SPECIAL REPORT

OF THE

GRADUATE COUNCIL

concerning

REVISION TO A DEGREE PROGRAM:
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
(#4188)

Presented at the
778th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
April 26, 2018

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

GRADUATE COUNCIL


The Graduate Council recommends approval of this proposal.

Briefly describe the Proposal

ECO would like to amend our submission to include the following information.
1. Reduce required credits from 35 to 30.
2. Revise core course requirement for professional (non-thesis) MS students.

Please describe the existing program requirements, listing all required courses and available electives, as well as any additional requirements, and continuation or admissions policies.

Table 1 in the attached file lists all the courses required under existing program.

Please describe the requirements that you are proposing, listing course requirements, elective options, as well as any additional requirements, and continuation or admissions policies.

See the attached Table 1 for comparison of existing and proposed requirements.
1. Reduce over-all credits from 35 to 30, as follows:
   a) For thesis students: by reducing the number of required thesis credits from 12-6, and reducing required registration for the departmental seminar series to one term instead of two.
   b) For professional students: by eliminating the practicum credit requirement and making the requirement of a “publishable professional paper” optional.

2. The professional (non-thesis) degree program would further be revised to eliminate the core courses of ECO 601 and ECO 602, and replacing these credits with courses/credits specific to a student’s concentration focus.

Please provide the rationale for these revisions.

1. The current total of 35 credits is higher than the graduate school requirement of 30 credits, and it places an undue burden on students to pay for these extra 5 credits and delays time to degree completion, especially for professional students. Reducing our requirement to 30 credits makes our program more competitive with other MS degree programs in environmental conservation.

2. There is a need for master’s level professionals in environmental conservation fields, and the current, research-oriented requirements delay time to graduation and consume the credit space for our professional degree students that would be better utilized with focused disciplinary coursework rather than the research design and analysis “core courses” presently required.

ECO 601 – Research Concepts, 3 cr. (replace with concentration course)
ECO 602 – Analysis of Environmental Data, 3 cr. (replace with concentration course)
ECO 691A – Departmental Seminar, 1cr. x 2. (reduce required enrollment to one term)

3. Eliminating the requirement for a practicum/internship, the publishable professional paper and final defense of the paper for the professional (non-thesis) program and making it optional for specific students makes our program more competitive with other existing programs at our peer institutions. While students find value in co-op internship experiences, and these will continue to be encouraged, we do not have a capacity to place students in these positions, and seeking out such positions further delays student degree progress.

Collaborations with federal agencies (such as US Fish & Wildlife) have provided us with a local partner for graduate student externships in the past– but the availability of such positions has diminished significantly in recent years, and we are unable to guarantee students placement while they are working on their degree program. To be competitive, we need to eliminate this requirement.

These proposed changes were discussed at the department faculty meeting and a majority of faculty are in support of these changes.
Table 1. Current requirements and proposed changes to the professional and research components of the Masters degree in Environmental Conservation.

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<th>MS Professional</th>
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<td>Current</td>
<td>Proposed</td>
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<td>Practicum/Thesis</td>
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<td>0 credits &amp; the publishable professional paper is optional</td>
<td>12 Credits</td>
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<td>Core Courses</td>
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<td>ECO 601 (3cr)</td>
<td>ECo 691A (1 cr X 1 semester)</td>
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<td>ECO 691A (1 cr X 2 semesters)</td>
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<td>Core Topic Areas</td>
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<td>Min 29 credits</td>
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MOTION: That the Faculty Senate approve the Revision to a Degree Program: Environmental Conservation, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 18-075.