

**GPSS Focus Group Report**  
**Environmental Management Certificate Program**  
**November 2007**

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On November 1, 2007 the University of Washington Graduate & Professional Student Senate Special Assistant attended a focus group of graduate students in the Environmental Management (EM) Certificate Program. There were seven students present at the meeting. The purpose of this focus group was to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program from the perspectives of EM students. This report summarizes students' feedback for consideration in the Graduate School Council's review of the EM Certificate Program.

*Please note: The Graduate & Professional Student Senate (GPSS) and the Graduate School Council are in the process of revising the GPSS focus group report process and procedures. This report is in an interim format until the new process is established in January 2008. The data you see here are the notes the special assistant took at the focus group. The opinions stated here are EM Certificate student opinions and observations, the author of this report did not synthesize any information or make any conclusions.*

**Choosing this certificate program**

- The keystone project component is the main reason students apply for this certificate.
- UW provides a great opportunity for the EM certificate while still being able to complete other coursework.
- The applied component of the certificate is the most important part of the program.

**Courses**

- Students thought the policy process class was excellent.
- One student suggested having the courses and project happen simultaneously rather than having to do coursework first and the project second.
- When courses are offered is confusing and always varies; there needs to be more structure.
- There should be a set list of electives students can choose from rather than the students picking classes and having to get approval of each one from an adviser.

**Mentoring**

- Faculty mentoring is okay during the keystone project, but it is sometimes hard to get face time with the faculty member on the project because they are stretched too thin.
- A formal peer mentoring structure would be a nice component to add to the certificate.

**Funding**

- In project groups when one student is funded and others are not, it causes conflicts. This problem is especially true in regards to the fellows.

**EM Fellows**

- There is some confusion as to the role of the fellows within the project groups-how much work should they be doing? Who is in charge of the project, is it the fellow because they are being paid or can it be another student?
- The role of fellows should be more clearly defined for everyone in the certificate program.
- Fellows often have more access to professors/mentors which can cause conflict between group members.

**Keystone Projects**

- It would be best to know what project you will be assigned by the end of spring quarter so a student can drop if needed. This will allow for more time to find replacement group members.
- There should be different types of projects to accommodate the different numbers in each group. As it stands now, the projects groups range from 3 members to 6 members but the projects do not reflect the number disparities. Smaller groups end up having to do more work than the larger groups.

**Community/leadership**

- There is some effort to have community events but they are not well attended by certificate members.
- There is no community between the different years in the program.

**Improvements**

- Application process is confusing, needs to be streamlined.
- The timeline for the application process causes students to have to turn down other sources of funding while they are waiting to hear if they received the fellows position.
- Courses can be repetitive-it was suggested there be two core courses instead of three, this would all for more flexibility.
- There are not many applicants to this certificate; students reasoned this is due to a lack of exposure around campus.
- One student suggested reaching students early in their graduate studies. The certificate program might need to rely on home departments for exposure.