Environmental Science and Water Resources: Overview

The Environmental Science (EnvS) Program is the largest interdisciplinary academic program at the University of Idaho (UI), committed to undergraduate and graduate research and education. The EnvS Program was established in 1993. The Water Resources (WR) program was launched in 2007 as part of the Waters of the West Blue Ribbon Initiative. The Professional Science Master (PSM) program was launched in 2010 with funding from the National Science Foundation. EnvS launched the UI Sustainability Center through Blue Ribbon Initiative funds.

The Program’s primary emphasis is on teaching students interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and solving environmental and water resources problems, with a strong foundation in engineering and science, supported by social, economic, legal and political realities.

Degrees are offered in Moscow, Idaho Falls, Coeur d'Alene, Boise, Twin Falls. Online degrees are offered anywhere. EnvS has one faculty member in Idaho Falls. All programs rely on faculty participation from nearly all colleges. Degrees attract highly qualified students!

Enrollment (total > 350):
- EnvS: 170 undergraduates, 100 graduate students (M.S., Ph.D.), online Water Science M.S., and non-degree certificate programs in Environmental Contamination Assessment and Environmental Water Science.
- WR: 55 graduate students (M.S., Ph.D.) in Engineering & Science, Science & Management, and Law, Management & Policy, including concurrent degree with J.D. in Law (only in country!).

Courses:
- EnvS 101 (Intro to EnvS) is largest service course at UI (~350 every fall & spring).
- EnvS 101, 102, and 225 are online. Program has helped development of 22 other online courses at UI. WR 506 is premier course in Interdisciplinary Methods at UI. PSM includes new (online) courses in Business Principles, Ethics and Technical Writing.

Human and Office Resources:
- the program has a full-time director, academic advisor, admin II, communications coordinator, and half-time admin I. Total general ed funding for the program is ~$268k for salaries and $33k for TAs. PSM grant funds 50% admin assistant. Additional funds have been requested at last budget hearings. Main office is Morrill Hall 216. Student offices are in Morrill Hall 202, 214, Gauss Johnson 105, and Blake Hall 111, 112 (hold appr. 15 grads).

Reporting Structure:
- Dean committee: chaired by coordinating Dean Burnett (Law). Other members: Aiken (CLASS), Baird (Library), Chen (COGS), Hammel (CALS), Hoversten (AA), Pregitzer (CNR), Stauffer (Eng), and Wood (Science).

External Funding:
- past three years: NSF-PSM ($692k), NSF-GK-12 (~$3M), NSF-REU (~$575k), NSF-Bridge ($586k), NASA ($548k), SBOE, IDEQ, INL.

Challenges & Needs:
- sustainable financial support (increase in Gen Ed budget for 50% Admin I, Director salary, travel and operating expenses); uniform messages from deans to dept chairs/heads to faculty that students in interdisciplinary programs count equally; access to fund raising currently organized by college; and sustained commitment from the university leadership for integration across disciplines. Current TA/RA out-of-state tuition waiver policy change is a concern for external support for grad students.