



## II. Provosts and Academic Officers

### Key Findings<sup>1</sup>

#### Colleges and Universities Offer Environmental Courses

- ✿ Colleges and universities, uniquely situated to educate America's future leaders on environmental issues, have taken strides towards including environmental studies in their curricula. Nearly four in five offer at least one course on environmental studies. In half of all four-year schools a majority of students take a course related to environmental issues, although a smaller number of two-year schools can boast this level of participation. There is even a small but notable minority that require most or all students to take a course on environmental studies, and a larger minority requiring at least some students to take such a course.

#### Majority of Four-Year Colleges and Universities Offer Environmental Studies Major or Minor

- ✿ In addition to the prevalence of environmental studies courses on college campuses, many schools have truly made environmental studies an academic priority with the establishment of an undergraduate major or minor. A large minority of colleges and universities offer an environmental studies major or minor, and a majority of four-year schools do so, as well. Moreover, a solid number offer the option to pursue environmental studies through an interdisciplinary degree program, and many also offer opportunities for environment-related studies through internship programs, independent research projects, and service projects.

#### In the End, Many Students May Not Gain Basic Environmental Literacy

- ✿ While a few departments offer courses that deal with environmental topics, these tend to concentrate in the physical sciences such as biology and chemistry. More work, in particular, needs to be done in offering environmental courses in the fields of education, engineering, and law. Meanwhile, students can avail themselves of the many

<sup>1</sup> Results in this section are based on the return of 320 surveys from Provosts and have a margin of error of plus or minus five percent. These 320 colleges and universities include 229 four-year and 91 two-year schools, and 171 are public while 149 are private.

opportunities colleges and universities offer to study environmental topics outside the classroom, through independent research projects, internship programs, community service programs, and campus service projects.

## Faculty Environmental Research Receives Support from Colleges and Universities

✿ Aside from providing students with opportunities in environmental studies, many schools also support faculty who are engaged in environmental research. Half of all campuses have programs to support faculty professional development on environmental topics, and one in three four-year schools house a research institute that studies environmental issues. Although supporting faculty in environmental studies is common, few schools evaluate professors on how they integrate environmental topics into their courses.

## Environment Grabs Strong Foothold in the Curricula

Although there is a great deal of variation in the extent to which colleges and universities make the environment part of the college experience, virtually all schools in the United States incorporate the environment, at least in some way, into the academic curriculum. Schools have designed many different avenues for students to pursue studies on the environment, including internship programs, community service projects, interdisciplinary degree programs, majors or minors, or even required courses.

### Percentage of Students Who Take One or More Environmental Studies Courses

	TOTAL	2-YEAR DEGREE	4-YEAR DEGREE
<b>Basic functions of the earth's natural systems</b>			
Less than 30% of students	38%	51	30
30% or more of students	50	39	55
<b>Correlation between human activity and environmental sustainability</b>			
Less than 30% of students	52	63	45
30% or more of students	38	29	41

	TOTAL	2-YEAR DEGREE	4-YEAR DEGREE
<b>Practices that support a sustainable lifestyle</b>			
Less than 30% of students	57	63	54
30% or more of students	30	25	33
<b>Policy strategies that support environmental sustainability</b>			
Less than 30% of students	61	71	57
30% or more of students	26	18	31

Environmental studies is not as predominant in classrooms as more traditional subjects in the natural and social sciences, but schools have nonetheless chosen to promote environmental studies in many different ways. Although virtually every school has an English, biology, math, political science, and chemistry program, more and more colleges and universities are choosing to make environmental studies part of their core curricula as well.

### **Does School Offer Major or Minor in Environmental Studies?**

	TOTAL	2-YEAR DEGREE	4-YEAR DEGREE
Major or Minor	43%	18	57
Major	35	17	44
Minor	32	7	45
Both Major & Minor	23	6	32

In nearly half (45%) of all colleges and universities, a majority of students take a course related to the environment during their tenure. In fact, in half (51%) of four-year schools a majority of the student body take an environmental studies course, compared with 35 percent of two-year schools. Half (50%) of all provosts say that 30 percent or more of their students take at least one course on the basic functions of the earth’s natural systems, and four in 10 (38%) say at least 30 percent of students have had a course on the correlation between human activity and environmental sustainability. Somewhat fewer schools say at least 30 percent of their students have taken a course addressing practices that support a sustainable lifestyle (30%) or policy strategies that support environmental sustainability (26%). Just 6 percent of provosts say that no students at their schools have taken a course on any of these subjects. In each of these specific areas, more students at four-year schools than two-year schools have taken a course dealing with the environment.

Many schools have established a commitment to environmental studies through the development of a major or minor for undergraduate students. Four in 10 (43%) colleges and universities offer undergraduates the opportunity to major (35%) or minor (32%) in environmental or sustainability studies. In fact, among four-year colleges and universities, 57 percent offer an undergraduate major (44%) or minor (45%) in environmental studies, and one in three (32%) offer both. Schools with less than 1,000 students (22%) are half as likely as all other schools (52%) to offer a major or minor.

Aside from offering majors and minors in environmental or sustainability studies, many schools have incorporated environmental studies into the curriculum through interdisciplinary degree programs. Fully half of colleges and universities (49%) allow undergraduates to design interdisciplinary degree programs incorporating the study of environmental issues. Four-year schools (61%) are twice as likely as two-year schools (27%) to allow students to design interdisciplinary degree programs.

### **Top 5 Departments in Which Courses on Environmental Issues are Taught**

	TOTAL	2-YEAR DEGREE	4-YEAR DEGREE
Biology	68%	53	75
Chemistry	43	20	55
Political science or sociology	33	12	43
Business or economics	25	7	35
Philosophy or religion	22	9	30

Undergraduate courses on environmental issues are taught in a wide range of academic departments. Environmental studies tend to be concentrated within the physical sciences, although some schools offer environmental studies as part of the social science curriculum, as well. Two in three (68%) schools offer environmental studies courses in their biology departments, while another four in 10 (43%) offer courses on the environment in their chemistry departments. One in three (33%) schools offer environmental studies courses within their political science or sociology departments, while a solid minority offer courses in environmental studies in the business or economics department (25%) or the department of philosophy or religion (22%). Colleges and universities are least likely to offer courses on the environment in computer science or engineering (12%), education (11%), law (9%), and communications (6%) departments. For each department, four-year schools are more likely than two-year schools to offer environmental studies courses.

## Alternative Means for Studying Environmental Issues

	TOTAL	2-YEAR DEGREE	4-YEAR DEGREE
Percentage of schools that offer different options			
Internship programs	58%	41	67
Independent research projects	69	53	78
Campus service projects	49	34	56
Community service projects	58	45	65
Mastery learning	7	7	7

In addition to individual courses, colleges and universities have developed other means for students to pursue environmental studies. At least half of schools offer students the opportunity to study environmental issues through independent research projects (69%), internship programs (58%), community service programs (58%), and campus service projects (49%), all of which are more prevalent at four-year schools than two-year ones. Few two- or four-year colleges and universities offer environmental studies opportunities through mastery learning (7% in each).

## Students Required to Take Courses on Environmental Studies

	TOTAL	2-YEAR DEGREE	4-YEAR DEGREE
All students	8%	3	13
Most students	5	2	7
Some students	21	24	18
No students	63	66	59

Although most colleges incorporate environmental studies into the classroom, students are most often not required to take a course on environmental issues. There is a small minority of colleges (8%) that explicitly require all students to take at least one course related to the environment, and another handful (5%) that require most students to enroll in such a course. Still, one in three (34%) schools require at least some students to take an environmental studies course. Private colleges (20%) are four times as likely as public colleges (5%) to require all or most students to take a course on the environ-

ment. Four-year colleges and universities are (39%) more likely than two-year schools (23%) to require at least some students to take an environmentally related class.

## Schools That Have Taken Lead in Teaching Students about Environment

### **Leading Schools for Offering Majors & Minors and Requiring Environmental Courses** (Schools listed alphabetically)

Alaska Pacific University  
Albion College  
Arizona State University  
Dominican College of San Rafael  
Humboldt State University  
Tri-State University  
University of the Incarnate Word  
University of LaVerne  
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Wilson College

A good portion of colleges and universities offer majors or minors in environmental studies and a solid number of schools require at least some students to take courses on the environment, but some schools stand apart in their dedication to bringing environmental studies to the classroom. These campuses offer undergraduates the option of both an environmental studies major and minor. Moreover, they require all or most students to take at least one course related to the environment. Each of these schools is a four-year college or university, and most are located in either the western or Midwestern regions of the United States.

# Colleges Provide Faculty Support for Environmental Studies

## College Support for Faculty and Environmental Issues

Percent of colleges that. . .

	TOTAL	2-YEAR DEGREE	4-YEAR DEGREE
Have programs to support faculty professional development on environmental topics	50%	54	49
Formally evaluate or recognize how faculty have integrated environmental topics into their courses	8	5	9
House any research institutes that study environmental issues	23	6	32

For colleges and universities there are two main ways to promote studies on any particular subject matter: They can provide students the opportunity or require students to take courses on that subject, and they can support faculty development in that area. We know colleges and universities provide at least modest opportunities for students to learn about environmental issues, but what steps, if any, are colleges taking to support or encourage faculty engagement in environmental studies?

Similar to the pattern observed with students, there is a solid share of schools that support faculty development on environmental issues, even if few overtly encourage faculty to make the environment part of their classroom activities. Fully half of colleges and universities (50%) have programs to support faculty professional development on environmental topics, a trend that does not differ much by school size or the type of degree the school offers.

There is also a sizable number of schools that have made environmental studies a priority in faculty research. One in four (23%) house research institutes that study environmental issues. In this case, four-year colleges and universities (32%) are far more likely than two-year schools (6%) to have such a research institute. Campuses with 4,000 or more students (42%) are more than twice as likely as smaller schools (13%) to house a research institute that studies environmental issues, while public colleges and universities (29%) are more likely than private schools (16%) to do so.

Although many schools support environmental studies as part of the classroom and research experience of their faculty, a small minority formally evaluate professors for bringing the environment into the

classroom. One in 10 (8%) colleges formally evaluate or recognize how the faculty has integrated environmental topics into their courses, and this does not vary across schools with different characteristics.

## Colleges That Make Environment Part of Faculty Experience

### **Leading Schools for Supporting and Evaluating Faculty on Environmental Studies**

**(Schools listed alphabetically)**

Calvin College  
Central Methodist College  
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania  
Humboldt State University  
Illinois Wesleyan University  
Indiana University-Kokomo  
James Madison University  
Kent State University-Trumbull Campus  
Lynchburg College  
Massachusetts Maritime Academy  
Oliver Nazarene University  
Palo Alto College  
Pitzer College  
Rappahannock Community College  
Towson University  
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Viterbo College  
Warren Wilson College  
Westminster College  
Westchester Community College

Although most schools do not evaluate faculty based on how they have brought the environment into the classroom, there is a group of schools that have taken this step towards promoting environmental studies. There are 21 schools that not only have programs to support faculty professional development on environmental topics, but also formally evaluate or recognize how faculty have integrated environmental topics into their courses. The colleges and universities are located throughout the nation, and vary both in size and the type of degree that they offer. In fact, half of these schools also house a research institute that studies environmental issues.