Positive developments, more opportunities for students

Message from J. Christopher Brown, Director

We ride into this academic year on a wave of developments in the Environmental Studies Program that will make lasting impacts on both undergraduate and graduate students. New faculty appointments this year will bolster our efforts to engage students in field experiences and research. A talented group of undergraduates with research scholarship support are working with faculty mentors this year on issues ranging from food systems to environmental and public health. Graduate students across the University will begin receiving our first-ever graduate certificate in environmental studies. Opportunities for exchange and research are expanding each year with new international initiatives of students and faculty. And finally, we continue to build contact with our alumni, and we are excited about them returning to KU to meet with our students and faculty to share their story about the importance of our program to their lives and career. These increased contacts with alumni help our students envision their own environmental career paths. There is so much more, but I hope this preview entices you to read on about the vast array of students, faculty, and alumni that help make our program a campus leader in interdisciplinary work addressing the local, regional, and global environmental challenges of our time.
Field laboratory experiences are essential to environmental education. There is no substitute for getting outdoors to understand how the natural world works, especially because so much of our everyday experiences are now disconnected from direct contact with the organisms and habitats we depend upon. As environmental challenges to these systems grow increasingly urgent, our society will need skilled professionals—and citizens—who can understand and deal with them. Unfortunately, the need is growing at the same time that opportunities for course-based field experiences are diminishing at all educational levels, including colleges and universities. The “No Child Left

“The ultimate goal that underlies all of this work is to leave no KU student inside.”

-Dr. Bob Hagen

Inside” movement is a national effort to reverse this loss at the elementary and secondary school levels. At the University of Kansas, one key step was taken this year to address the problem, with creation of a new Field Education Coordinator position within the Environmental Studies Program. Dr. Bob Hagen, who has taught a variety of courses for Environmental Studies and Undergraduate Biology, was hired for the post at the beginning of the summer.
A major part of the coordinator’s job is teaching Field Ecology (EVRN 460), which has been a key part of the Environmental Studies curriculum from the program’s start in the mid-1970s. As part of the core curriculum, all Environmental Studies majors are required to take Field Ecology. However, for the past several years the course has been taught by temporary, part-time lecturers. As enrollment in the major has grown in recent years, it has become more important to have a permanent instructor in place to manage the greater number of students taking the course each year and to plan for continuing improvement.

Bob’s general goals in teaching Field Ecology are to get the class outside as much as possible during the semester and to have students experience a wide diversity of local habitats and fields of environmental sciences. Assignments in the course focus on developing skills in four areas: (1) learning how to read and understand scientific or technical reports; (2) learning how environmental field studies are designed and carried out; (3) learning how to analyze and interpret results of these studies; and (4) learning how to write about these topics in a clear and professional style. These skills are essential for all students—regardless of which career path they follow—and are also skills that draw upon topics covered in other courses. Planning for improved coordination among core environmental studies courses will be one of the major long-term benefits of a permanent Field Ecology instructor.

In addition to teaching Field Ecology, the coordinator is also responsible for working with faculty members in Environmental Studies and other departments to develop and enhance field experiences for KU students. One aspect of this effort is to encourage greater use of the KU Field Station by courses offered by the university. Another is to assist individual students find internship and independent study opportunities in the environmental field sciences. The ultimate goal that underlies all of this work is to leave no KU student inside.
Dr. Kelly Kindscher

Dr. Kelly Kindscher is now appointed as Full Professor with tenure in the Environmental Studies Program, in addition to his long-time appointment as Senior Scientist at the Kansas Biological Survey. Kelly has long been involved in the Program, teaching courses including Ethnobotany and our Capstone course for undergraduates. This new appointment shows much deserved recognition by a panel of external reviewers, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the University as a whole for Kelly’s long-demonstrated excellence in research, teaching, and service. Kelly’s permanent position in the Program will allow for expanded contact with our undergraduate and graduate students, and it helps bring a new profile of groundbreaking research on prairie plants and ecosystems to the College. Congratulations, Kelly!

Dr. Paul Outka

Dr. Paul Outka was hired this fall as Associate Professor in the English Department. We look forward to the contributions Paul will make to our program as we work to build environmental emphases in the humanities. Paul is the author of Race and Nature from Transcendentalism to the Harlem Renaissance, part of Palgrave Macmillan’s series in critical race studies, "Signs of Race." This monograph won the biennial prize for "best book of ecocriticism" from the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment in 2009. His chapter, "Posthuman/Postnatural: Ecocriticism and the Sublime in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein," is forthcoming in Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century: Science, History, Scale, from Routledge. This research will form part of his work-in-progress, a second monograph entitled Evolution, Essentialism, and the Organic Sublime: the Nineteenth-Century Posthuman. He has also published several articles on Walt Whitman and one (reprinted twice) on Maxine Hong Kingston. His most recent publication, in the clinical journal Traumatology, examines the possibility of a pharmacological cure for PTSD in the context of posthuman theory. While at the University of Maine (2001-2007), he was awarded a full-year ACLS/Mellon Fellowship for Junior Faculty and a Trustee Professorship.

Program to hire Environmental Sociologist

The Department of Sociology and the Environmental Studies Program are searching for a tenure-track Assistant or Associate Professor in environmental sociology to begin as early as August 18, 2012. Required qualifications: Ph.D or ABD in Sociology or a closely related discipline is expected by the start of the appointment. We are especially interested in candidates working on energy related environmental issues, including energy development, use, production, and/or policy, including the impacts of these energy-related processes on social and natural environments in rural or urban settings in the US or internationally, their environmental justice implications, and/or the human dimensions of the relationship between climate change and energy. This joint hire would contribute to the Sociology Department’s strengths in Social Inequalities and Global Dynamics and Change and to the Environmental Studies programs’s goal of fostering collaborations among social and natural sciences and the humanities. Teaching will include undergraduate and graduate courses in the Sociology Department and the Environmental Studies Program. A competitive salary will be offered that is commensurate with experience. The successful candidate must be eligible to work in the U.S. before the start of the position. The University of Kansas is especially interested in hiring faculty members who can contribute to four campus-wide strategic initiatives: Sustaining the planet, powering the world; Promoting Well-Being, Finding Cures; Harnessing Information, Multiplying Knowledge; Building Communities, Expanding Opportunities.
The April 2011 visit to the Mongolian University of the Humanities (HIS) for the KU-Mongolian Initiative was a great success. Following the very successful visit Chris Brown made to the university in May 2010, I went to develop faculty exchanges and start some possible internet class exchange programs.

It was a great trip and I met over twenty professors and deans including the university president. The general plan after my visit is to slowly start a managed and organized faculty exchange and research program between KU and HIS. There is a strong desire among the faculty in all schools and departments to work with KU faculty through exchanges and the faculty development at the university (i.e. internet). There are many KU-HIS opportunities for research and faculty development. There are several possible development plans including a joint KU-HIS PhD program, faculty workshops on research methods, class and research exchanges and establishing a research center on environmental and social policy studies. I think we can have a very productive long term relation with HIS.

The social science professors in School of Business, and Government and International Relations requested a research methods class exchange because they need these classes at their university. So, I started the internet exchange program this Fall semester with my research methods class at KU (POLS 306). I record my KU lecture and John Rinnert at IT uploads the video to a KU website dedicated for this exchange course. In Mongolia, the professors and students are able to download the lecture recording and watch in their class. The professors have all my class notes and power point presentations (I gave these to them back in April). The goal of this course is to help the professors at HIS develop their own courses on research methods in Mongolian.
Capstone Course Contributes to the KU Living Laboratory

The KU living laboratory concept was the cornerstone of a proposal for a major strategic initiative on sustainability, as part of the University’s strategic planning process, authored by Stacey Swearingen White, Urban Planning (Associate Director, Environmental Studies), J. Christopher Brown, Geography and Director, Environmental Studies, Jeff Severin, Center for Sustainability, and Barry Swanson, Interim Associate Vice Provost for Operations. There were 53 faculty and staff who signed on to the proposal, in addition to 9 non-academic campus units and 6 student organizations. The KU Living Laboratory gives a name to a number of ongoing education, research, and outreach activities related to sustainability involving students, faculty, and staff. The summary of the proposal states, "Ensuring a sustainable future, in all its environmental, socio-economic and cultural aspects, is a monumental challenge for KU and our world. KU can take on this challenge by engaging faculty, students and staff, and by bridging divisions among disciplines, schools, research centers, academics and operations. We can lead the discovery and implementation of sustainability innovations on our campuses and beyond. To achieve this, we propose to expand the efforts of the KU Center for Sustainability, enabling the development of KU as a “living laboratory” and making the Center a broader, wider-reaching hub for research, learning, and outreach for the entire university. The result will be a human and physical infrastructure geared toward improving health, safety and welfare for all."

The story below relates how Environmental Studies undergraduates contributed to the Living Laboratory efforts via work in their capstone course.

The Center for Sustainability recently recognized efforts by campus departments to reduce their environmental impacts. During an Earth Day celebration, 17 campus units were recognized as "green offices" through a program administered by the center. Developed by KU’s Sustainability Ambassador Network, the Green Office Recognition Program was established to raise awareness about sustainable practices in the office and highlight efforts to create more sustainable workspaces at KU.

Participants in the program complete an application that identifies specific actions their offices are taking, including strategies for cutting energy consumption, reducing waste and making environmentally-preferable purchases. Each action is assigned a point value, and an applicant’s total score determines their overall level of achievement, with Level 3 Green Offices reaching the highest level of recognition. Departments that were recognized by the program include:

Level 1
- Business and Financial Planning
- Comptroller’s Office
- Parking and Transit
- School of Business
- Office of the Associate Vice Provost for Finance, Associate Vice Provost for Operations and Chief Information Officer
- Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success
- Recreation Services

Level 2
- Department of Student Housing
- Environment, Health and Safety
- Information Technology
- Kansas Biological Survey
- Legal Services for Students
- KU Dining Services
- Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Institute
- Office of Institutional Research and Planning
- Office of the Provost
- School of Law

Departments recognized at the event were assisted by students in the Environmental Studies Capstone Project course. In addition to working on the Green Office Application, the students performed a mini energy audit and provided recommendations for additional actions that could be taken to reduce energy consumption and green the workplace. Green Offices recognized this spring join 12 additional offices that were recognized as charter members of the program during a fall 2010 ceremony.

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Environmental Studies supports talented and motivated undergraduate students who engage in research projects. Students work closely with a faculty supervisor, and at the end of an academic year, present their research and findings before other faculty and students.

Here is a list of research topics and corresponding advisors for the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 research symposia.

Jessica Brooks, “The Jonglei Canal”
Garth Meyers

Carra Gorby, “Hazardous Waste Site Cleanup, Redevelopment, and the Influence of Public Participation”
Dorothy Daley

Caleb Hall, “Genetic Modifications on Food Species”
Dorothy Daley

Ellen Hernly, “How Do Urban and Rural Food Deserts Differ in Formation, Prevalence and Impact?”
Dorothy Daley

Nolan Kappelman, “Understanding the Value of Food: Student Farms”
Kelly Kindscher

Chelsea Paxson, “Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation’s Impact on Water Quality”
Kelly Kindscher

Lauren Service, “Anticancer Compounds in Physalis Longifolia”
Kelly Kindscher
From One Plot to 23

In the fall of 2009, KU student Jason Hering proposed an idea to Dr. Kelly Kindscher, one of the leaders of the Native Medicinal Plant Research Program and Kansas Biological Survey... what about a place for people to learn how to grow and consume their own produce? A student run farm? The idea took hold, and the following semester Kelly chose to include the student farm idea as one of the potential research projects for the Environmental Studies Capstone course he was teaching. A small group of students began turning the idea into a reality shortly thereafter with student meetings and research.

The student group Environs became involved and along with some volunteers, began gardening and learning on-site throughout the summer and fall 2010 semester. From one plot containing basic vegetables has risen 23 plots, ranging from vegetables and herbs all the way to flowers which students are using to study and consider natural dying techniques. Participants also study various growing methods, such as companion plantings and small-scale permaculture techniques, as well as provide a starting point for the potential KU Student Farm of the future to grow food on a larger scale for the purpose of selling, trading or donating to local businesses, groups and causes. The KU Student Farm is also offering plots and learning opportunities for students, faculty and staff interested in growing their own food. The farm is being used as an educational tool for individuals who want to learn sustainable gardening practices and at the moment, less than thirty plots are available on a first come, first serve basis. The group continues to bring in group speakers who educate the group on gardening practices and techniques. To apply for a plot, or just to learn more about the activities of the farm, please visit their website...

http://kustudentfarm.wordpress.com/

Vegetables grown at the KU Student Farm.
Founded in 1985, Environs is a KU student organization that promotes environmental awareness and encourages sound environmental practices within the university and in the community of Lawrence. Environs is composed of a variety of four committees so that students can focus on issues that interest them most. The committees this year are:

- **Environmental Preservation**: a grass roots committee performing regular trail maintenance, planning benefit shows, and working with the center for sustainability.

- **Resource Conservation**: working with energy and waste conservation and transportation issues.

- **Educational Creative Outreach**: spreading the word to youth in Lawrence about important environmental issues.

- **Local Food**: improving accessibility and knowledge about local food issues in the Lawrence community and on the KU campus. Recruiting volunteers to work on the KU Student Farm.

A few activities that took place this year:

- Coordinating of the Lawrence Earth Day Parade. The members took part in face painting and recycled binder-making for the celebration.
- Present at the Take Charge Challenge Kick-Off Event, where they face painted and helped with setup. An Environs member has been present at almost every Take Charge Challenge event in the spring and summer of this year.
- Put on a showing of “King Corn” at Liberty Hall, raising $700 for Just Food and $300 for Films For Action. Approximately 350 people attended and there was a raffle of local food and prizes donated by local businesses.
- Conducted survey on two models of lights in comparison to current metal halide lights which led to the creation of a new lighting standard at the University
- Provided free bike assessments for Earth Week
- Attended the Potter Lake 100th Year Anniversary and took over the project. The members worked to remove an invasive species.
Igert Students Study Farming

Land Use

During the spring 2011 semester, the NSF IGERT C-CHANGE (Climate Change, Humans, and Nature in the Global Environment) program ran the second of its four EVRN courses for the second time. The course was called Energy, Ecology and Community in Kansas and was team-taught by Dietrich Earnhart (Economics, lead professor), Johan Feddema (Geography), Jane Gibson (Anthropology) and Belinda Sturm (Civil, Environmental & Architectural Engineering). Over the course of the semester, this team of interdisciplinary faculty members worked with twelve C-CHANGE Trainees who are all PhD candidates in the natural sciences, social sciences, and engineering. The focus of the course was on examining farmers’ decision making about land use, water use and crops in light of weather variability, the biofuel energy market, farm policy, and other factors. As part of this study, the group developed surveys, held focus groups, and interviewed farmers in both Lawrence and Hutchinson, KS.

Program Launches Graduate Certificate

The Environmental Studies Program now offers a new degree, and it’s for graduate students. The Graduate Certificate in Environmental Studies provides an opportunity for graduate students from any field to earn interdisciplinary credentials in Environmental Studies with an emphasis on Global Climate Change.

The certificate grew out of the National Science Foundation-funded C-Change IGERT Program (Climate Change, Humans and Nature in the Global Environment Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship) which is led by Prof. Joane Nagel, a sociologist and governance faculty member in Environmental Studies. Completing the certificate requires students to take EVRN 701: Climate Change, Ecological Change and Social Change, EVRN 702: Energy, Ecology and Community in Kansas, three semesters of EVRN 700: Colloquium, EVRN 915 Capstone, and two additional graduate course electives with significant climate change content.

The Program awarded its first-ever graduate certificate last spring to Trish Jackson, an IGERT fellow and doctoral graduate of the Department of Geography. Trish is now an Assistant Professor of Geography at South Dakota State University. Those wishing to declare their intent to earn this graduate certificate should contact Prof. J. Christopher Brown, the Director of Environmental Studies (jcbrown2@ku.edu).

From Left: Professor Dietrich Earnhart, Hannah Owens, Chris Hensz, Adam Sundberg, Brian Rumsey, Rebecca Crosthwait.

Graduate certificate recipient, Trish Jackson.
Environmental Studies collaborates with other units to co-sponsor the visits of a variety of scholars to campus. In addition to presenting at colloquia, visitors often meet with undergraduate and graduate classes. Here’s a list of fall events we are helping sponsor this year:

• **Douglas Trent**; November 10th, 5:00 pm - 6:30pm, Snow Hall Auditorium 120. Mr. Trent is the current president & owner of Focus Tours in the USA, president & co-owner of Sustainable Community Development & Communication in Brazil, president & founder of Focus Conservation Fund & Instituto Sustenar as well as being an international ambassador for the Minas Gerais State (Brazil) Secretary of the Environment. Mr. Trent will be giving a presentation on the wildlife of Brazil as well as speaking about conservation. Free admission and refreshments provided. Open to the public.

• **So-min Cheong**; Assistant Professor of Geography, University of Kansas; “Coastal Adaptation to Climate Change.” Thursday, September 29, 11:30-12:30pm, The Commons, Spooner Hall, University of Kansas.

• **Wen Zhang**; Assistant Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Arkansas. “Characterization of Biofilm Detachment Mechanisms.” Tuesday, October 4, 3:00-4:00pm, 3152 Learned Hall, University of Kansas.

• **Ronald Admundson**; Professor of Pedology, University of California Berkeley; “Are Soils Endangered?.” Thursday, October 6, 11:30-12:30pm, The Commons, Spooner Hall, University of Kansas.

• **Lisa Campbell**; Rachel Carson Associate Professor of Marine Affairs and Policy, Duke University, Thursday, October 20, 11:30-12:30pm, The Commons, Spooner Hall, University of Kansas.

• **John R. McNeill**; Georgetown University; “A Global Environmental History of the Industrial Revolution, 1780-????.” Nature and Culture Seminar. Friday, November 4, 3:30-5:00pm, Hall Center Conference Hall.

• **Donald Brown**; Associate Professor of Environmental Ethics, Science, and Law, Pennsylvania State University; Thursday, November 10, 11:30-12:30pm, The Commons, Spooner Hall, University of Kansas.

• **Marisol Cortez**; American Studies; “From the Bedroom to the Bathroom: Toward an Urban Environmental Gothic in American Horror Film.” Nature and Culture Seminar. Friday, December 9, 3:30-5:00pm, Hall Center Seminar Room.
New Staff in Environmental Studies

Anna Pierce
Anna joined the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Student Academic Services Office in June. She is the Advising Specialist for the program as well as the coordinator for readmission to CLAS. Anna is returning to KU after receiving her M.Ed in Higher Education Leadership at the University of Arkansas. She completed her Bachelors in History, with a minor in Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies in 2007 at KU. She is looking forward to working with the faculty and students in the program, as well as increasing her awareness of environmental issues.

Danielle McCarville
Danielle comes to us from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She joined the Environmental Studies staff at the beginning of March this year. She is the new Administrative Associate Sr. for the program. Danielle moved to Lawrence when her husband was accepted to the KU graduate program in political science.

Sondrea Smith
Sondrea is the student worker for the Environmental Studies program. She works closely with Danielle to complete projects and assist students. She is currently a senior in the Communications Studies program here at KU. She is also the head delegate for the Black Student Union and a member of the KU Marketing Club.

Anna Archer
Anna is a senior Environmental Studies major working on a minor in Public Policy. She is the new internship coordinator for the program. She is a member of Environs and Oxfam here at KU. She spent last spring studying abroad at the University of Kent and is looking forward to being back at KU and helping students organize their internships.

Adam Shanko
Adam is a first year TA for Environmental Studies. He moved to Lawrence a year ago after four years in Seattle. He is in his second year of the MA program in the Geography department. He will be teaching lab sessions for Global Environment.

Ali Brox
Ali is a Ph.D candidate for the English department. Her dissertation examines literary representation of environmental justice. She is working with the Global Environment course and is very excited for the interdisciplinary and collaborative experience the course promises.

Anna Kern
Anna is a PhD student in Sociology and a National Science Foundation IGERT trainee in KU’s C-CHANGE program. Her studies are focused on sustainable community development, the green economy, and climate change. She is GTA for Field Ecology.

Nicole Reiz
Nicole is a returning GTA in Environmental Studies and also taught for three years in her home department of Geography. She will be the TA for Environmental Law in the fall and Environmental Policy in the spring. She is currently working toward her PhD in Geography regarding the Critical Geopolitics of Rape Law.

Ryan Callihan
Ryan is a first year GTA assisting with Field Ecology. He received his B.S. in Environmental Studies from KU in 2010 and is currently seeking his M.A. in Geography. He specializes in remote sensing, GIS and water resources.
alumni spotlight: where are they now?

Amy Hammontree
B.A. Environmental Studies, 2004
B.A. Biology, 2004
M.A. Environmental Management, 2007
After receiving her M.A. from Duke University, Amy relocated to Colorado Springs and is currently employed as an environmental scientist with a consulting firm. She is involved in the permitting of energy facilities, primarily wind and solar.

Thomas Rickert
B.A. Environmental Studies, 1986
Thomas is currently the Deputy Director of Transportation in Kane County, IL and the Executive Director of the Kane Kendall Council of Mayors. His job involves planning and programming transportation projects. He is also currently the chairman of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Task Force for the Chicago region.

Kris Craven
B.A. Environmental Studies, 1992
M.S. Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences, 1999
After receiving her M.S. from the University of Wisconsin, Kris served as an intern at NWS Key West for 18 months before working as a journeyman forecaster at NWS Pueblo, CO. She is currently the senior meteorologist at NWS Topeka, KS.

Jason Franks
B.S. Environmental Studies, 1998
B.S. Biology, 1998
Jason currently works as the Field Services/DOT/Health and Safety Manager for Aquaterra Environmental Solutions, Inc., an environmental engineering and consulting firm.

Amy Glovan
B.A. Environmental Studies, 1998
Amy currently works as a research scientist at the Southwest Research Institute, Geosciences and Engineering Division in San Antonio, TX.

Greg Beilfuss
B.G.S Environmental Studies, 1993
Greg is currently the State and Community Outdoor Recreation Planner for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. He is also currently the lead author of the Indiana Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan as well as a NWCF Type II wildland firefighter.

Matt Petrie
B.S. Environmental Studies, 2008
M.A. Geography, 2010
Matt is currently a PhD candidate in biology at the University of New Mexico. He is working on a spatial/temporal precipitation paper with a focus on characterizing variability in ecologically-significant precipitation during the summer monsoon.

Judd Moritz
B.S. Environmental Studies, 1997
Judd is currently the Director of Utility Solutions at EnerNOC, Inc. He retains 11 years as a sustainable energy professional focusing on energy efficiency and demand response. EnerNOC is now one of the leading clean tech companies in the world!

Jennifer Holladay
B.G.S. Environmental Studies, 2008
Jennifer began her career at the Kansas Biological Survey as an intern for the Applied Science and Technology for Reservoir Assessment program through Professor Jakubauskas, then worked as a research assistant for the same program.

Taylor Schaack
B.A. Environmental Studies, 2011
Upon graduation, Taylor acquired the position Environment, Health & Safety Specialist at Diodes Fabtech, Inc.

Laura (Flemming) Smith
B.S. Environmental Studies, 1999
KU Law School, 2002
Laura is currently the Assistant District Attorney in Johnson County, Kansas.
Mr. Trent is the current president and owner of Focus Tours in the USA, president and co-owner of Sustainable Community Development & Communication in Brazil, president & founder of Focus Conservation Fund & Instituto Sustentar as well as being an international ambassador for the Minas Gerais State (Brazil) Secretary of the Environment. After graduation, Mr. Trent moved to Brazil and became one of the founders of the rain forest conservation movement. He started Focus Tours to use tourism to alleviate poverty and preserve nature in the area. To help Pantaneiro jaguar hunters stop hunting, he used Focus Tours to finance an ecodge, start the NGO FCF, got volunteers to teach English, and paid the hunters to preserve land to create the Jaguar Ecological Reserve. He has started many other projects, and is using tourism to fund jaguar research in Brazil’s Pantanal. He has now spent more of his life in Brazil than in the USA! Mr. Trent will be visiting family in Kansas in the fall and has volunteered to speak to current students about his experiences, research and accomplishments. You can read more about his work at the following sites...

www.focustours.com
www.focusconservation.org

What do you remember most fondly in regards to environmental studies at KU?

I really enjoyed the variety of classes with excellent professors from my courses. In my ES program, being able to take classes from many different departments gave me a broad education and also allowed me to meet many people with different interests. Many are still my friends, even though I have now spent most of my life outside of the USA.

What is the most valuable thing you learned at KU?

I learned to see the big picture, to get a holistic view. This enabled me to be a visionary, as I was able to get a good, broad based education that later enabled me to get where I am today.

What advice would you give current Environmental Studies students?

Learn from your classes, but also do independent research in the part of environmental studies that attracts you the most. Do volunteer work in the field. Do a year overseas where you will also learn a new language and have international contacts, if possible.

How can our current students best prepare for getting a job after graduation?

Excel in your field. Think outside the box. Learn what and where the jobs are long before you graduate, and learn outside of school skills you will need. Volunteer in your field, if possible as this will show employers you are willing to do more than expected. Do not be afraid to go into business for yourself, nor in leaving the USA and going to Third World countries. Most of them have fewer professionals, less competition, and your American work ethic will go far. If you are interested in preserving nature, create projects that help pull people out of poverty and preserve nature. Believe in yourself!
Ed Hubert  
B.A. Environmental Studies & M.S. Engineering Management, 1984

Mr. Hubert has been working as an environmental consultant for 26 years, all based in the Kansas City area, although project work has taken him all over the country. He is currently the Vice President & Principal Environmental Scientist for Geotechnical Services, Inc. He is active on the boards of the Environmental Excellence Business Network, Kansas Alliance for Watersheds & Streams, and Alliance of Hazardous Materials Professionals.

What is the most valuable thing you learned while at KU?
While it’s a cliche to say it, the fact is I learned a lot of things at KU, both in and out of the classroom. From a professional standpoint, the fundamentals of keeping good notes, collecting valid data, and producing clear, concise written reports have to rank up there pretty high. But perhaps the most important thing was to really think hard, every day, about what I can do to make a meaningful difference in the world, and then try to do those things. More than 25 years later, I still value the professor who challenged me to do that.

What do you feel was the essential key to gaining employment in the environmental community?
Environmental jobs were less common when I graduated than they are now, and career paths were less well established. For me, the critical thing was to take that first job, even though it was not exactly the kind of work I wanted and was, in some ways, unappealing. What I learned, though, was that with that first toe in the door, I could leverage that first job into a better job, and start to develop a satisfying career path.

What advice would you give current environmental studies students?
It’s pretty clear to me that environmental issues are some of the most urgent, most pressing issues of our time. I’d just encourage students preparing to enter the environmental field to recognize that, and to take their studies and their future life’s work seriously - but also, to never forget to have a good time and to enjoy the beautiful world they’re learning about.

Javier Ahumada  
B.G.S. Environmental Studies, 2007

Mr. Ahumada is currently working as an Environmental Scientist III with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. He oversees the air performance testing unit for the whole of Kansas. This includes air quality sampling from stationary sources ranging from printing presses and gas stations to refineries and power plants. He was initially hired right out of school as an Environmental Scientist I, and after nearly three years was promoted to his current position.

What is the most valuable thing you learned while at KU?
I enjoyed most of my time in the environmental studies program, but some of my fondest memories are from my last semester in the Field Ecology class. I loved spending time outdoors, immersed in nature while learning about things I had previously only seen in books.

What is the most valuable thing you learned while at KU?
I believe the knowledge I gained at KU about air environmental laws and the chemistry behind air pollutants helped me to get my first position at KDHE.

What do you feel was the essential key to gaining employment in the environmental community?
Environmental jobs were less common when I graduated than they are now, and career paths were less well established. For me, the critical thing was to take that first job, even though it was not exactly the kind of work I wanted and was, in some ways, unappealing. What I learned, though, was that with that first toe in the door, I could leverage that first job into a better job, and start to develop a satisfying career path.

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What do you feel was the essential key to gaining employment in the environmental community?
Environmental jobs were less common when I graduated than they are now, and career paths were less well established. For me, the critical thing was to take that first job, even though it was not exactly the kind of work I wanted and was, in some ways, unappealing. What I learned, though, was that with that first toe in the door, I could leverage that first job into a better job, and start to develop a satisfying career path.

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keep in touch!

Alumni and friends: we want to hear from you! We appreciate your support and want you to keep in touch with us. If you happen to be in the area, drop by Snow and visit us!

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM
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