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Henberg Takes Holistic Approach

Laura Davis
Linfield College

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Environmental studies traverses the curriculum

The environmental studies major at Linfield College is interdisciplinary with a focus on science or policy.

Environmental studies centers on understanding relationships between humans and the planet’s life support systems and seeks to develop a deep awareness of the complex, highly dynamic nature of the world, including interactions among human population, the biological and physical environments, resources, technology, social organization and culture.

Environmental studies major features cross-disciplinary introductory courses along with requirements in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Students may take an English course that is co-taught by English and biology professors, as well as courses in political science, anthropology, history, the natural and physical sciences, and economics. Environmental studies January Term courses have been held in China, Chile, Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, South Africa and Australia.

Reid's learning style doesn't fit the typical curricular mold of college. By working with Linfield professors he has been able to complete much of his major through independent study. During spring semester he studied environmental leadership and served as a peer advisor in Henberg’s Environmental Problem Solving class, which Reid took as a sophomore. He spent a week in Washington, D.C., meeting with and interviewing environmental leaders in Congress and at various agencies for a research paper.

Marvin Henberg, professor of philosophy and co-ordinator of the environmental studies program, calls Reid “a force to be reckoned with” on environmental issues, yet also generous and affable.

“Reid is the kind of student you love to have because he is very motivated and he likes to think in ways that I believe challenge a faculty member,” he said. “He is one of those students who see everything in light of that one great cause. He is always refreshing because he thinks things through in ways most people do not.”

Reid says he was watching the reaction of students who realized for the first time that they could inspire people to act on major issues. Reid believes there is no issue too big to tackle, especially if you accentuate the positive.

“With the 120 students I advise, every problem, there’s an opportunity to make a change for the better.”

Beth Satterwhite ‘10 said Reid has a vision for what he wants to accomplish and the ability to inspire others to take action on their beliefs.

“Even if there is nothing that we can do, I think my life will be better served trying to change it for the positive instead of just giving up,” he said. “If you don’t try, nothing will happen.”

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“Interacting with administrators and faculty outside the classroom has been really beneficial,” he said. “Linfield has given me opportunities to design a major that fits my learning style.”

Greensfelder, the student environmental club, was Reid’s brainchild. Student membership has grown, partly because students are attracted to the group’s mission, and partly because of Reid’s natural charisma.

“I think some people became involved because they were interested in what I was trying to do,” he said. “I think they have remained involved because they realize that this is something within their reach. It is possible to make a difference.”

Beth Satterwhite ‘10 said Reid has a vision for what he wants to accomplish and the ability to inspire others to take action on their beliefs.

“He doesn’t give up, no matter what obstacles are in his way,” she said. “He’s a really good leader and can get multiple people to take on leadership roles. I think that’s why Greensfelder has been so successful. He’s not the only leader in that club.”

Reid tries to set an example so others will make a commitment to sustainability.

“A lot of people are talking about sustainability because it’s hip,” he said. “I want to help bring about that shift in attitude so people understand the importance of living in a sustainable way.”

– Mardi Mileham

Henberg takes holistic approach

Long before the whisper of terms like global warming and carbon footprints, before SIGG bottles and reusable shopping bags, Marvin Henberg was already a committed environmental advocate.

A thoughtful philosopher with a penchant for the outdoors, Henberg found a niche for his interests at Linfield College. As chair of the Philosophy Department, Henberg helped found the environmental studies program in 2002 and has spent the years since teaching students about environmental ethics, with an eye toward balance.

You have to approach environmental issues with specific expertise, but holistically,” said Henberg, who also served as interim president and as vice president of academic affairs/dean of faculty during his 15-year Linfield tenure. He will become president of College of Idaho on July 1. “Human beings think in grids – city blocks and spreadsheets. Animals think in terms of long stretches of river and meandering streams, where the food is. So if you want to preserve other creatures besides us, you have to think ecologically and not chop things up.”

Growing up in rural Wyoming, Henberg hunted and fished while tramping around the abandoned tie camps where his father, a timber worker, had once cut railroad ties by hand. This way of life instilled an awareness of the need for balance between humans and nature.

“If trees hadn’t been there for my dad to cut and make into ties, he wouldn’t have had a job and we wouldn’t have had food on the table,” Henberg said. “Yes, we do need to use trees for human good, but we can always do it smarter.”

Henberg was in the first generation of his family to attend college, earning a bachelor’s degree in English literature and philosophy from Washington and Lee University in Virginia. During graduate school, he worked in a recycling yard and, for a time, considered making it a career. But academia pulled – he earned a Rhodes Scholarship and ultimately a Ph.D.

“The most important environmental issue is to adopt wise social policies that give people incentives to be good stewards of nature,” he said.

– Laura Davis

Faculty activities

Environmental studies faculty take personal steps to improve the environment. They are also involved in a variety of projects relating to the ES curriculum. Here they offer recommendations you can take and describe their current projects.

David Sumner
Associate professor of English

Steps you can take now: Plant a garden; buy a few hens. All the food you eat from the garden or eggs from your hens is healthy, and isn’t shipped to you using fossil fuels.

Projects: I am currently working on an article on the environmental ethics of Edward Abbey’s Monkey Wrench Gang and Hayduke Lives!

Tom Love
Professor of anthropology

Steps you can take now: I have replaced my hot water heater with a tankless hot water heater on my home, am a 100 percent wind customer of PGE and pay an extra amount to NW Natural to support gas alternatives.

Projects: Collaborative research on rural electrification with small-scale renewable energy systems in Peru. We will evaluate the success of two alternative solar installations and help prepare for and participate in the installation of 100KW wind turbines.

Eric Schuck
Associate professor of economics

Steps you can take: Bottled water can be as much as 100 times as expensive as tap water. Reusing a reusable bottle and filling it with tap water saves money and eliminates the need to produce and distribute a plastic bottle.

Projects: I have been doing water conservation research for about 15 years, mostly on water pricing and runoff control. Currently, I’m using that research to develop a curriculum for a university in the Middle East.