

1-1-2011

# Academic Learning Compact : M. S. Environmental Science and Policy [Effective 2011]

University of South Florida St. Petersburg.

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## Recommended Citation

University of South Florida St. Petersburg, "Academic Learning Compact : M. S. Environmental Science and Policy [Effective 2011]" (2011). *Institutional Research: Academic Learning Compacts*. 91.  
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## Academic Learning Compacts M.S. Environmental Science & Policy

2011 – 2012  
Due: May, 2012

In 2004, the Florida Board of Governors resolved that universities, through their boards of trustees, would establish guidelines and procedures for the development and implementation of Academic Learning Compacts (ALCs) to ensure student achievement in baccalaureate degree programs in the State University System. In support of ongoing SACS Accreditation, at USFSP, ALCs are used for both undergraduate and graduate programs and include assessment of student learning in: content/discipline skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills, and civic engagement.

On an annual basis, academic programs must update their ALCs to reflect ongoing data collection activity, use of results for improvement, and ongoing monitoring of the impact of changes made from previous assessment. The beginning of the review cycle for the upcoming year must reflect any new goals/objectives, changes in performance standards to meet those goals/objectives, and changes in collection tools/methods for the upcoming year. The cycle ends with year-end review of ALCs.

The Planning, Effectiveness and Budget Committee (PEBC) is responsible for coordinating the overall university ALC review process and compiling results for use by each of the college deans. The Office of Institutional Research provides staff support to the PEBC in their annual review of ALCs.

It is the responsibility of college deans to initiate and coordinate conversations with their academic program faculty to: 1) provide a summary statement about their academic program performance over the previous year including high points and low points; 2) provide a summary statement of changes that were made as a result of ongoing assessment and the positive/negative impact of the changes that were made; 3) complete the ALCs for the previous year; 4) update the ALC for use in the upcoming year; and 5) obtain appropriate sign-off by their respective dean.

It is the responsibility of each dean to: 1) provide a summary statement about the performance of the academic programs in their college over the previous year including high points and low points; 2) provide a summary statement of changes that were made as a

result of ongoing assessment and the positive/negative impact of the changes that were made; and 3) develop a matrix of academic program goals/objectives that are aligned with college goals/objectives.

With the exception of cover/signature pages, materials should be submitted electronically to either the Institutional Effectiveness folder on the Q-drive or should be attached to an email sent to [jegon@usfsp.edu](mailto:jegon@usfsp.edu). Paper copies of ALCs will be maintained in the IR Office.

Signature Page for College

College:

Dean: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Summary Statement – College Performance in 2011-12

Provide a summary statement about college performance over the previous year including high points and low points.

**TO BE COMPLETED BY COLLEGE DEAN**

### Summary Statement – Impact of Changes Made in 2011-12

Provide a summary statement about changes that were made in your college as a result of ongoing assessment in 2009-10 and the positive/negative impact of the changes that were made.

**TO BE COMPLETED BY COLLEGE DEAN**

## ALC Updates 2011 – 2012

### University Mission

The University of South Florida St. Petersburg offers distinctive graduate and undergraduate programs in the arts and sciences, business, and education within a close-knit, student-centered learning community that welcomes individuals from the region, state, nation and world. We conduct wide-ranging, collaborative research to meet society's needs and engage in service projects and partnerships to enhance the university and community's social, economic and intellectual life. As an integral and complementary part of a multi-institutional system, USF St. Petersburg retains a separate identity and mission while contributing to and benefiting from the associations, cooperation, and shared resources of a premier national research university.

### College Link to Institutional Mission-based Goals/Objectives

On the list below, please identify the Strategic Goals and Objectives (Points of Focus, 2009 – 13) that your division is responsible for. A detailed listing of Goals and Objectives are found in Attachment 1.

#### **TO BE COMPLETED BY COLLEGE DEAN**

1. Academic Performance:

\_ 1.1      \_ 1.2      \_ 1.3      \_ 1.4      \_ 1.5

2. Student Engagement:

\_ 2.1      \_ 2.2      \_ 2.3

3. Diversity and Inclusion:

\_ 3.1      \_ 3.2      \_ 3.3

4. Research and Creative Activities:

\_ 4.1      \_ 4.2      \_ 4.3

5. Environmental Stewardship

\_ 5.1      \_ 5.2

6. Administrative and Financial Stewardship

\_ 6.1      \_ 6.2            \_ 6.3            \_ 6.4            \_ 6.5

## ALC Updates 2011 – 2012

### College Mission Statement

Please include the Mission Statement and Goals/Objectives for your College and/or the URL to the location of this information on the web.

**TO BE COMPLETED BY COLLEGE DEAN**

### Academic Program-linked College Mission-based Goals/Objectives

Please develop a matrix of Goals/Objectives for each academic program in your college that aligns with institutional mission-based goals/objectives. Also, please develop and use a consistent nomenclature for goals/objectives in your materials.

**TO BE COMPLETED BY COLLEGE DEAN**

Please complete one ALC matrix for each of the academic programs in your college

Signature Page for Academic Program

Academic Program:           ESPG Graduate Program  
Chair/Coordinator:       Drs. Henry Alegria/ Barnali Dixon

Date:

### Summary Statement – Academic Program Performance in 2011-12

Provide a summary statement about academic program performance over the previous year including high points and low points.

**The ESPG graduate program admitted 5 graduate students during Fall 11-Spring 2012. During this time period, the program also graduated 6 Masters students with thesis. 4 more are scheduled to be defended during the summer of 2012. The thesis topics are posted at the website located at [http://www.usfsp.edu/coas/espg/gradprogram/p\\_students.htm](http://www.usfsp.edu/coas/espg/gradprogram/p_students.htm). All students passed their oral defense on their first attempt. One student didn't pass the written thesis in Fall 2011 (hence has not graduated). The ESPG graduate program administers comprehensive examinations twice a year (Spring and Fall). During Fall of 2011, 7 students attempted the comprehensive examinations and 1 of them took her comps for the second time. During Fall of 2010, ESPG restructured the Seminar in Environmental Science Core classes to require students to write thesis proposals. This modification was instituted to ensure that students are on the right track and will be able to complete their thesis proposals. This was followed in Fall 2011 also. Some of the incoming graduate students (Fall 2010 or summer 2010 admits) are scheduled to defend their theses this summer (2012). It seems like our plan worked. Having them get started to write proposal early on (during their first semester for the Fall admits) kept them on track for graduation. This year was reasonably productive for the program as evidenced in the number of successful graduations. The employment status for our graduates is posted on the website listed above.**

**During late Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 we started to enroll for students who will start in Fall 2012. One major issue we have seen with our potential students is lack of faculty with Ecology/ Conservation Biology background who are willing to take on new students. We currently could NOT offer any new thesis supervision with a Conservation Biology or Ecology focus, therefore, we could not admit several students who wished to apply to the graduate program. In addition, some of the students whom we admitted chose other institutions (happy to provide any email documentation) because we could NOT find them adviser with an Ecology or Conservation focus. Current affiliated biologists are NOT taking any new masters students (will be happy to provide documentation), hence we are limited in our ability to recruit graduate students as we are unable to offer them the opportunity to pursue a thesis in the area of Ecology/Conservation Biology. A significant percentage of the incoming ESP students want to get their degree in ESP but want to focus on Conservation and Ecology (one of the three major pillar of the discipline of**

Environmental Science, indeed this provided the base for the Environmental Science). Further, creation of the new Biology Department reduced opportunities for ESP students to acquire TAs, which also impacts us negatively because TAship is the main way to support our students. The Department of Biology indicated that they will make all decisions to hire Bio TAs and their position will be open to Florida Studies students and College of Marine Science (CMS) – I will be glad to provide any documentation, if needed. Although this may make a lot of sense for the Bio Program (getting PhD students from Tampa’s Marine Sciences Program to be TAs), it hardly makes sense for ESP grad students. Now we have lost many of the Bio labs that were always taught by ESP graduate students (when they were part of the ESP program). Further, it makes little institutional budgetary sense to fund CMS students and NOT fund ESP students, which indeed helps us recruit and retain graduate students for this program. ESP proposed a comprehensive streamlining of the process and development of a MOU between BIO and ESP to have win-win situation for growing both the ESP grad program and the Bio program for USFSP – which has not gain much momentum. So the low point for the ESP program is not having faculty who are willing to supervise MS thesis with Conservation Biology and Ecology Focus and reduced number of TAship via Bio TAs to our potential students. This may affect our recruitment in the future. Further, currently, we have only one policy person, who will be leaving soon, hence we don’t have anyone who could potentially supervise incoming students. Even if this person is replaced with a tenure-track line it is really not enough to have a single person for the Policy area of ESP.

### Summary Statement – Impact of Changes Made in 2011-12

Provide a summary statement about changes that were made in your program as a result of ongoing assessment in 2009-10 and the positive/negative impact of the changes that were made.

No significant change was instituted during Fall 2011 and Spring 2012. However, a major curriculum revision is underway. During Spring 2011 an external review of the program was conducted and recommendations from this review will be incorporated during upcoming years. Following the external review recommendation, this program submitted a new proposal to start a MA in Environmental Science. This degree will be non-thesis option ONLY. This should be in the books for Fall 2012 and we will start recruiting for this degree once all necessary paperwork is finalized and it is in the catalog. We will need to hire the Policy line as well as we have to ensure that we could offer thesis supervision in the field of Ecology and Conservation.

# Academic Learning Compacts: 2011 – 2012

“... to ensure student achievement in undergraduate and graduate degree programs ...”

**Academic Program: ESP Grad Program**

**Person Responsible: Dr. Barnali Dixon**

<p><b>Mission of Academic Program (include URL):</b>  <a href="http://www.usfsp.edu/coas/espg/gradprogram/index.htm">http://www.usfsp.edu/coas/espg/gradprogram/index.htm</a></p>				
<p><b>List Program Goal(s) / Objective(s):</b>  <b>Program Goals / Objectives must be mapped to College Goals / Objectives – use consistent nomenclature.</b>  <small>[Please note impact of any changes that were made as a result of 2010-11 assessment]</small>                  ALCs must address student learning in three areas: 1. Content/Discipline Skills; 2. Communication Skills; and Critical Thinking Skills.</p>				
<p><b>1. Content/Discipline Skills</b></p>				
Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2012-13
<p>1a. <i>Graduate students will demonstrate proficiency in statistical methods and use of statistical programming software in presenting, analyzing, interpreting and decision making concerning scientific data of real world problems</i></p>	<p>The final exam for STA 5166 consists of two parts. In the first part students have to explain the data from descriptive statistic given. They have to explain the statistical structure of the data. In the second part they use statistical software to analyze the data and make recommendations based on their findings. Demonstration of statistical competency on statistics portion of comprehensive exam.</p>	<p>We want all students to earn at least a 70% on the final exam in STA 5166. Students need to score 70% or higher on comprehensive exam stats section to show proficiency in statistics</p>	<p>In fall 2011, seven students took the comps in STATS and four (57%) passed it. The other three had conditional passes and successfully met the conditions in fall 2011.</p> <p>Of the six students that took STA 5166 spring 2012, two (33%) met the passing mark of the final exam.</p> <p>No one took COMPS in Spring 2012</p>	<p>Need to find new creative ways for the students to do more practice at home. I gave problems but if it is not graded they don't do it.</p>

	Competency demonstrated by passing exams.			
<p><i>1b. Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues in environmental science, especially as they pertain to human interactions with natural ecosystems, and how scientists have documented and reported those interactions as well as proposed future research to better understand and manage those same anthropogenic changes</i></p>	<p>The final grade for EVR 6936 (Seminar in Environmental Science) taught during Fall of 2011 is comprised of 30% from Research Proposal (written and presentation), 40% from weekly scholarly article review, presentation and summarization, 20% from exams and 10% on short project.</p>	<p>We want all students to earn at least 80% on the research proposal. Students need to score 75% or higher on comprehensive exam to show proficiency in environmental science</p>	<p>In fall 2011, six students took the comps in Environmental Science and all six successfully completed the exam. One student retook the COMPS - had a conditional pass and successfully met the conditions in fall 2011.</p> <p>Of the five students that took EVR 6936 Fall 2011, one earned (90%) and two earned 80% on their research proposal and met the success criteria i.e. 60% of the student met the criteria of earning 80% or more in their research proposal. About 40% of the students in EVR 6936 didn't meet the criteria.</p> <p>No one took COMPS in Spring 2012</p>	<p>We need to give admission to students who are better prepared. I started to work with them from second week onwards to develop the research proposal, however, I found out some students had better idea about their projects than others. Students who had clear idea about their research project were successful. I have created guidelines in a question answer format to help students develop research projects if they don't have one. I will give students this document during the first week of class in Fall 2012</p>

\*Please include multiple assessments. For example: students perform well on classroom assignments, norm-referenced tests/surveys, and they get accepted to graduate school or are employed.

## Academic Learning Compacts: 2011-2012 (Continued)

2. Communication Skills				
Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2012-13
<p>2a. <i>Students will demonstrate an ability to conduct literature research and prepare both written and oral critiques of environmental science or policy research</i></p>	<p>All graduate students are required to take EVR 6936 (Seminar in Environmental Science), and complete a literature review and write a research Proposal. They are also required to present their research proposal in class.</p> <p>Students are also required to complete thesis (written and oral defense) for their degree.</p>	<p>All students in EVR 6936 are required to present their research proposal in class. They have to earn &gt;80% to pass.</p> <p>Students are required to write a thesis and present their work in a public event (including open and closed door defense). The thesis committee will evaluate the success of the thesis.</p>	<p>Of the five students who took EVR 6936, only 3 students earned 80% or greater. Highest grade earned for research presentation was 83%. Lowest grade was 64%. The other student who earned less than 80% earned 69%.</p>	<p>I will have them present their research proposal twice. Currently I had them present once at the end of the semester. In the future, I will have them present once during middle of the semester before their final presentation. Although I will grade the middle of the semester presentation – I will use it as a feedback and not add to their final grade. This intermittent presentation of the proposal will be designed to help them improve their presentation skill.</p>
	<p>All graduate students are required to take EVR 6937 (Seminar in Environmental Policy) and complete 4 section review papers. Each section review paper has</p>	<p>All students in EVR 6937 (Seminar in Environmental Policy) are required to complete 4 section review papers and discuss their critiques of</p>	<p>100% of students in EVR 6937 completed 4 section review papers, discussed their critiques of environmental policy research in class, and earned &gt;80% on each paper to pass.</p>	<p>Current assessments have had successful academic outcomes. Therefore, there are no plans to change the evaluation format.</p>

	a literature review. They are also expected to discuss their papers in class during an open forum.	environmental policy research in class. They have to earn >80% on each paper to pass.	No one took COMPS in Spring 2012. In Fall 2011 comps on Environmental Policy was given to six students. They were all successful in their first attempt.	
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### 3. Critical Thinking Skills

Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2012-13
3a. <i>Students will demonstrate the ability to design and conduct an original program of research in environmental science and policy, which results in a scholarly work of publishable quality</i>	Write a research proposal that provides an introduction to the research question, methodology to be used, and significance of research. Successfully defend the thesis (written and oral)	Thesis research and results presented in a public forum and successfully defended by the student to the satisfaction of the thesis committee members.	3 students successfully defended their thesis during Fall 2011. No one defended thesis during Spring of 2012. However, a few scheduled to defend during summer of 2012. During summer of 2011, 3 students successfully defended their thesis.	In Sp 2011, six student defended their thesis while during Sp 2012 no one has defended. We will work with major professors to increase number of dense during the Spring semester.

### 4. Civic Engagement

Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2012-13
NA	NA	NA	NA	Department will have to discuss strategies for developing goals and methods of assessment in this field for the future

\*Please include multiple assessments. For example: students perform well on classroom assignments, norm-referenced tests/surveys, and they get accepted to graduate school or are employed.

Academic Learning Compacts: 2012 – 2013

*“... to ensure student achievement in undergraduate and graduate degree programs ...”*

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**Academic Program:**

**Person Responsible:**

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1. Content/Discipline Skills				
Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2013-14
1a. <i>Graduate students will demonstrate proficiency in statistical methods and use of statistical programming software in presenting,</i>	The final exam for STA 5166 consists of two parts. In the first part students have to explain the data from descriptive statistic	We want all students to earn at least a 70% on the final exam in STA 5166. Students need to score 70% or higher on		

<p><i>analyzing, interpreting and decision making concerning scientific data of real world problems</i></p>	<p>given. They have to explain the statistical structure of the data. In the second part they use statistical software to analyze the data and make recommendations based on their findings. Demonstration of statistical competency on statistics portion of comprehensive exam. Competency demonstrated by passing exams.</p>	<p>comprehensive exam stats section to show proficiency in statistics</p>		
<p><i>1b. Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues in environmental science, especially as they pertain to human interactions with natural ecosystems, and how scientists have documented and reported those interactions as well as proposed future research to better understand and manage those same anthropogenic changes</i></p>	<p>The final grade for EVR 6936 (Seminar in Environmental Science) taught during Fall of 2011 is comprised of 30% from Research Proposal (written and presentation), 40% from weekly scholarly article review, presentation and summarization, 20% from exams and 10% on short project.</p>	<p>We want all students to earn at least 80% on the research proposal. Students need to score 75% or higher on comprehensive exam to show proficiency in environmental science</p>		

\*Please include multiple assessments. For example: students perform well on classroom assignments, norm-referenced tests/surveys, and they get accepted to graduate school or are employed.

2. Communication Skills				
Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2013-14
<p>2a. <i>Students will demonstrate an ability to conduct literature research and prepare both written and oral critiques of environmental science or policy research</i></p>	<p>All graduate students are required to take EVR 6936 (Seminar in Environmental Science), and complete a literature review and write a research Proposal. They are also required to present their research proposal in class.</p>	<p>All students in EVR 6936 are required to present their research proposal in class. They have to earn &gt;80% to pass.</p>		
	<p>Students are also required to complete thesis (written and oral defense) for their degree.</p>	<p>Students are required to write a thesis and present their work in a public event (including open and closed door defense). The thesis committee will evaluate the success of the thesis.</p>		
	<p>All graduate students are required to take EVR 6937 (Seminar in Environmental Policy) and complete 4 section review papers. Each section review paper has a literature review. They are also expected to</p>	<p>All students in EVR 6937 (Seminar in Environmental Policy) are required to complete 4 section review papers and discuss their critiques of environmental policy research in class. They</p>		

	discuss their papers in class during an open forum.	have to earn >80% on each paper to pass.		

3. Critical Thinking Skills				
Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2013-14
<i>3a. Students will demonstrate the ability to design and conduct an original program of research in environmental science and policy, which results in a scholarly work of publishable quality</i>	Write a research proposal that provides an introduction to the research question, methodology to be used, and significance of research. Successfully defend the thesis (written and oral)	Thesis research and results presented in a public forum and successfully defended by the student to the satisfaction of the thesis committee members.		

4. Civic Engagement:				
Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2013-14

Attachment 1  
USF St. Petersburg  
Strategic Goals and Objectives, 2009-2013

1 – Academic Performance

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Support and enhance programs that prepare students to be knowledgeable, reflective and engaged citizen scholars

- 1.1 Use sustained evidence of student learning outcomes and student achievement for continuous improvement
- 1.2 Offer certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs that meet regional needs
- 1.3 Implement and support information and instructional technologies that facilitate effective pedagogies
- 1.4 Enhance programs that specifically support academic excellence
- 1.5 Increase student awareness of participating in a global society

2 – Student Engagement

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Enhance learning and achievement and promote retention through active engagement in curricular and co-curricular programs

- 2.1 Create a freshman experience that enables students to thrive and move successfully through to graduation
- 2.2 Foster institutional pride and strengthen connections within the campus community
- 2.3 Enhance opportunities for increased student involvement in curricular and co-curricular activities

3 – Diversity and Inclusion

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Create a vibrant, inviting, and enriching university community that values and respects all individuals and whose students, faculty, and staff represent the diversity of its region

- 3.1 Ensure an inclusive community where differences are respected and valued
- 3.2 Attract and retain a diverse student population
- 3.3 Increase the diversity of faculty and staff

4 – Research and Creative Activities

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Encourage faculty research and creative activities, and engage students in local, national and international scholarship

- 4.1 Create a vibrant culture of faculty research and creative scholarship
- 4.2 Promote and support undergraduate research as a meaningful aspect of campus life
- 4.3 Enhance and support research and scholarly collaborations with community partners

#### 5 – Environmental Stewardship

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Foster stewardship of the environment and embody the values of sustainability

- 5.1 Enhance sustainability through energy conservation and recycling
- 5.2 Create a community that champions environmental awareness and sustainable living

#### 6 – Administrative and Financial Stewardship

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Enhance revenue, provide effective and efficient financial management, and ensure institutional sustainability

- 6.1 Create and obtain funding streams to support short and long term initiatives
- 6.2 Increase private and corporate funding
- 6.3 Strengthen academic infrastructure of the university to ensure the proper alignment of instruction, services, and student life
- 6.4 Strengthen institutional infrastructure for the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff
- 6.5 Evaluate and improve facilities and processes that foster services to faculty, students, staff, and the community.