

TEN WAYS TO ENHANCE YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES EDUCATION AT UCSB

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THE NO BRAINERS, THINGS YOU MUST DO...

1) Sign Up and Use the *ESmail Listservice* and ES Program Website

Staying in touch with the ES Program is critical. You need to know promptly about internships, job opportunities, guest lectures, special events, and announcements/deadlines regarding valuable scholarships. If you do not want to be the last person to know what is going on in Environmental Studies, then be sure to do the following:

1. Activate your UCSB Umail email account at: <http://www.umail.ucsb.edu> Do this even if you use an “outside” address, as *Umail* is the only email system UCSB uses to officially contact students. You can always set the forward option to send *Umail* messages to another account.
2. Sign up for the ES Program’s email announcement service, *ESmail* at: http://www.es.ucsb.edu/general_info/esmail.php
3. Check your email and read your *ESmail* messages at least once a week.
4. Visit the ES Program’s website regularly as it contains detailed information not provided via *ESmail* messages: <http://www.es.ucsb.edu>

2) Know your Major and Graduation Requirements and visit your Academic or College Advisor at least once a year

You and only you are responsible for making sure all graduation requirements are properly met before you can receive your diploma. Make sure you know the rules and regulations and use your advisors to regularly verify your progress. UCSB advisors are here to help you, but it’s up to you to initiate the contact, make an appointment, and take advantage of their knowledge and expertise.

- Visit the Registrar’s “Path to Graduation” webpage: <http://www.registrar.ucsb.edu/brochure.htm>
- ES major requirement worksheets: http://www.es.ucsb.edu/curriculum_info/worksheet.pdfs.php

3) Go to Class!

Yes, this seems like common sense, but as you may have already experienced, it can be difficult to get up for that 8:00am course three days a week or ditch a class to complete an assignment due later that day. Whatever the reason, the temptation to skip out on lecture is always present. However, it’s to your benefit to go. Regularly

remind yourself that professors are being paid to teach and share their expertise; and you are paying thousands of dollars to gain access to this knowledge. This exchange can only occur when both of you are present in the same room. Another way to think about it is the students sitting next to you in class are ultimately the people you will be competing against for jobs and graduate school admission. If they attend class and you do not, are you giving them an advantage? In the end, if you don't attend class the only person you end up hurting is yourself - so go to class!

THINGS YOU SHOULD STRONGLY CONSIDER COMPLETING...

4) Pursue an Internship(s) and/or a Senior Thesis

By far the most common and often successful experiential opportunity available to any college undergrad is participating in an internship. An internship can be so important to getting a job that many environmental studies alumni cite it as "the most valuable aspect of their undergraduate experience." Often a professional internship can bridge the difficult transition between completion of an undergraduate degree and the environmental job market. Internships provide an opportunity to see if a particular career or environmental industry is what a student really wants to do upon graduating. The skills and experiences a student obtains through interning prove invaluable in securing a job after graduation or being accepted to graduate school. Most importantly, student interns gain valuable experience and prove to themselves and potential employers that they can excel in the professional workplace.

Internships are considered an integral part of the environmental studies and hydrologic sciences curriculum and are fully supported by the faculty. Academic credit (**Env S 192**) is awarded year round through the Environmental Studies Internship Program (ESIP) to junior and senior level students. An extensive internship database as well as general information regarding the Environmental Studies Internship Program is available from one of the advisors in the ES Program or visit the ESIP webpage at: http://www.es.ucsb.edu/student_info/internship.php

The ES Senior Thesis course (**Env S 197**) provides an incredible, rich opportunity to prepare for your future in the environmental career field. While writing a thesis you will develop or enhance your abilities in: conducting detailed research, analyzing and evaluating data, and writing and speaking about your conclusions. Past graduates who completed senior theses report that they become comfortable with: using the library, interacting with professors and professionals, designing and conducting experiments, and time management. They also completed the experience with an enhanced level of self-confidence.

For most ES graduates, the senior thesis modeled a process of inquiry and communication that they now use professionally. Moreover, activities like gathering and analyzing data, planning, and drafting and revising reports mimic many of the workplace responsibilities of ES graduates.

It's fair to say that that a senior thesis requires a tremendous amount of time and work. Students must be self-disciplined and motivated to work independently over multiple quarters. The reward at the end of the process makes all the effort well worth it. The Senior Thesis course (Env S 197) is only open for enrollment once a year, normally during the fall quarter. Interested students should visit the Senior Thesis webpage at http://www.es.ucsb.edu/student_info/honors.php#2 or contact the ES Senior Thesis Coordinator, Dr. Greg Graves at: graves@history.ucsb.edu .

5) Participate in Independent Studies or Faculty Research Projects

UCSB is well known for the breadth of opportunities available to undergraduates for participation in high-level research work. Missing out on undergraduate research is like throwing away the other half of a great education. Think what it can provide:

1. The opportunity to help create new knowledge.
2. The inherent pleasure of learning about investigation and discovery.
3. Teamwork in a close-knit interdisciplinary community.
4. A chance to find out what it's really like to work in an area that interests you.
5. Marketable skills: critical thinking and problem solving, specialized training, leadership.
6. A network of faculty and graduate students who can help open doors to future opportunities.

The Environmental Studies Program offers two distinct ways students may gain research skills while obtaining units that apply towards satisfying major requirements. The Independent Studies course (**Env S 199**) is a variable unit course available every quarter to students who have a specific topic of interest they would like to research in-depth under the supervision of an ES faculty member. The intent of independent studies is to allow an undergrad to investigate a topic (perhaps one briefly mentioned in a course) they would like to learn more about. The ES Program will accommodate any reasonable Independent Studies proposal as long as it has an ES faculty member support and the research to be conducted is “environmental.”

The Research Assistant course (**Env S 199RA**) is similar to Env S 199 except the main focus is to allow a student to obtain academic credit while assisting an ES faculty member in conducting ongoing university research. This is a great way for an undergraduate to pick up research experience and learn more about a specific environmental issue. Interested students should keep their eyes open for advertised 199RA opportunities and don't be afraid to approach an ES faculty member you are interested in working with to inquire about research opportunities.

More information about these courses is available at: http://www.es.ucsb.edu/student_info/eap_ucdc.php#ind or <http://research.ucsb.edu/undergrad>

6) Study Abroad and/or Field Studies Programs

A variety of environmental problems affect our entire planet. As globalization continues and the earth's natural processes transform local problems into international ones, no society is untouched by major environmental problems. Since its inception as an academic unit UCSB's Environmental Studies Program has encouraged students to consider completing some portion of their undergraduate education through an off campus studies program such as the University's Education Abroad Program (EAP), the UC Washington D.C. Program, or the UC Center in Sacramento.

Studying in another city or a foreign university offers an international dimension to an undergraduate education and can deepen a student's understanding of today's environmental problems on a global scale. The built-in flexibility of the ES curriculum allows students to participate in courses, programs, and opportunities that contribute to independent thinking and experiential learning. With careful academic planning and the application of study abroad units towards the ES major's “Outside Concentration” requirement, ES students can have an experience of a lifetime studying abroad with no loss of time completing their degrees.

The ES Program also encourages students to consider pursuing environmental field studies programs and research opportunities beyond the limitations of our own curriculum. The ES Program is proud to be affiliated with a large number of colleges and universities that offer academic credit to students participating in environmentally related field studies projects throughout the world. Field studies experiences differ from traditional education abroad in that the majority of classes are conducted out in the field. Students can experience what it is like to assist researchers track wolves in Montana, study human/ wildlife interactions in the Northern Territory of Australia, or conduct ecological transects in the tropical forests of Thailand. These opportunities offer amazing insight into the world of field research allowing students to explore unique and diverse ecosystems worldwide.

For more on these opportunities visit: http://www.es.ucsb.edu/student_info/fieldstudies.php or UCSB's Education Abroad Program at: <http://www.eap.ucsb.edu>

FROM DAY ONE, NEVER STOP WORKING ON...

7) Get to Know Your Faculty!!!!

Professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants draw on diverse experiences in their fields, making them excellent resources for information about a specific career fields or academic discipline. These people were all undergraduates at one point in their academic career and can identify with the career decisions an undergraduate must make. Most faculty are more than willing to spend their time discussing coursework, career options, as well as offer graduate school advice. So take advantage of them, they are one of the most valuable resources you have while at UCSB.

However, given the proportion of faculty members to undergraduates, it is not practical for each faculty member to get to know every undergraduate. Hence, you must make the effort to meet them. Go to their office hours and introduce yourself. Do not be afraid to ask questions in class or discussion. Most importantly, remember the faculty are here to educate and help prepare you for life after graduation, so take advantage of them while you can.

It is important you get to know the faculty on a personal level from day one. It will pay off in the future when you need career advice or a letter of recommendation for graduate school or a job. The better they know you the better they can sing your praise in their recommendations!

8) Develop A Network of Contacts

According to research from the U.S. Department of Labor, only 5% of people obtained their jobs by responding to "help wanted" ads. 24% landed jobs by contacting employers directly, or "cold calling." An additional 23% used employment agencies, career planning services, and executive search firms. The lion's share - 48% of all jobholders - received their jobs through referrals and word-of-mouth. To learn about these jobs, you need a strong career network.

Who you know does matter! A strong network is not a substitute for good skills and meaningful experience, but it can make the difference between being selected for an interview and being left out. More importantly, your presence in a network can determine whether you hear about good positions in the first place. If you're not in the network, you may not even get a chance to apply. There are a variety of ways to develop your network, including:

- Seek out opportunities to work with others, inside and outside of school. This includes internship supervisors, relatives, neighbors, or perhaps someone you meet at a festival or Earth Day event.
- Attend conferences, professional meetings, and guest lectures, or join a local chapter of a professional environmental organization as a student member.
- Conduct "informational interviews" with people whose work genuinely interests you!
- Get involved with extra curricular activities, such as campus clubs, intramural sports teams, the Greek system, volunteer work, etc. The more involved you are the better your chances of meeting new and interesting people who might be willing and able to help you!

To learn more about how and why networking is so important visit the ES Environmental Career Course (**Env S 190**, fall qtr.) website at: http://www.es.ucsb.edu/curriculum_info/es190careers

9) Explore Graduate School and Career Options Early

As with any career-related decision, deciding whether or not you should attend graduate school requires careful reflection upon your future goals.

First things first, do you really understand what graduate school is? If not, don't worry, you are not alone. Graduate education differs from undergraduate education in that it offers a greater depth of training, with increased specialization and intensity of instruction. Study and learning are more self-directed at the graduate level than at the undergraduate level. Graduate courses assume that students are well prepared in the basic elements of their field of study. Depending on the subject, courses may be quite formal, consisting primarily of lecture presentations by faculty members, or they may be relatively informal, placing emphasis on discussion and exchange of ideas among faculty and students. Seminars involve smaller groups of students than lecture courses, and students may be required to make presentations as well as participate in discussions. Class participation, research papers, and examinations are all important.

Graduate school isn't the place for people who are trying to "find themselves." You don't go to explore different options or even a wide variety of subjects. That's what your undergraduate years and life outside the university are for! If you are still wondering about your life's goals, don't hide on campus. Take a stab at a career or two first. Graduate school is for people who are obsessed with learning! Graduate school requires too much intellectual rigor, spiritual fortitude, and financial commitment for students to be motivated solely by future job prospects and theoretical increase in lifetime income! Graduate school is for people who have a burning passion

inside that is driving them towards that advanced degree. Make sure you are not just trying to postpone some tough decisions about your future by going to graduate school.

Questions to ask yourself before deciding to attend graduate school:

1. What are the motivating factors behind your desire to attend graduate school?
2. Have you researched the employment opportunities available for an individual with your undergraduate degree, work experience, and skill set? Is an advanced degree required to succeed in securing a satisfying and well paying job?
3. Are you fairly certain about the career path you have chosen? Would a full-time job help confirm whether or not you want to pursue additional education?
4. Are you physically, mentally, and financially prepared to go straight into another two to seven years of academia? Do you need a break from school?
5. What are the pros and cons of going directly to grad school vs. going to work first? Some pros for work first could be:
 - A few years on the job can give you a different perspective on what's important about your education.
 - You can save money to pay for your education, your or employer might even offer tuition reimbursement as a benefit.
 - You can learn what problems need to be solved, generating research ideas.

Any current undergraduate should start investigating both graduate school and career options early. The more you understand what graduate school is, the more time you will afford yourself to prepare and apply. To learn more about graduate school and the different options available to you, visit the **Env S 190**, *Environmental Careers*, website at: http://www.es.ucsb.edu/curriculum_info/es190careers

10) Enhance Your Communication Skills

According to ES alumni and environmental industry executives, the key to a successful environmental career is oral communication and writing skills. Fostering these abilities during your undergraduate years, in combination with other skills and experiences, can greatly enhance your marketability.

Think about it: an employer wants employees who are self-reliant, have a high level of self-esteem, can fulfill leadership positions, and most importantly, can communicate what they know to others. You might have a brilliant mind and invent a solution to solve global warming, but if you cannot convey ideas and findings to your boss and the professional community, your ideas may never come to fruition. If you cannot communicate effectively in writing and speech, you cannot receive credit for your ideas.

How do you develop these skills? You practice every single day! Whether writing an email to a friend or a 20-page term paper, you should always strive to communicate your thoughts in clear, concise sentences. Go to UCSB's CLAS and sign up for a free writing workshop, pursue the Writing Department's minor, or enroll in the WRIT 109ES class, "Writing for Environmental Studies Majors." The opportunities are endless, but you have to choose to make the most of them.

Opportunities also present themselves on a daily basis for you to practice public speaking. It could be as simple as getting up in front of your roommates to discuss who's turn it is to do the dishes, or addressing a group of fellow students at a club meeting. Perhaps you enroll in the local Toast Masters group or give an oral presentation as part of a class assignment. It does not matter where or how you practice, you need to be conscious of the opportunity to improve your oral communication talents each time you open your mouth. Just like most things in life, the more you practice the more comfortable you will become, and ultimately, the more marketable you will be to potential employers after graduation.

Remember, writing and public speaking skills are absolutely critical, regardless of your major and/or career goals! These skills can be applied to anything you do in life, so constantly challenge yourself to gain all you can during your time at UCSB.