty members joining ENVS this year.

Lucas Silva was a research faculty member in the Department of Land, Air, and Water Resources at UC Davis before joining us. His research explores the connections between soils, plants, and the atmosphere on multiple scales. He has a joint appointment between ENVS and Geography and is a member of the Institute of Ecology and Evolution.

Alexandra Rempel was an assistant professor in the School of Architecture at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute before taking her new position at the UO. She has training in architecture and biology, and her research focuses on the design of passive heating and cooling for buildings. She is our first tenure track faculty member to be appointed solely in ENVS.

Kory Russel is completing his PhD in Civil and Environmental Engineering at Stanford University. One of his main research interests focuses on the provisioning of water and sanitation services to impoverished communities around the world, and he is broadly interested in environmentally-conscious design. He has a joint appointment between ENVS and Landscape Architecture.

In addition to these three faculty members, we also hired Lauren Hallett, a restoration ecologist, who will join us in fall 2017 after completing her current postdoctoral research appointment.