



Spring 2007 Newsletter

Message from the Director

This has been a year of great positive (even transformational) changes for the Environmental Studies Program. Most importantly has been the arrival of new faculty and staff. In the fall semester, we carried out a search for a second full-time faculty member in Environmental Studies. The focus of the position is environmental policy and politics. We received over one hundred applications and brought five finalists to campus for interviews. The hiring committee unanimously selected Glenn Fieldman, a longtime lecturer in both International Relations and Environmental Studies. Glenn actually participated in the founding of our program seven years ago. Her outstanding teaching, research on the politics of climate change, and passionate interest in working to change U.S. climate policy will be great contributions to our program. She has already begun working on a number of projects including “Focus the Nation,” a national teach-in on climate change, scheduled for January 2008. I would like to thank Sheldon Gen, John Hafernik, and Melissa Nelson for all their great work on the search committee.



The second addition is Courtney Rump, our new Office Coordinator. Courtney’s hard work, many talents, and enthusiasm are helping transform the program's infrastructure - the seldom noticed but critical things, such as up-to-date student e-mail lists, a functioning system for sending out job notices, etc. that make a big difference. See below for an interview with Courtney, and see the Spring ‘06 newsletter for an interview with Glenn.

As always, a small interdisciplinary program owes its functioning to the help of faculty in many other departments. I would like to thank our concentration advisors: Nancy (Sami) Reist, Barbara Holzman, Dean Joel Kassiola, Raquel Pinderhughes; and our steering committee members: all the concentration advisors plus Jamie Kooser, John Hafernik, Sheldon Gen, Melissa Nelson, and student representative Yussef Milburn, for all their hard work and support. Karen Grove and Pete Palmer have just joined as advisers. I would also like to thank a number of students: Woody Hastings, our new student assistant, Helia Rasti and alum Jessica Tovar for their work on our environmental leadership training, and Suzanne McNulty for organizing two environmental career nights.

Thank you, Carlos Davidson

News & Events

Awards and Honors

This was the first year that the Environmental Studies Program awarded the George Feliz Memorial Scholarship. George Feliz was an Economics professor on campus from 1946 to 1975, and SFSU's first dean of graduate studies. Feliz was instrumental in helping San Francisco State evolve from a teacher's college to a university. Professor Feliz donated an endowment fund to support a scholarship for Environmental Studies majors with financial need. Applications for the Feliz scholarship are accepted early each fall semester. This year's award went to Casey Batchelder, a junior in the NRMC concentration. After graduating, Casey wants to teach people ways to conserve and live a sustainable life. Casey is currently studying abroad in New Zealand.



Each year the program selects an honoree for the Honors Convocation. The selection is based in part on GPA, and also on extra extracurricular activities, particularly environmental work. This year's honoree is Yvette Michaud, who had a near perfect GPA and has done outstanding work with Eco Students.

Congratulations to Casey, Yvette and our 31 graduates this year. And thanks to faculty who participated in the awards selection process: Barbara Holzman, Gretchen LeBuhn, Sami Reist, Jerry Davis, Leonard Sklar, and Jane DeWitt.

New Staff

An interview with Courtney Rump, ENVS Office Coordinator

Courtney is a 1½ year resident of San Francisco, having recently lived in Tahoe where she spent a summer working with the Tahoe International Film Festival. She grew up in the fine state of Minnesota, and attended college in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where she earned a degree in Philosophy. She is planning to take graduate courses here at SFSU next spring.

You've been on the job as Office Coordinator for ENVS for about three months now; how do you like it so far?



So far, so good! Everyone I work with here has been great, and the students haven't been too demanding (yet). I enjoy being in the dynamic campus environment and I love having an office with lots of windows.

What are your top three priorities and/or goals for the ENVS Department?

To keep the department running smoothly, to keep everyone well informed of department-related issues as well as local and global environmental issues, and to see students active and involved in both department activities and in local and global issues.

What kind of services or opportunities do you have to offer for students or faculty?

For students, I am here to provide information related to both the program and to the university. They can come see me if they need to change or add a major, drop a class, substitute a class, add a class, find out faculty office hours or contact information, find out what classes will be offered next semester, the list goes on and on. I am also the one sending out all that email twice a week, keeping them informed about jobs, internships, events, and other environmental information. In the past Carlos has handled most of these things, and while many of them still require his final signature, I now serve as the first point of contact. Plus, I love getting visitors, so come by any afternoon (our new office is in HSS 336).

For faculty, I am here to make copies of handouts or exams and order supplies. I handle reimbursements, scheduling, updating the website, and probably a lot more that hasn't even come up yet, so don't hesitate to ask.

Faculty Spotlight

Interviews and News on Faculty Participating in the ENVS Program

An Interview with Nancy “Sami” Reist, Professor Broadcast & Electronic Communication

Sami Reist has produced environmental news features for public radio, created environmental education websites, and is currently conducting research about environmental communication. She has also published articles on popular music and sound recording technology. Reist has been responsible for a number of curriculum innovations in Broadcast & Electronic Communication (BECA), including courses in interactive media and environmental communication.

Tell us about your work on curriculum in BECA

Although my graduate work was all in media and communication, I got my undergraduate degree in Wildlife Management at Humboldt State. I worked as a wildlife biologist in Alaska for a couple of field seasons and really loved it, but I also really enjoyed working in radio. I produced a series of radio pieces about endangered species and quickly realized that it can be very challenging to convey complex scientific information through the media. I began to study communication with an emphasis in the broadcast media and ultimately ended up teaching radio and multimedia classes here in the BECA department at SFSU. I maintained my interest in environmental communication and hounded my chair, until ten years ago he let me design a class about environmental issues and the broadcast media. That was the beginning of BECA 502.

How do you see the emerging communications technologies that allow for greater interactivity affecting environmental studies and/or efforts to address environmental problems?

To be honest, I have mixed feelings about this. Although I am an acknowledged tech addict, I think it's important to recognize the down sides: much of this technology is very toxic and time spent in front computers is extremely hard on the human body. On the other hand, we face some grave social and

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environmental problems, which I believe can only be addressed if and when people recognize how inter-related we all are. I think the nonlinear aspect of the newer communication technologies has the potential to bridge some barriers to this. They also make it possible for people with fewer resources to disseminate their ideas more effectively than they could in the past. So I have to hope that the good will outweigh the bad!

You have some wonderful elephant seal vocalizations that you recorded posted on the CA State Parks website (parks.ca.gov) Can you tell me about that experience?

I recorded those sounds as part of a website about elephant seals that I designed several years ago. The majority of the recording was done at Año Nuevo in the early morning and early evening hours when the park was closed. We worked with one of the rangers there, who was also interested in developing a website for the park. I recorded audio and took still photos, while one of my students recorded video. I have always loved sound, and an elephant seal colony during breeding season creates the most superb cacophony you can imagine. One place we recorded there is a beautiful symphony of frogs blended with the seals. I think that's my favorite tape.

It was the early days of the Internet, so I was exploring how one might effectively integrate multimedia into educational web sites. I had a web site called Sounds of Science which used images and sound to illustrate environmental education stories. The elephant seal segment was probably my favorite. I'm actually working on a new segment featuring cranes. Their calls are quite impressive as well.

"Counting Stars by Candlelight" is a line from the Grateful Dead song "Terrapin Station." It's also the title of an article you wrote about the "mythical appeal" of the Grateful Dead. Where or how do you place music, and particularly culturally influential musical subcultures, into the larger framework of the environmental movement?

This is actually a pretty complex topic and I could talk about it for a long time. The central point is that music has been an extremely important force in society for millennia. It is one of the more powerful pulls on our emotions, so it can be very effective at fostering community and building commitment to a cause. I think it also can move someone to action when they already believe something is true, but aren't sufficiently motivated to act. Thus, I believe music (and other forms of art as well) plays a significant, and often underappreciated, role in most social movements.

Sami Reist is a professor for Broadcast & Electronic Communication, and serves as the advisor for the Humanities and the Environment concentration in Environmental Studies. She can be reached at sami@sfsu.edu.

Faculty News

Jerry Davis

Associate Professor of Geography and Human Environmental Studies

Davis directs a multidisciplinary watershed research program focusing on coastal streams and Sierran meadows. In the San Pedro Creek watershed in Pacifica, projects have included sediment source analysis documenting the extent and causes of fine sediment runoff into streams from impervious surfaces, gullies, and landslides; contrasting background and urbanized hydrologic stream response to rainfall

events; stream channel geomorphic assessments; and microbial source tracking of *E. coli*. He has recently been named the academic sector representative to the California Geographic Information Science Council and the primary CSU delegate to the University Consortium for Geographic Information Science. He teaches Landforms, Soils, Watershed Assessment and Restoration, and GIS for Environmental Analysis. At the SFSU Field Campus, he teaches Watershed Analysis & Restoration Using Fluvial Geomorphology (7-14 July).

Jerry Davis can be reached at jerry@sfsu.edu.

Peter Palmer

Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry



Pete Palmer, professor of analytical-environmental chemistry, is working with SFSU undergraduate students and the FDA on a variety of forensic applications using a field portable X-ray fluorescence analyzer. This device can detect most elements in the periodic table down to part-per-million levels in less than a minute. Current applications include screening for toxics in Ayurvedic and Chinese herbal medications, detecting arsenic and mercury contamination on museum artifacts, and iron in baby formula.

Palmer is a technical advisor for the ongoing remediation efforts at the Hunters Point Shipyard in San Francisco which has widespread radioactive contamination, toxic metals, and PCBs. He is on the Restoration Advisory Board which is in the process of evaluating the feasibility of remediation for the site. The area, one of the poorest in the city, has long been the subject of environmental justice struggles, re-development efforts, and most recently a possible site for a new 49ers stadium.

Peter Palmer can be reached at palmer@sfsu.edu

Call to Action

You Can Help To “FOCUS THE NATION” On Climate Change

Efforts to cut greenhouse emissions are finally taking off in California and some other parts of the country. And the U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled that carbon dioxide is a pollutant—thus clearing the way for federal regulation. But the enormous effort to reduce greenhouse emissions by as much as 80 within a few decades has just begun, and as yet the federal government has still taken no regulatory action.

In January 2008, colleges and universities across the country will hold coordinated teach-ins to “Focus the Nation” on climate change. At SFSU we will host an educational and action-oriented event for the campus and the community that will involve students, faculty, staff, and administration. Please consider being part of it—not just as a “consumer” but as a PARTICIPANT. There are decisions to be made and much to do. You can let Glenn Fieldman of ENVIS know that you’re interested by e-mailing her at glenn@sfsu.edu. Everyone is welcome!

News on Current Students and Alums

Yvette Michaud (ESSJ)

Yvette is this year's Departmental Honoree and vice president of San Francisco State's ECO Students. She was co-chair of the organizing committee for the 2007 Redefining Wilderness Symposium and worked with the Cesar Chavez Student Center to implement composting. In 2006, Yvette interned in San Francisco's Department of the Environment and trained as a naturalist for Acorn Soup, an environmental education organization. She has a strong interest in cultivating sustainability and community in the urban environment through sustainable food systems and waste management practices, reducing toxics, and greening and restoring the urban landscape. Before coming to SFSU, Yvette spent 13 years as a technical pattern designer in the fashion industry and continues to make patterns for local San Francisco designers.

Lawrence Torres (NRMC fall 2006)

Lawrence is a Project Officer for the US EPA in San Francisco in the two-year Federal Career Intern Program. He assists state and tribal governments with the development and management of their pesticide programs, offering technical assistance for programs such as Worker Protection Safety, Ground and Surface Water, Endangered Species, and Enforcement. He hopes to continue working at EPA, and attend graduate school.



ECO Students Update

ECO Students has worked hard this year to tackle some big projects. Most notably was the Redefining Wilderness Symposium that took place in the Cesar Chavez center in April. After a year of planning in collaboration with other Bay Area environmental groups the symposium kicked off two days of insightful and stimulating dialogue with a wide array of panelists concerning the definition, place, and importance of wilderness in our lives. Take a peek at <http://www.bawt.org/symposium/> and look out for next year!

The highly acclaimed composting project in the Cesar Chavez Center has entered into Phase Two. Every restaurant in the center is composting their scraps behind the counter and starting April 18th students are now be able to divert their organic waste into the lovely green receptacles. Conservative estimates say 70% of the waste will be used for farmers rather than landfills! Stay tuned for upcoming projects in the movement towards a sustainable SFSU.