




February 4, 2019

  
Daniel A. Reed  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs  
205 Park Bldg.  
Campus



RE: Graduate Council Review  
Environmental Humanities Program

Dear Vice President Reed:

Enclosed is the Graduate Council's review of the Environmental Humanities Program. Included in this review packet are the report prepared by the Graduate Council, the Program Profile, and the Memorandum of Understanding resulting from the review wrap-up meeting.

After your approval, please forward this packet to President Ruth Watkins for her review. It will then be sent to the Academic Senate to be placed on the information calendar for the next Senate meeting.

Sincerely,



David B. Kieda  
Dean, The Graduate School

Encl.

XC: Stuart K. Culver, Dean, College of Humanities  
Jeffrey M. McCarthy, Director, Environmental Humanities Program

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The Graduate School - The University of Utah

GRADUATE COUNCIL REPORT TO THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT  
FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND THE ACADEMIC SENATE

*September 4, 2018*

The Graduate Council has completed its review of the **Environmental Humanities Program**. The External Review Committee included:

Richard H. Watts, PhD  
Associate Professor of French  
Director of Canadian Studies  
Department of French and Italian Studies  
University of Washington

Louise Westling, PhD  
Professor Emerita of English and Environmental Literature  
University of Oregon

The Internal Review Committee of the University of Utah included:

Steven J. Burian, PhD  
Professor  
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering

Daniel L. Dustin, PhD  
Professor  
Department of Health, Kinesiology and Recreation

This report of the Graduate Council is based on the self-study submitted by the Environmental Humanities Program, the reports of the external and internal review committees, and responses to the external and internal reports from the program director and the co-interim deans of the College of Humanities.

## **PROGRAM PROFILE**

### **Program Overview**

The Environmental Humanities (EH) program is a 2-year interdisciplinary master's (MA and MS) degree-granting program housed within the College of Humanities. The program was founded in 2005 to "fulfill a need for focused humanities research, teaching and engagement with the burning environmental issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century." As noted by the external review committee, this program is considered a "first of its kind in the nation." The current director of the EH program is Jeffrey M. McCarthy, PhD.

The EH program is focused on "training the next generation of environmental leaders and thinkers." The mission statement of the EH program, as per the current program website, program self-study, and director's response to internal and external reviews, is: "This program integrates our need to know with our desire to act. The Environmental Humanities Graduate Program aims to produce an interdisciplinary, intellectual, and creative space in which we are prepared: to reflect on what it means to be "human" in a world of entangled human and animal presences; to encourage creative and collaborative exchanges both inside and outside the classroom; and to think in a forward fashion both about new forms of environmental leadership and stewardship, and about the intersection of ecology and environmental justice."

In general, the EH program was praised by the internal and external review committees for its organization and effectiveness. The internal report summarized the EH program as "a great example of the interdisciplinary possibilities at the University of Utah, and opportunities for its development and growth are abundant." The external report listed several exceptional commendations in support of the EH program (outlined further in the Commendations section) and summarized the EH program as being established to the point where it can be "effectively strengthened as the field now emerges as an important movement around the country," and benefit from "the infrastructure, administrative and faculty know-how, and track record," as well as stability and modest discretionary funding in the form of an endowment, to support initiatives, special events, and other educational opportunities. In the exit interview with the external committee, the program was referred to as a "polished jewel." Overall, both internal and external review teams were highly supportive of the EH program and provided a sense that the program is both effective and well-positioned for emerging opportunities in this discipline. Finally, the program director, Dr. McCarthy, received high praise from both review teams, as well as from the co-deans of Humanities, who specifically highlighted initiatives he has taken to build the EH program and to "underscore [the University of Utah's] leadership in defining the field of Environmental Humanities."

### **Faculty**

The EH program does not have its own tenure-line or career-line faculty, which the director refers to as a "classic challenge for interdisciplinary programs." Rather, the EH program relies upon "healthy and productive working relations with the faculty who work through EH," which are "on loan" from other departments; faculty range in academic rank and tenure status and come from Sociology in the College of

Social and Behavioral Science; Ethnic Studies in the School of Cultural and Social Transformation; and English, History, Communication, Creative Writing, Philosophy and World Languages and Cultures in the College of Humanities. Reviewers noted that expansion of disciplines would offer even greater research and coursework opportunities for students.

EH program faculty are divided into “four concentric circles of faculty engagement”: CORE faculty (5 total), including the director; AFFILIATE faculty (8 total); an EH RESEARCH professorship providing a two-year award offering one course release, research money and a TA to interested faculty from the College of Humanities (1 total), and ASSOCIATED faculty (9 total). Faculty diversity (women and underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities) appears consistent with many departments and programs across the University of Utah.

The EH program faculty appear to be strong, productive, and effective. Both the internal and external committees provided comments supportive of this assessment. The internal reviewers noted that “it is clear that EH faculty involvement is a labor of love” and summarized their interviews with faculty by stating that “the faculty members we spoke to are dedicated to the value of interdisciplinary inquiry and the students in the EH program,” adding further that the home departments of the EH faculty should be credited for their willingness to afford the faculty the opportunity to affiliate with the EH program. The external reviewers also noted that “the EH faculty, staff, and student community is lively and positively focused on its academic mission. Our impression was of collegiality and intellectual energy among the students and appreciation of all the support provided them by administrative staff and their faculty.” It was further noted that the director was “unusually committed to guiding students in all their various paths of exploration, with effective timelines and completion dates for stages along the way towards successful shaping and completion of final thesis projects.”

The internal reviewers also noted that “The EH program is a dedicated community of administrators, students, faculty, and staff” and that the “collegiality and positive attitude among the community members is genuine.”

## **Students**

The EH program recruiting efforts are nationwide and international through alumni networking, the program website, program reputation, social media, and through direct mailing to faculty from select leading colleges and universities. The EH program has enrolled students since its inception in the Fall of 2005. The program currently enrolls ~8 students/year, with on average about 15 first- and second-year students. A substantial number of students come from outside Utah. Both the internal and external review teams noted a significant increase (~2-fold) in the number of applicants to the program since 2016, and a commensurate increase in non-acceptance rate. Further, the external team noted that the “quality of undergraduate institutions represented among applicants has improved as well.” From the program self-study and internal and external reports, “it appears that most students complete their degree in 3 years or less” and that “most graduates go on to work in environmental non-profit organizations in the region, though some go on to PhD studies or law school.” The EH program also has one postdoctoral trainee (2016-2019).

Financial support is provided for 8 students/year using funds derived from the EH program endowment fund, other campus entities that pay EH program students for working, and other University entities. The self-study describes student/postdoc support “as one of the highest in the country,” consisting

of a full tuition benefit, access to subsidized healthcare, and a stipend. Students work across the University in “meaningful, career-building work here on campus” (e.g., the Office of Sustainability, the Natural History Museum of Utah, as an advisor in the Honors College, teaching composition through the Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies, at the University of Utah Press, and other institutional settings) as part of their fellowships. The external report states: “An unusual and highly commendable aspect of the program is that all students have financial support based on internships and teaching assignments through the EH program.”

Establishing consistent racial and ethnic diversity of student enrollment can be challenging. The EH program has worked with appropriate University programs and other resources to recruit traditionally underrepresented groups. Further, the EH program continues to work on addressing diversity within its program. In the response to the internal and external reports, the director specifically noted the success of recruiting and enrolling students with “geographical diversity” and “gender diversity,” with at least 50% of enrollment for the past two years being female. The director’s response also highlights “some success with diversity in social class,” and that the program has had increases in applications from people of color. The EH program also has a scholarship to support diversity and they have been proactive in their outreach to, and recruitment of, students of broad racial and ethnic backgrounds. While the program presently lacks abundant racial/ethnic diversity among students, the incoming class includes one Latino and one Asian-American.

External reviewers noted in a very convincing way that “student satisfaction seems remarkably high.” This committee met with almost all current students and a few alumni and described the students as “committed, empowered, and, dare we say it, happy.” Students and alumni generally found the curriculum stimulating and suitable to prepare them for future career opportunities.

## **Curriculum**

The EH program offers both MA and MS degrees. Between 2010-2017, two-thirds of the degrees earned were an MS. Students who join the program enter a defined coursework sequence and adhere to a fairly recently developed and implemented “standardized calendar” for completion of milestones. All students must complete 33 hours of coursework with a minimum GPA of 3.0. “Requirements [for the MA and MS degrees] are identical with the exception that the MA degree requires standard language proficiency or the equivalent of one year of college study of a foreign language.” There are three options for completion of the MS degree: 1) completion of a thesis, 2) completion of a creative project, or 3) completion of a final examination. Options 1 and 2 require a written summary of the thesis/project and an oral defense. Option 3 is considered less desirable by the program and requires 33 hours of coursework (no thesis/project credit hours) and advisory committee/program approval prior to completion of 24 credit hours of course work. Students electing to take the final exam must complete and pass both the 6-hour written and 2-hour oral components, which assess the student’s knowledge and understanding of theoretical foundations of humanities-based inquiry of environmental phenomena, methodological approaches, and relevant literature. The internal reviewers noted that “most students take the thesis route,” consistent with data provided in the self-study.

There is some confusion in how the credit hour breakdown for coursework is presented in the internal and external reports and the EH program self-study, perhaps due to the fact that 3 options for degree completion exist. It appears that the EH program has a core curriculum of 6 courses totaling up to 21 credits. However, this can vary depending upon the number of “required courses,” versus electives that can be

substituted for some of the “required courses.” There are numerous elective course opportunities for students, and up to 12 hours of elective coursework can be counted towards the 33 credit hour total, partially substituting some credits for the “required courses.” Overall, the combined credit hour total for required and elective courses must equal 27 credit hours for students who intend to complete a thesis/project (Options 1 and 2). The remaining 6 credit hours generally come in the form of thesis/project credit during semesters 3 and 4 (3-6 hours/semester, to total 6).

As noted above, student satisfaction with the curriculum is high. It was noted as being intellectually challenging and stimulating and “suitable to prepare [students] for future career opportunities.” Minor concerns regarding the curriculum were provided in the external report, where it was noted that “curriculum is limited primarily to courses within the Environmental Humanities Program and taught by CORE faculty” and “the required 27 hours of coursework is almost fully absorbed by EH required courses, so electives are limited by available time outside requirements.” In the recommendations provided by the external reviewers, it was also noted that “students reported some difficulties exploring course electives outside the EH curriculum,” due in part to difficulties navigating the University course catalog. However, it was also noted in the external reviewer exit interview that “most students do take a few electives in other departments” and that the workload seemed “balanced.” In the self-study, problems with elective opportunities were identified and described and in both the self-study and director’s response to the reviews, it was noted that the EH program is working to increase the diversity of program membership and thesis/project advisory opportunities. Despite some minor concerns, the curriculum as it is currently constructed appears to be balanced, challenging, and highly effective.

### **Program Effectiveness and Outcomes Assessment**

The ideal outcomes for EH program graduates are outlined in the self-study as follows:

“EH graduates will be able to understand the historical development of environmental thought and be able to evaluate the major ideas associated with environmentalism (e.g., the anthropocene, conservation, preservation, sustainability, environmental racism, environmental justice). Students will have an informed, interdisciplinary perspective on environmental problems. Students will also encounter paths of environmental transformation and the constructive alternatives to environmental destruction. Our students can reflect critically and creatively on their roles as problem solvers. To this end, they are introduced to multiple methodologies, are encouraged to express themselves creatively, trained in academic discourse, come to understand public scholarship and practice close reading of multiple textual genres. In the end, students must communicate the results of their investigations using various types of writing, visual and electronic communication.”

Progress toward these goals is monitored by a supervisory committee throughout the training period and directly assessed through “student writing, oral expression, and research skills.”

The EH program has self-identified some concerns related to graduating students within the 2-year time-frame. In response, they have also invested significant effort to facilitate completion by adding a student orientation, providing a comprehensible timeline, hiring a dedicated graduate advisor, enacting a hard date for formation of an advisory committee, and adding courses as well as a clear policy that student support is for a maximum of 4 semesters. The internal report does not seem to acknowledge the efforts that the EH program has taken to address graduate timelines, as described in the self-study document, but does provide

several recommendations related to this issue and the training program in general. However, the external report notes several positive points regarding program outcomes, assessment, and effectiveness. "Program effectiveness is primarily seen in successful movement of students through the program and completion of degrees," which is apparent based on the self-study report despite some difficulty meeting the 2-year timeline for some students. The external reviewers also lauded the addition of the orientation, which was "deemed useful by the students" and the "Director's hands-on advising and mentoring [to help keep them on track for timely graduation]." Finally, the external report highlighted satisfaction from alumni and their continued interactions with the program via planned events, and "students' notable success in finding employment after graduation, much of it in the Salt Lake City area with environmental groups of various kinds." Overall, the EH program appears successful in meeting its goals.

### **Facilities and Resources**

The internal report states that the "space [facilities] is a great fit for the program" using a variety of criteria, and acknowledges the efforts of the EH program to improve the space using University grants to enhance the facility for program operations. Some commendations and recommendations were provided with respect to integration of the EH facilities with the broader University of Utah campus. The external report does not comment on facilities or resources, perhaps indicating that they are sufficient. Support for this conclusion comes from the exit interview, in which the external reviewers indicated that the EH program had "amazing space."

The self-study notes a lack of budgetary support from the College of Humanities in the prior year (2016-2017). The reason given was that the "financial situation of the program was already in good shape." The internal report does not extensively address financial resources, but the external report indicates that the EH program does benefit from an endowment that provides the director with modest discretionary funding to support students, program events, and faculty awards, when combined with other resources. Later it was noted that the "present resources are adequate for the program's functioning," but that "strengthening and expanding its size and reach will require increased funding and dedicated sponsors," which should involve fundraising efforts by multiple stakeholders at the EH program, University, and external levels.

### **COMMENDATIONS**

Both the internal and external review teams were highly complimentary of the EH program and its accomplishments.

1. The EH program was commended for its ability to establish an environment and curriculum that engages and empowers students. Current students and alumni are highly satisfied with the program and the preparation it provides for future career opportunities.
2. The quality, level of engagement, and success of the students entering and graduating from the program was commended.
3. The EH program faculty and administrators were commended for their genuine dedication, collegiality, and positive attitude. The program has done an excellent job of helping students mold their varied interests into a focus that fulfills them personally and readies them for a wide range of career options.

4. The EH program's high level of community involvement, involvement in campus sustainability initiatives, and hosting of special events was commended as a mechanism contributing to the growing local and national reputation of the EH program, and the success of graduating students.
5. Finally, the EH program was commended for its use of resources to maintain and continually improve the program, also highlighting efforts of the director to develop new initiatives such as a fellowship program on climate change.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The program director, along with program constituents, should create a strategic plan, precisely defining the program mission, articulating principles and values, and identifying ways to continue to elevate the program's national profile. At the same time, growth in size and disciplinary breadth should be planned for tactically, with sustainable models for funding, program administration, and advising. This may require greater investment of resources from the College and/or other major stakeholders in the program.
2. The EH program should work toward stabilizing faculty participation arrangements. This could come in the form of stronger MOU agreements between the EH program and participating faculty home departments and colleges. Attention to departmental relations and faculty commitment is especially important prior to expanding in the undergraduate arena.
3. Continue to improve and grow the student applicant pool, particularly for traditionally underrepresented groups.
4. Build on success and student satisfaction by addressing curricular issues (such as increasing elective opportunities), enhancing integration of students into the Humanities community, and, importantly, improving assessment of program outcomes and effectiveness.
5. Continue to capitalize on opportunities for alliances on campus to expand the advantages of interdisciplinary research and create meaningful synergy.

Submitted by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Graduate Council:

Christopher A. Reilly (Chair)  
Professor, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology

Jeffrey R. Moore  
Assistant Professor, Department of Geology and Geophysics





Environmental Humanities OBIA Profile\*

	R411 Data Table						
Environmental Humanities							
	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Faculty							
Headcount							
With Doctoral Degrees (Including MFA and other terminal degrees, as specified by the institution)							
Full-time Tenured							
Full-time Non-Tenured							
Part-time							
With Master's Degrees							
Full-time Tenured							
Full-time Non-Tenured							
Part-time							
With Bachelor's Degrees							
Full-time Tenured							
Full-time Non-Tenured							
Part-time							
Other							
Full-time Tenured							
Full-time Non-Tenured							
Part-time							
Total Headcount Faculty							
Full-time Tenured							
Full-time Non-Tenured							
Part-time							
FTE (A-1/S-11/Cost Study Definition)							
Full-time (Salaried)							
Teaching Assistants							
Part-time (May include TA's)							
Total Faculty FTE							

\*Many fields are left blank because of the interdisciplinary nature of the program.

	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Number of Graduates							
Certificates							
Associate Degrees							
Bachelor's Degrees							
Master's Degrees	3	7	10	7	11	7	8
Doctoral Degrees							
Number of Students—(Data Based on Fall Third Week) Semester of Data: _____, 20__							
Total # of Declared Majors	31	25	25	18	23	18	15
Total Department FTE*				6	13	11	10
Total Department SCH*				119	250	211	200
*Per Department Designator Prefix							
Student FTE per Total Faculty FTE							
Cost (Cost Study Definitions)							
Direct Instructional Expenditures							
Cost Per Student FTE							
Funding							
Appropriated Fund	\$22,131	\$39,693	\$91,312	\$163,805	\$194,100	\$328,452	\$267,896
Other:							
Special Legislative Appropriation							
Grants of Contracts							
Special Fees/ Differential Tuition							
Total							



## **Memorandum of Understanding Environmental Humanities program Graduate Council Review 2017-18**

This memorandum of understanding is a summary of decisions reached at a wrap-up meeting on October 31, 2018, and concludes the Graduate Council Review of the Environmental Humanities Program. Daniel A. Reed, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Stuart K. Culver, Dean of the College of Humanities; Jeffrey M. McCarthy, Director of the Environmental Humanities Program; David B. Kieda, Dean of The Graduate School; and Katharine S. Ullman, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, were present.

The discussion centered on but was not limited to the recommendations contained in the review summary report presented to the Graduate Council on September 4, 2018. The working group agreed to endorse the following actions:

**Recommendation 1: The program director, along with program constituents, should create a strategic plan, precisely defining the program mission, articulating principles and values, and identifying ways to continue to elevate the program's national profile. At the same time, growth in size and disciplinary breadth should be planned for tactically, with sustainable models for funding, program administration, and advising. This may require greater investment of resources from the College and/or other major stakeholders in the program.**

Dean Culver noted that Environmental Humanities programs are forming at sites around the country, as interest in this scholarly discipline grows. He stressed the importance of keeping in the lead during this expansion, and the EH Program here seems well-positioned to do so. With information gained from the review process, the Director is enthusiastic about revisiting the strategic plan that was crafted in 2015 and plans to start this conversation with faculty at a retreat in December. The process will carry forward through to Spring with additional, focused meetings, and an elaborated plan is anticipated by Summer 2019. There are many considerations to integrate (see also Recommendations 4 and 5), and feedback from different constituents (such as alumni) will help in honing a plan that encompasses the current program vision and practical goals. The EH Program has several initiatives underway that bolster its local and national visibility. These include launching the Utah Award in Environmental Humanities as well as hosting conferences that bring colleagues from across the nation together. Further, with the Taft-Nicholson Center becoming a venue where scientific and humanistic approaches converge, the EH Program, which has deep ties to this Center, is poised to play a central role in facilitating exchange across these disciplines at the University of Utah.

**Recommendation 2: The EH program should work toward stabilizing faculty participation arrangements. This could come in the form of stronger MOU agreements between the EH program and participating faculty home departments and colleges. Attention to departmental relations and faculty commitment is especially important prior to expanding in the undergraduate arena.**

There was consensus on the need to formalize plans for faculty participation in a multi-year manner, which would have the benefits of allowing new faculty to contribute without overburdening their service loads, as well as stabilizing core curricular options. While this is a simpler process when confined to one college, there are strategies to accommodating faculty from other colleges, and this option may be needed (and is being used) in some cases to maintain the breadth required of a competitive program. Dean Culver and Director McCarthy were uniformly committed to the goal of developing MOUs and felt it was realistic to begin this process now and have this formalized starting in the next academic year.

**Recommendation 3: Continue to improve and grow the student applicant pool, particularly for traditionally underrepresented groups.**

The EH Program has been putting substantial effort into recruitment, particularly instituting new links to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as well as to Tribal Colleges and individual McNair Fellows. They also offer an Equity and Diversity Fellowship. They are having more success attracting students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as first-generation students, and will continue pressing forward along these lines. We touched on the importance of web-based publicity, including social media and video, as a way to reach potential applicants more broadly, and efforts along these lines are also being implemented. Professor McCarthy pointed out that their current applicants are of very high quality and come from across the country, but views being proactive to attract students and potentially increase the EH applicant pool as important.

**Recommendation 4: Build on success and student satisfaction by addressing curricular issues (such as increasing elective opportunities), enhancing integration of students into the Humanities community, and, importantly, improving assessment of program outcomes and effectiveness.**

The MOU agreements for faculty discussed in Recommendation 2 will help underpin a stable curricular plan. Elective opportunities, along different types of tracks within the EH domain, exist within the College of Humanities and across campus, but would benefit from being more formally identified and planned. Placing EH students in such electives within the College of Humanities would be one way to integrate them further into the Humanities community. Going beyond the College in some cases brings up questions about differential tuition, which is viewed as an obstacle by students. SVP Reed said that talks are taking place at upper administrative levels about differential tuition, but that near-term solutions for a graduate program likely need to take place at a local level, pursuing options such as cross-listing particular courses. Finally, improved documentation of program and learning outcomes, as well as addressing their assessment, is

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Environmental Humanities Program  
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Seen as an important priority and will be articulated in the strategic plan (see Recommendation 1). Dean Kieda suggested getting assistance from the Office of Learning Outcomes Assessment (specifically, Mark St. Andre and Ann Darling) and Dean Culver noted that Joy Pierce, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Humanities, could give feedback on this process as well.

**Recommendation 5: Continue to capitalize on opportunities for alliances on campus to expand the advantages of interdisciplinary research and create meaningful synergy.**

The EH Program has many strengths to tout in this arena. They have strong connections to the Global Change and Sustainability Center and the American West Center, among others. Yet, given the feedback from reviewers on the potential for further collaborative opportunities, intentional ways by which the Program chooses to both sustain and create alliances will be a key topic in their strategic planning process in Spring 2019 (Recommendation 1).

The EH Program stands out for its achievements and for the success of its alumni. Dean Culver particularly pointed to Jeff McCarthy for guiding this program through important steps of growth and evolution that have taken place during his tenure as director.

This memorandum of understanding is to be followed by regular letters of progress, upon request of the Graduate School, from the Director of the Environmental Humanities Program. Letters will be submitted until all of the actions described in the preceding paragraphs have been completed. In addition, a three-year follow-up meeting may be scheduled during AY 2020-21 to discuss progress made in addressing the review recommendations.

Daniel A. Reed  
Stuart K. Culver  
Jeffrey M. McCarthy  
David B. Kieda  
Katharine S. Ullman



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David B. Kieda  
Dean, The Graduate School  
February 4, 2019