Q&A about the Moratorium of Huxley’s Environmental Education Program’s Master’s in Education Residency track offered in partnership with North Cascades Institute
January 2019

1. What is a program Moratorium?
A Moratorium is a governance tool used to suspend (pause) enrollment of new students into a program. In the case of the Moratorium of the Master’s in Education - Environmental Education (EE) Residency Track offered in partnership with North Cascades Institute, the goal of the moratorium is to provide time to holistically reevaluate and redefine the curriculum and experiences without affecting new students. Any significant, substantive, or transformational changes can therefore be made without causing disruption to students in the program. The process follows procedures described in faculty self-governance documents such as the ones outlined in the Faculty Senate Handbook: https://www.wwu.edu/facultysenate/BB_ACC%20Handbook/ACC_Handbook_2017-10.pdf

2. What was the process that informed this decision?
The parties to Western’s Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) (the Administration and the UFWW union) agree that authority over program curricula lies with faculty. The immediate governing body for this program is the Environmental Education Graduate Program Committee (GPC), as charged by Huxley’s by-laws. The GPC’s decisions are put before the Department of Environmental Studies faculty for a vote. Thereupon, the Huxley Curriculum Committee is notified of the decision, which is reviewed by the WWU Graduate Council, the WWU Academic Coordinating Committee, and the Faculty Senate, which has ultimate review over program and curricular matters.

3. Why was this action taken?
In order to provide an innovative and responsive Master’s in Education program, Huxley College’s EE Program Faculty need to address concerns including curriculum, workload, resources, student experience, governance/transparency, and sustainability. In brief, our work during this moratorium is to design, coordinate, and implement a program that addresses:

A. Curriculum. We need to design our program (the curriculum, flow, and partnerships) to address cutting-edge trends in our field, while updating how we address long-standing needs to which environmental education responds in creative and emergent ways. Please also see: https://provost.wwu.edu/strategic-plan & https://huxley.wwu.edu/diversity/huxley-college-diversity-initiative.

B. Workload. Our program is not sustainable for faculty, staff, or students due to current resources, levels of student enrollment, and curricular goals. The Collective Bargaining Agreement defines faculty workload to include not only teaching (including advising, mentoring, program / curriculum design), but also scholarship (research, creative endeavor, high-quality applied products, and publication in refereed journals), and Service (to department, college, university, profession and community).
C. Student Welfare. We commit to supporting student needs, experience, and welfare so students can thrive in their professional and personal lives. We have heard consistent and increasing concerns from students regarding the structure of the program in regard to both its curricular and co-curricular aspects and the quality and availability of resources.

4. What will happen to Cohort 17 & 18?
Huxley EE faculty are committed to Cohort 17 and Cohort 18 through their entire Master’s experience. These students will have the opportunity to complete their degrees. All of the courses they require to complete their degree will be offered and the EE Program faculty are wholly committed to their intellectual pursuits, on-campus experiences, job-seeking, and future work as colleagues in the field of environmental studies and education, just as we continue to support and value our relationships with our program alumni.

5. Does the Environmental Education Program still have a Master’s in Education
The Moratorium is only placed on the Residency track of the Master’s in Education in EE offered in partnership with North Cascades Institute. Our program will continue to run its campus-based Master’s in Education. You can find more information about that program by visiting this website https://huxley.wwu.edu/med-environmental-education. Our capacity to take new students in this track is limited, especially during this time of transition.

6. What will happen with the EE Program’s relationship with NCI?
NCI has been a valued partner of the Residency program since it began in 2001, and indeed since the Institute’s founding in 1987. There is interest in partnering with NCI and other partner organizations under a new design of the program.

7. What impact will this have on alumni?
No immediate or long-term impacts should affect Residency program alumni. Their Master's degree is conferred by Western Washington University.

8. What will be the process moving forward?
Huxley’s EE Faculty will re-examine program values and assumptions, develop curricular goals, and consider options for program structure. Faculty will abide by Huxley and WWU curriculum change protocols, with the GPC and Department as primary bodies, but also other levels of approval, and the timetable for publication for the University Catalog.

In summary, the moratorium places the program in a “pause” cycle, so faculty have time to adjust and adapt the program to meet the needs of curriculum, workload, students, and governance of the program. If you have questions please contact Dr. Gene Myers, Graduate Program Advisor: Gene.Myers@wwu.edu, phone: (360) 650-4775.

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