



**Department of
Higher Education**

John R. Kasich, Governor
John Carey, Chancellor

**INITIAL INQUIRY
REQUEST TO OFFER A NEW PROGRAM**

Date of submission: *Date to come*

Name of institution: Kent State University

Primary institutional contact for this request:

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Name of new program: Environmental Studies major within the Bachelor of Arts degree

- New degree designation
 New program within an existing degree (e.g., major, minor, concentration)
 New technical certificate program
 New licensure/endorsement area (educator preparation)

Delivery options (check all that apply):

- Campus-based
 Online/hybrid delivery
 Flexible or accelerated delivery
 Offering the program at a new offsite location
 Offering the program at an existing offsite location
 Program contains off-campus experiences (e.g., internship, clinical, practicum, student teaching)

The institution will be seeking specialized accreditation for the program:

- No Yes

Provide a brief description of the request.

Kent State University proposes to create a Bachelor of Arts degree in Environmental Studies. The Environmental Studies major will be interdisciplinary, involving the areas of biology, geology, sociology, geography, economics, anthropology and, political science, among others. Students in the major will develop a set of key competencies in earth systems science, environmental social science, human-natural systems and sustainability science.

Explain the academic unit's rationale for making the request.

The Environmental Studies major will appeal to undergraduate students who want to make a difference in the environment; take on environmental challenges that face every business, agency and institution; and seek to be stewards of the earth's natural resources.

Between 2008 and 2012, the number of undergraduate environmental and sustainability programs grew by 57 percent at colleges and universities across the country. Data showed that specifically environmental *studies* programs have been growing faster than interdisciplinary environmental programs (which would include programs in environmental *sciences*) as a whole.¹ This growth expresses a popular demand for such a major among the student body as a whole. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Kent State students would also like to have such a major offered. The full proposal will provide more substantive evidence of this prospective demand.

The increase in demand for interdisciplinary environmental and sustainability education is aligned with strong job opportunities for graduates. A 2008 study² identified the size of the environmental protection industry corresponded to 2.9 to 4.9 percent of total jobs nationwide. The study estimated that environmental jobs in the state of Ohio at between 170,000 and 287,000 by the year 2020. To put this in perspective, employment occupations by the year 2020 in the Ohio health care industry (practitioners, technical and support) is projected to be at 680,000, and in Ohio's protective services (e.g., fire, police) to be at 120,000.³ The study also found that the environmental sector is more resilient or "recession-proof" in economic downturns.

Kent State presently offers discipline-specific environmental-focus concentrations at the baccalaureate level in biology, geology, geography and public health. The proposed Environmental Studies major will be distinct from those programs in three specific ways:

- (1) Environmental Studies will involve a strong natural scientific base, but will be primarily anchored within the social sciences and the human dimensions of environmental problem domains.
- (2) Environmental Studies will be a true interdisciplinary major, drawing from several existing academic disciplines.
- (3) Environmental Studies, itself, is a brand name, well recognized by students who enter college interested in studying different aspects of the environment and working towards a degree that will provide curricular flexibility and strong job prospects as environmental planners, analysts and policy-makers in conservation, corporations or the public sector, as well as preparation for graduate studies in such areas as business, education or law.

Indicate whether additional faculty and staff will be needed to support the proposed request.

The Environmental Studies will be administered by the Department of Geography in the College of Arts and Sciences with collaboration with faculty across the university. The proposed curriculum will comprise three new courses dedicated to the major (and will satisfy writing and experiential requirement, as well as a culminating senior project) and existing courses offered from departments across the university and used for other degree programs.

As such, it is anticipated that the major can be supported with existing faculty and staff.

¹ Information provided by the Center for Environmental Education Research. Retrieved from www.ncseonline.org/education-research-program-0.

² Bezdek, R. H.; Wendling, R. M.; DiPerna, P. (January 2008). Environmental protection, the economy, and jobs: National and regional analyses. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 86(1) 63-79. Retrieved from www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S030147970600380X.

³ Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (December 2012). Ohio Occupational Employment Projections Report, 2010-2020. Retrieved from <http://ohiolmi.com/proj/projections/ohio/Ohio2020.pdf>.