Environmental Studies Department Meeting
26 September 2014

New Science Museum

*1) What are the strengths of your department/program? What do you already do well?  Remember that these responses will be shared with the community at large, so please use this opportunity to brag a little bit.  What do you want people outside your department/program to know about your successes and strengths?*

-Writing intensive. Many writing requirements, preparation for thesis, original content, research, poster session presentation (all students)

-serving a large number of majors with a relatively small number of faculty

-Emphasis on interdisciplinary research

-Thesis must be interdisciplinary and must “solve a problem”

-Internships required (E.L.)

-Partnership with the Arboretum

-Summer undergrad research

-Collective long-term role in promoting campus stewardship and sustainability

*2) What do you wish you could do better, or do more of?  What would it take (resources, support, etc.) for you to reach those goals?*

-More field work for students and a field course during summer (3-week May term)

-Reach more non-majors

-Students don’t take our classes because they are interdisciplinary and don’t count for common curriculum mojo (“we got screwed by the common curriculum”) except for one gender course and one NS course.

-The intro course is always full--multiple sections are usually filled each year

-We are not able to offer any upper division common curriculum courses

-We are not able to staff an FYS or ECS

-All ES faculty would like to teach in the CC if time/load allowed (not enough FTEs)

-If we had more staff we would offer a broader range of classes and would have more stability in course offerings.

-We have no control over cross-listed classes (when they are offered, regularity, predictability) so it is difficult to schedule majors. We are working with other departments on scheduling but it remains a challenge.

*3) Leaving aside discipline specific knowledge, in what ways does your department/program best contribute to providing our students with a liberal education for their lives beyond college, as informed and engaged citizens, productive employees, ethical beings, etc.?*

-Writing focus
-Students don’t major in environmental studies without being engaged citizens

-Specific emphasis on critical reading and critical consumption of information

-Post evaluations on internships (world-wide in scope 30+ internships/year) show our students to be engaged, curious, and articulate.

-This interdisciplinary degree serves our students well because it doesn’t lead to a specific job—it does prepare them for success in a range of entry-level positions and graduate school. It is a true liberal arts degree.

-Interdisciplinary programs like ours epitomize liberal education—real-world problems are not discipline specific.

-Students have to focus on problem solving.

*4) Are there ways in which you would like to see your department/program contribute to liberal education that so far it has not been able to?*

-Rooftop garden: a dedicated green building like many of our aspirant programs feature, some of which include rooftop gardens but all of which are designed so the building itself is a teaching tool. We (institutionally) lack that sort of opportunity.

-We would like to be able to teach FYS and ECS

-In addition to FYS and ECS, we would like to teach upper-division common curriculum electives that would offer the chance to engage junior/senior non-majors.

-We would like to find ways to assist students in civic engagement—how to take a leadership role---how to operationalize their values. Civic engagement comes in many stripes, not that many of our students appear to be interested in politics, per se, but are rather drawn to be change agents in other ways…we need to equip them for that work.