

Program Suspension Proposal: B.S. in Forest Ecosystem Science.

Summary: The B.S. degree in Forest Ecosystem Science (FES) is offered through the School of Forest Resources (SFOR). This degree is one of five separate degree programs offered by the School. Enrollment in FES has been low. Students with an interest in the science of forest ecosystems can pursue a degree concentration within the interdisciplinary B.S. in Ecology and Environmental Science (EES) program. NSFSA proposes to suspend the B.S. degree in Forest Ecosystem Science, while we proceed with plans to eliminate this degree offering.

Rationale for suspension of program: The B.S. degree in Forest Ecosystem Science is one of five separate degree programs offered by the School of Forest Resources. The variety of degrees reflects the fact that two departments merged less than five years ago to form the School of Forest Resources and both former units had separate degree programs. The FES degree program has been characterized by low enrollment. Enrollment over the past five years averaged 14 students and remained fairly steady. Since AY 05-06, we have typically conferred three degrees per year (Table 1. Five year summary of enrollment and degrees conferred).

Table 1. BS Degree in Forest Ecosystem Science: Enrollment in program and number of degrees conferred annually from AY 2005 – 2006 to present:

<u>Academic year</u>	<u>Fall enrollment count</u>	<u>No. degrees conferred</u>
AY 2005 – 2006	12	2
AY 2006 – 2007	14	2
AY 2007 – 2008	17	6
AY 2008 – 2009	14	3
AY 2009 – 2010	15	2
Five year average	14	3

It is difficult to justify offering a separate degree option for this small number of students. Therefore, we propose to suspend the B.S. in FES while investigating alternative options. One such alternative has been established within the interdisciplinary Ecology and Environmental Science program. The Bachelor of Science in EES has a concentration in Forest Ecosystem Science. This concentration is designed to provide students with the breadth and depth of understanding required to become active participants in promoting the sustainability of our forests in the future. The Forest Ecosystem Science concentration outlines a program that will make students highly competitive for graduate studies in such areas as forest ecology, silviculture, forest health, or tree physiology. I believe it is more appropriate to educate students through this option than through the B.S. in FES.

Relationship of the program suspension to institutional mission: The FES concentration is a partner to the long established Forestry Program at the University of Maine. While the Forestry Program focuses on the management of forests, the FES concentration in EES emphasizes the biology and conservation of forest ecosystems from the molecular to the biosphere level. Other program options include the declaration of academic minors in such areas as biology, botany,

environmental management & policy, fisheries, forest products, forest recreation management, geological sciences, plant science, soil science, surveying, or zoology.

Suspension of the B.S. degree will not impact our current efforts in forestry research or public service. The University maintains active research programs in forest resources.

Assignment of faculty during the suspension period: Faculty having expertise in forest ecosystem science will continue to deliver courses on this topic. These courses contribute to the fulfillment of degree requirements in the other degree programs within the School of Forest Resources and also contribute to the Ecology and Environmental Science interdisciplinary degree program. Suspension of the B.S. degree in Forest Ecosystem Science is not linked to the elimination of any current personnel.

Impact of the program suspension on students: Students currently enrolled in the B.S. in Forest Ecosystem Science will have the option of completing their degree or transferring to the FES concentration within the B.S. in Ecology and Environmental Science degree program.

Timetable for program suspension: We wish to suspend admission to the B. S. in Forest Ecosystem Science degree program immediately. The program would remain suspended until the proposal to eliminate the degree is prepared, reviewed and evaluated. We expect those later steps to be completed in less than one calendar year.

Input obtained from meeting and discussion with the appropriate faculty and AFUM: The faculty of SFOR has been concerned with the low enrollment in several of their programs. In response to that concern, a concentration within the EES degree program was developed as an alternative. The SFOR faculty fully supports this action.

Respectfully submitted,

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