

Gaylord Nelson
Institute for Environmental Studies

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

February 9, 2005

Jocelyn Milner, Co-Chair
Robert Ray, Co-Chair
University Assessment Council
Provost's Office
170 Bascom Hall

Dear Jocelyn and Bob:

I am writing this letter in lieu of a full report on assessment activities in the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies for the 2003-04 academic year. We have undergone a major transition in the Nelson Institute in the past two years with the retirement of our former director, Tom Yuill, and hiring our new director, Frances Westley. Dr. Westley is now on board (as of January 1, 2005) and is making arrangements for a retreat later this spring for the faculty to address excellence in teaching with regard to interdisciplinary work. We will include the development of an assessment plan in these discussions with the faculty.

Also during this spring term, we have an assessment in progress for our undergraduate certificate program through a grant from the Assessment Council. The Chair and the Coordinator of our undergraduate program have hired a graduate assistant to help implement this assessment. The first step in this process will be to conduct surveys of our alumni, current students, and faculty.

Finally, past assessment activities in the Nelson Institute for our graduate programs have included alumni surveys for all recently reviewed programs (Land Resources, Water Resources Management and Environmental Monitoring), and a survey of all alumni of the institute in 1990. Results of these surveys were summarized for the program reviews and for the faculty program committees to use in future planning activities. Our program committees meet twice yearly and regularly get feedback from students in the programs. We also have other tools at our disposal that may be used for future assessment including capstone courses (Water Resources Management Practicum, Conservation Biology Seminar, Environmental Monitoring Practicum, Energy Analysis & Policy Seminar, and Transportation Management & Policy Seminar) and program certifications (study plans approved by all graduate students' committees and the program chair).

With our upcoming faculty retreats, the hiring of a new associate director, and our new director in place, we fully expect to have a complete report on assessment activities in the Nelson Institute for 2004-05.

Sincerely,



Hope Simon
Senior Student Services Coordinator
Univ. Assessment Council Representative