General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: EnvS 010: Life on a Changing Planet  
GE Area: B2

Results reported for: AY 2010-2011  
# of sections: 10  
# of instructors: 2

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Department Chair: Lynne Trulio  
College: Social Sciences

Instructions: Each year, the department will prepare a brief (two page maximum) report that documents the assessment of the course during the year. This report will be electronically submitted, by the department chair, to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, with an electronic copy to the home college by September 1 of the following academic year.

Part 1
To be completed by the course coordinator:

(1) What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?
We evaluated SLO 2: “Students should be able to demonstrate ways in which science influences and is influenced by complex societies, including political and moral issues.” We also evaluated the Diversity Objective, to incorporate discussions of diversity in the course.

(2) What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?
SLO 2 was evaluated with case study assignments, video analysis and/or papers in which students evaluated the interaction of social dimension and values with issues such as protecting rare species or determining the balance between human desires and environmental impacts. For example, in one assignment, students evaluate the role of public interests and policy with respect to measures to contain the cane toad, an invasive species in Australia that has had major cultural and ecological impacts since its introduction.
There were 410 students taking the course in 10 sections in AY 2010-2011. One instructor found that, averaging the results for six relevant assignments, 89% of 190 students received an ‘A’ or ‘B’ and 7% a ‘C’. The other instructor found 82.5% of 165 received a ‘C’ or better. These results show the great majority of students are performing adequately or very well on assignments assessing this SLO.
The interaction of science and society is a topic students find very engaging. One instructor notes, “Students are highly motivated to connect the knowledge gained in class with societal issues, and these connections reinforce class material.” We have learned that linking biological principles and society is an excellent technique for active learning.

With respect to the Diversity Objective, students must consider how human impacts on the environment can be affected by different moral perspectives and how environmental change can differentially harm people of diverse backgrounds and cultures. For example, in one assignment, students evaluate the connection between current market economies and environmental justice, especially with respect to the exploitation people in developing nations through resource extraction, exposure to toxic chemicals, and low-paying jobs. In another assignment, students must write a paper analyzing the connection between industrial food production and one of these topics: animal rights, worker’s rights, consumer’s rights, food safety, and universal access to healthy food.

(3) What modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year? (If no modifications are planned, the course coordinator should indicate this.)
The students are doing very well with respect to SLO 2 and, as noted above, are very engaged with this topic. This SLO is inherent to the teaching of Environmental Studies and is a central theme in all our courses. Thus, this SLO is addressed very well and no changes are planned. The diversity objective is covered directly in issues of environmental equity and justice, also a central theme in Environmental Studies. No changes are needed.
Part 2
To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

(4) Are all sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

Yes, all sections of EnvS 010 are aligned with the GE B2 SLOs and course assessment procedures. The instructors teaching the course work together on lectures and assignments and they also work with Dr. Trulio on assessment to ensure the course meets the SLOs and to ensure SLOs are effectively measured. Instructors meet with the course coordinator at least twice a year.