

Major: Program's popularity may come from curricular flexibility

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substituted for others. Other classes can be selected from a pool of 75 courses. Some options include student projects or skills packages that focus on everything from creative writing to geographical techniques.

Pockert said most other environmental studies programs offer majors that are more "highly structured" than the University's.

"Ours is more focused on the liberal arts than [on] science," Gale said.

"There is no math required," he said. "So if someone wants to be an environmental writer, he or she still only needs basic science. There are no tracks. The program is student-driven."

Damon Corners, a senior majoring in environmental studies, said the flexibility of the major attracted him to the program.

"I switched from being a biology major," Corners said. "It had a lot of requirements I didn't want to do. Environmental studies required a lot of classes I already had."

Seth Sundancer, a fifth-year senior, said he thought the program's broad scope of classes was a good idea as well.

"I like it because it encompasses a lot of things, not just sociology or [something else]," Sundancer said.

Gale said another reason for the program's success is the University's location.

"In the minds of a lot of people, Oregon is seen as an environmentally progressive state," he said.

"It kind of surprised me when I first got here that there was no environmental studies program," Corners said.

Sundancer said because Oregon deals with a lot of environmental issues, such as old-growth forests, the University seems like a logical place to have an environmental studies major.

These environmental issues and others are important to address, he said.

"There is imminent danger," he said. "We need to focus on some major issues like pollution and global warming so they don't kill us."

Carson Smith, a junior, said, "our past generations have raped the environment for financial or personal gain. It's up to our generation to make the clean-up."

Gale said the program helps students know more about environmental issues.

"It's a way of producing students who care about the issues," he said.

Pockert said he believes the number of people signing up to major in the program will grow because there is constant interest.

"We have people walking in every day [to major]," he said.

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