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College of the Environment Internship Reports

College of the Environment

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2023

## College of the Environment Strategic Visioning Committee

Brynn Vogel  
*Western Washington University*

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# COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: College of the Environment Strategic Visioning Committee

Student Name: Brynn Vogel

Internship Dates: 1/4/2023 - 3/15/2023

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STUDENT SIGNATURE Brynn Vogel

DATE: 3/13/2023

# COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Section 1 – Student Identification			
Last Name, First Name:		Western ID:	
Email Address		Major/PreMajor	

Section 2 – Registration Information			
Total Credits:		Faculty Advisor:	
Internship Start Date:		Internship End Date:	
Number Credits Per Quarter (F/W/S/Sum)			
<p><i>Note: You must be registered for credits during quarters you perform <b>any part</b> of the internship work (Including Summer Session) to include writing of reports...this can be spread over multiple quarters. You are expected to register an appropriate number of credits based on anticipated hours worked BY Quarter (Example: Working 120 hours during Summer = 4 Credits Summer Enrollment)</i></p>			

Section 3 – Organization for Internship	
Organization Name:	
Intern Supervisor Name:	
Mailing Address:	
Email Address:	
Phone Number:	
Description of Duties (Or Attach Job Description):	

**Section 4 – Learning Objectives**

What do I intend to learn from this experience:

How does this experience contribute to my educational goals:

If Faculty require any additional Learning Objectives, they should be listed here:

**Section 5 - Deadlines, Evaluation, and Assessment (Completed by faculty advisor)**

Meet with Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Draft Due: \_\_\_\_\_  
Final Draft Due: \_\_\_\_\_

	Yes	No
Additional Learning Objectives (as assigned by faculty)		
Oral Presentation Required		
Daily/Weekly Log Require		

### Section 6 – Students Certification

I certify that I have read the University Policy on Risk Management Considerations for Student Internships and I will report any injuries suffered while performing internship promptly to WWU.

[http://www.wvu.edu/bfa/Risk\\_Mgmt/documents/Internship%20Considerations%20\(14\).pdf](http://www.wvu.edu/bfa/Risk_Mgmt/documents/Internship%20Considerations%20(14).pdf)

I will endeavor to represent myself and my college well and will abide by the relevant policies, procedures and ethical standards of the university and the internship organization.

I understand that **30-hours of work per credit earned is expected** for an internship. I understand that I am expected to enroll in a number of credits commensurate with hours worked each quarter.

Student's  
Signature/Date

### Section 7 – Internship Site Supervisor Certification

I have reviewed the student's indicated learning objectives and on behalf of my organization agree:

- To enrich the Student's knowledge by orienting him/her to the occupation, the work setting, and the responsibilities relating to the assignment
- To regularly evaluate/provide feedback to student on progress, projects and areas of growth
- At or near the completion of the assignment to provide an evaluation of the student's performance
- To review and approve the Student's Learning Plan and communicate with the college if areas are not going to be met.
- To supply the student with, and abide by the organization's policy against discrimination and/or harassment in the workplace
- To contact the instructor or the College of the Environment Internship Coordinator (360) 650-3646, [ed.weber@wwu.edu](mailto:ed.weber@wwu.edu) should any problems arise

Internship Site  
Supervisor  
Signature/Date



1/3/23

### Section 8 – Faculty Advisor Certification

I certify that the student intern and I have reached agreement on the learning objectives and academic expectations for this experience. These objectives are challenging and enriching to the student's academic and/or career goals. I will award grades after satisfactory completion of all learning objectives/tasks/reports assigned.

Faculty Advisor's  
Signature/Date

Gene Myers

3 Jan 2023

### Section 9 – College of the Environment Internship Coordinator

Actions:

1. Review Agreement
2. Update Course Override
3. File Agreement in Student Records
4. Communicate with Employers as necessary during internship



# Registering and Completing ENVS/ESCI/UEPP 498B Credits

## YOU MUST BE REGISTERED FOR INTERNSHIP CREDITS WHENEVER YOU ARE PERFORMING WORK RELATED TO THE INTERNSHIP TO RECEIVE ACADEMIC CREDIT

- This **INCLUDES** Summer Sessions

## REQUEST FACULTY MEMBER TO OVERSEE 498B CREDITS

- The CRNs for ENVS/ESCI/UEPP 498B credits are linked to specific faculty members
- Students need to speak with the faculty member for these credits
  - If possible, students should have a draft of an Internship/Learning Agreement completed before they approach a faculty member to supervise the internship.
  - Most students use their faculty academic advisor as their faculty internship supervisor
    - During Summer Sessions, your faculty advisor may not be available. If not, then register for internship credits with Ed Weber, CENV Internship Coordinator
- Environmental Science students register for ESCI 498B and all others for ENVS/UEPP 498B
- Registration for 498B (Internship Credits) requires an override, which is normally given by the CENV Internship Coordinator (Ed Weber, ES545)
  - You must have a completed/signed Learning/Internship Agreement signed **before** the override will be input

## CRNS FOR ENVS/ESCI/UEPP 498B

- See Classfinder for the CRNs for ENVS/ESCI/UEPP 498B Internship credits
  - During Summer Sessions, if your faculty advisor is not listed, please register for credits with Ed Weber, College of the Environment Internship Coordinator

## VARIABLE CREDIT REGISTRATION ON WEB

- Initially you can only register for one credit.
- Return to the registration menu after registering. Then go to Change Variable Credits to change the 1 credit to the number of credits desired. (Instructions for Changing Variable Credits are included on the Add/Drop page for registering.) 30-hrs work = 1 academic credit. Register in good faith based on anticipated hours for the whole quarter.

## RESOLVING K GRADES

- To graduate, you must receive a passing grade for any credits listed on your major evaluation.
- (For Internship, students must receive a Satisfactory (S) for S/U grading. **Incomplete grades not completed and graded after a year from the quarter of registration automatically become a U (Unsatisfactory) or a Z (equivalent to an F). Incompletes can impact financial aid standing.**

## REPORT SUBMISSION

- Final report will be submitted to your faculty advisor using the ESIGN Form available on the CENV webpage.
- Always consult with the faculty advisor **in advance** about how much time he/she will need to read and grade the report by the end of the graduation quarter.
  - The most difficult time to get a grade on a report is for summer quarter graduation because faculty are generally not available during this time.
  - Spring graduation is a close second in difficulty because many faculty leave campus for extended periods after their last final.

Dear Brynn:

During Winter Quarter 2023, you completed an internship with WWU's College of the Environment visioning committee. The committee is charged "to bring our community together to identify *a very limited number of cohesive strategic goals that will prioritize the work of the College over the next five years*" (Dean Teena Gabrielson, November, 2022). As a faculty member sitting on the visioning committee, I served as your internship site supervisor. This quarter, the committee's tasked centered on planning and listening. We decided that before we could engage in deep conversations and focus groups with college stakeholders, we first needed to get the "lay of the land". To accomplish this goal, we held listening sessions with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and employers. We met weekly to reflect on what we'd been hearing at the listening sessions, and to plan for future information gathering efforts.

Your contributions were integral to our efforts this quarter! You dutifully attended all of our weekly committee meetings, often offering important insights from your perspective as a student. With support from the committee, you co-developed an effective plan for student listening sessions that included both survey and discussion components. You implemented this plan by co-facilitating a handful of student listening sessions in CENV classes. You also attended and took notes during employer and alumni listening sessions, and helped out with other administrative tasks.

In reflecting on the last ten weeks of working with you, I'm struck by the tremendous professionalism and flexibility you brought to this work. Your notes from the listening sessions were always thorough, yet you were able to accurately and effectively synthesize them to ensure that they were digestible for the committee. When opportunities for additional listening sessions presented themselves (e.g. the BIPOC ESCI student event), you took on note-taking and facilitation duties (often with very short notice). You were an active participant in our committee meetings. From my perspective, your contributions were commensurate with the faculty and staff committee members.

I hope and suspect that you are completing this internship with a stronger understanding of the inner workings of higher education, and a stronger sense of how to engage community members in discussion. Thank you for your support of CENV's visioning committee!

Sincerely,



Kate J. Darby  
Associate Professor  
Environmental Studies

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During Winter Quarter 2023, I served as an intern for the College of the Environment's Strategic Visioning Committee. The Committee served to address a potential college enrollment decline over the next few years and evaluate how the College of the Environment can continue to keep enrollment up as well as preserve its legacy at a university, state, and national level. As an intern on this committee, my primary duties involved attending weekly meetings with the faculty members of the committee, designing and presenting questions for multiple student listening sessions, and organizing feedback and notes.

Over the course of the quarter, after holding and attending several listening sessions between students, staff and faculty, alumni, and employers, the goals of the committee shifted slightly. Originally, we had the idea that there would be an impending college enrollment cliff to keep in mind, based on readings from *The Agile College* by Nathan D. Grawe. But throughout my time on the committee, we noticed that enrollment at Western, particularly the College of the Environment, is doing well in terms of interest and popularity. We then were able to shift our focus to a broader scope, asking ourselves what the college does well, how it can be improved, and how it can compete with other environmental programs at a regional and national level. Those questions served as a baseline for the more tailored, specific questions that were created for listening sessions at multiple levels, from students to alumni that graduated in the early years of the College of the Environment.

## Initial Internship Goals

The initial description of duties for this position were as follows: "This intern will support WWU College of the Environment's Strategic Visioning Committee in Winter Quarter, 2023. The intern may be asked to help conduct background research, set up and take notes at focus groups, and synthesize findings. We will involve the intern substantively in the work of the committee, including meetings and discussions. Through this experience, the intern will learn more about institutions of higher learning, and will hone in their skills in qualitative methods, facilitation, research, and collaboration". This description of the role helped solidify my learning objectives for the quarter, as I was able to create a concrete vision for what I wanted to accomplish during my time with the committee. One of my goals was to learn more about the inner workings of the university and the College of the Environment. As a graduating senior, I was eager to learn about the other side of the process. I also wanted to be able to contribute meaningful feedback for the College of the Environment, as it is a department that I am passionate about and I would love to help it become the very best that it can be. Finally, a goal I had going into this internship was to improve my professional communication skills, and this was achieved through connecting with and working closely with other faculty members who were on the committee. I was eager to learn about how a visioning process worked, and I felt

that this was an especially important time to discuss goals for the future, as the university dynamic has undergone major changes since the beginning of the pandemic.

## Student Listening Sessions

One of the first tasks as an intern on this committee was to design and implement questions for student feedback on the College of the Environment. We as a committee made sure to try and survey a wide audience of students across departments and expected graduation year, in order to gain a better understanding of what newer students are feeling, being in classes in their major for the first time, as well as students who are getting ready to graduate and are taking their final classes in the College of the Environment. As a committee we brainstormed different questions we could ask, and I created a Google Forms survey as well as an introductory PowerPoint to explain to students what the Strategic Visioning Committee was for. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of student feedback, and by having students conduct these surveys, I felt that the discussions were meaningful and honest. Students who participated in the survey had valuable feedback and were able to have nuanced conversations with each other and myself.

The questions we asked students during the listening sessions were:

- What drew you to the College of the Environment? How have your experiences in the College aligned with your initial expectations?
- What excites you about being a part of the College of the Environment? At the end of the day, what do you take home with you and cherish about college?
- How does the College of the Environment support your educational goals as a student and your career goals looking ahead? What can be done to further support you?
- What aspects of the college should be growing? This could include components that are already present, or new ideas for the future of the college.

Many students, across College of the Environment majors and grade level, had similar things to say, which was helpful towards having meaningful conversations and concrete findings to present at the weekly committee meetings. Across the board students felt that the college had exceptional faculty that supported their educational goals. They also valued smaller class sizes and the interdisciplinary nature of the College of the Environment. Many students also spoke to the fact that they enjoy how classes are discussion-based rather than lecture-heavy, as it encourages more in-depth critical thinking about a topic rather than just being focused on memorization of lecture topics. Students also expressed the ways in which they'd like to see the college grow— creating more specialization classes (particularly for UEPP classes),

more tailored advising, and more immersive capstone courses. One thing that went well from the various student listening sessions was that because it was held by students who were also a part of the College of the Environment, there was a mutual understanding of some of the strengths and challenges. A big personal takeaway that I had from conducting these student listening sessions was that a lot of other students across the College are in the same boat as I am. It helped me gauge a better understanding of our purpose as a community of students in the College of the Environment, and at the end of the day I felt a stronger connection to my identity as a part of the college.

## Weekly Meetings

Another important aspect of this internship was attending weekly meetings to discuss any findings from the previous week and provide general updates to the rest of the committee as to what we had learned, or any updates for the committee. Usually, this would include summarizing a listening session, planning for new events (such as the employer listening session that was conducted at the environmental career fair), and brainstorming ideas based off of feedback that had been gathered. My role in this was essentially to take meeting notes and share findings from the listening sessions I attended. At one of the later meetings in the quarter, I presented a summative document of the biggest themes and takeaways from the undergraduate student listening sessions. Presenting these themes to the rest of the committee helped faculty and the dean of the college gain a better understanding of what other students in the college were feeling, and how we could create a strategic goal out of that feedback. These meetings also helped me gain a better insight into how to create and communicate realistic strategic goals for the future of the college. It was helpful to learn the framework for this goal setting, and I believe that these meetings improved my understanding of the university-level decision making process as well as increasing my confidence in professional communication and collaboration. I really valued the fact that I was a student on this committee, and I felt like there was a place to express my feelings and opinions as a student. I felt that my voice was valued on the committee, even as a person who is not a faculty member.

## Alumni Listening Sessions

In addition to student listening sessions, the committee also held listening sessions for alumni of the college to voice their opinions about the College of the Environment related to their personal experiences. In order to gauge an understanding of what worked well for graduates and when, the alumni listening sessions were organized by time of graduation. One session for those who graduated less than 10 years ago, one for those who graduated 10-25

years ago, one for those who graduated more than 25 years ago, and a final session for all age groups. The alumni listening sessions were hosted by Teena Gabrielson, the dean of the College of the Environment, and I was able to be a note taker for three of the listening sessions (one in each group).

The questions we asked during the alumni listening sessions were:

- **FOR ALL GROUPS:**
- Focusing on the College's strengths and points of distinction, would you share something that you especially cherished or valued about your time in the College?
- How can we better foster connection and engagement both with the College and among our alumni?
- **FOR MOST RECENT COHORT:**
- What skills/knowledge/capacities/experiences that you gained during your studies in the College of the Environment have been particularly useful after graduating?
- With the experiences you now have, how might the College have better prepared you? How might you guide us to better prepare and serve future students for the variety of post-graduation paths they might take?
- Are there educational opportunities (specific certifications for example) or programming that you might be interested in if the College were to offer it?
- **FOR MID-CAREER COHORT:**
- As you look to the future, what do you see as the most important ways that the College can educate and equip our students to be environmental leaders and problem solvers?
  - If you or your organization regularly hire new employees, what are some of the most important traits/skills/capacities that you and your organization are looking for in college graduates?
- Are there educational opportunities that you might be interested in if the college were to offer it?
- **FOR ESTABLISHED COHORT:**
- As you think about your time in the College and the ways your relationship with it has evolved over the years, how do you think we can best continue the incredible legacy of the College while adapting to the needs of today's world?

It was helpful to have these conversations organized in the way that they were. For example, alumni who graduated 10 or less years ago emphasized the value of the technology aspect of certain components of the college, like GIS and other lab-science related topics. People in the middle demographic valued the professional development skills that they learned from being in the college, particularly through internships and applied sciences. In the last alumni listening session, those who graduated more than 25 years ago, it was a common theme that they all valued the importance of the interdisciplinary nature of the College of the

Environment. This was evident in that each member of the listening session found a different career path after graduation, from environmental education to working in the political sector to working in a lab or as an environmental engineer. To hear feedback from so many different people with different careers was particularly valuable because we were able to analyze feedback from all corners of the College of the Environment, and assess how the college changed over time and adapted to meet the needs of the current workforce. I enjoyed being able to sit in on these alumni conversations, and after these meetings it was important for the committee to see the value in fostering connections with alumni and creating a sense of community for graduates of the College of the Environment. Another more personal takeaway I had from one of the alumni sessions was hearing from another graduate with a degree in environmental education. It felt reassuring to hear from somebody else from the same path as me, and it was great to hear from them about their long-term career, especially as I am about to graduate.

## Career Fair and Employer Listening Sessions

Another listening session held by the committee was to hear from employers after the environmental career fair. I attended the career fair as a student and attended the listening session as an intern. The goal of hosting an employer listening session was to hear what employers look for in College of the Environment graduates and potential hires, and what sets College of the Environment students and graduates apart from other potential hires.

The questions we asked during the employer listening session were:

- What areas do you see as strengths when hiring students/graduates from the College of the Environment?
- What areas could we strengthen to make it more likely your organization would hire a College of the Environment graduate?
- What makes the College of the Environment different? Is that difference valued by your organization?
- Is our internship program flexible enough to meet your needs as an employer? What can we do better?

As a student intern (and a senior), I found the employer listening session to be beneficial to be a part of, even as just a note taker. It was helpful to hear what certain employers across various environmental fields look for in graduates, and how it relates to what I can personally improve in as well as what the college can do. Across the board employers valued the interdisciplinary aspect of the College of the Environment, particularly how “hard” science skills

are overlapped with a knowledge of socio-environmental topics. Hearing from employers was valuable for the committee because it allowed us to start brainstorming for more concrete strategic goals, such as the idea of creating new classes or areas of study or new capstone opportunities. Employers also valued the hands-on experience, such as Spring Block, that College of the Environment students and graduates bring to the table, which is something that we heard from both the student and alumni listening sessions as well. Both the career fair and the employer listening sessions had great turnout overall, and we as a committee felt that the feedback that we received was representative of a wide variety of different careers within the fields of environmental science, environmental studies, and urban planning.

### Reading: The Agile College

At the beginning of the quarter, the committee members and I were reading *The Agile College* by Nathan D. Grawe. This book served as a framework for the initial objectives of the committee, to better understand the predicted college enrollment decline and assess what can be done at an individual university level to keep enrollment numbers up. This change in enrollment patterns, likely due to the state of the economy around the time these incoming students were born, has mostly impacted colleges in the Northeast and smaller liberal arts colleges. As a committee we realized that this shift isn't necessarily being reflected by Western of the College of the Environment, but it helped set a basis of understanding for what could potentially happen at Western in the future (for example, as housing and rental prices in Bellingham increase exponentially, is this going to impact the number of students who are realistically going to be able to attend college in-person?). In addition, it helped the committee discuss changes to the college on the opposite side of the spectrum: how can we brace for higher enrollment? What can be done to preserve the legacy of the College of the Environment while also updating its objectives and design to stay relevant in the future? What is the value of a heavy emphasis on interdisciplinary education? And has the college outgrown its initial focus (i.e., has the idea of creating multiple departments/emphasis/institutions further siloed and isolated students despite being under the broad umbrella of the College of the Environment?) Reading this book helped lead to more nuanced conversations about the strategic goal making process, realistic hopes for the future, and discussions about the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the future of universities as a whole. I felt that as a current student I had an interesting perspective on these conversations, particularly about the affordability of university and what it means to be a (future) college graduate at such a unique time in the world, especially politically.



## General Observations and Takeaways

Across all aspects of this internship, I felt valued as a student and like I was able to bring a unique perspective into the visioning process. I was able to account for student opinion and feedback, both from personal experience and the listening sessions. This helped bring first-hand student experience to the committee, which will eventually help shape the student-oriented strategic visioning goals. Overall, the feedback gathered from each type of listening session aligned with my personal experiences and it was interesting to see that others have similar experiences and hopes for the future of the College of the Environment. Garnering this feedback was a major step forward for the committee's goals, as more in-depth focus groups are expected to be held during Spring Quarter. During my time with this internship, I feel that I met my initial goals to improve my professional communication and organization skills, as well as meeting the expectations of the initial position description.

One major takeaway from my time with the committee was seeing how the goals could be shifted and individually tailored as we gathered more and more feedback from across the college, particularly regarding the sense of community within the college. For example, each listening session that I attended cited the College of the Environment as providing them with a strong sense of identity with an emphasis on the community created between students and staff. This was an important factor to keep in mind as we discussed goals for the future as a committee. Having a strong sense of community within a department at a school like Western is a valuable asset, especially because Western differs from traditional state universities, with a lack of things like a Greek system or a football team that traditionally bring a sense of community to students across the board.

## Final Observations and Takeaways

Combined with my coursework during my time in the College of the Environment, I felt like this experiential learning opportunity has made me more confident in my professional communication skills. As a future educator, I found value in the emphasis that this internship placed on conversations around strategic goal designing, and that there was a community aspect to the creation of these goals. Part of my leadership style is that I appreciate collaboration, and there was a strong emphasis on collaboration as a team during this internship. Because so many of my responsibilities on this committee involved communication with students, faculty, and alumni, I felt like there was a true sense of community engagement, and everybody's voice was heard and valued. This contributes to my overall field of study, and further reiterates the importance of community that is emphasized within the College of the Environment.

## Self-Evaluation

Overall, I feel like my initial learning goals were met through participating in this internship. I learned about the strategic visioning process as a broad topic and then got to experience the more detailed inner workings of the process through attending and participating in various listening sessions. I have also gained confidence in my ability to effectively communicate with colleagues and peers on a professional level. While it will take a while longer to solidify the college's strategic goals, I valued being able to be a part of the beginning steps of the process. I felt that this internship opportunity exceeded my initial expectations, especially because I felt that my voice as a current student was valued. I enjoyed being able to contribute to discussions around professional development and goals for the future of the College of the Environment. Gathering student feedback was another important aspect of this internship that I enjoyed and valued, it further strengthened the greater community bond that I feel being a part of the College of the Environment. The feedback gathered from students is something that will be heavily taken into consideration when designing the final strategic visioning goals.

Students who value organization and research will appreciate an internship with the Strategic Visioning Committee- it was a unique experience that was different from a "typical internship". I valued that there was an opportunity to have my voice heard and to uplift the voices of others. Students who are interested in learning more about a general strategic visioning process, and those who are passionate about goal-setting and creating change for the future, would thrive in an environment like this committee. I would recommend this internship to a student who is passionate about their time in the College of the Environment and wants to professionally communicate with their faculty and peers.