

MES Academic Budget Request Narrative

June 7, 2012

The MES Academic budget is meant to support the curriculum needs of the Graduate Program on the Environment. This primarily includes classroom supplies and field trips, as well as membership to the National Council on Science and the Environment. As with the MES support budget, in 08/09 the academic budget was reduced \$2400 from \$9800 to \$7400 a year with some roll forward added on every year.

A number of positive additions and changes in curriculum delivery require that we re-evaluate this budget and adjust it to support curricular needs for 2012-2013 and beyond. As our student body changes from a full-time employee majority to minority, our electives and some core classes have increased field trips. Field trips can be quite expensive, especially if transport is involved. In addition, faculty have found it difficult to teach without the materials they need because they cannot afford them. This program offers natural science courses that require lab or field equipment that is very difficult to purchase on our small budget. Increasing the line item for instructional supplies will allow faculty to teach a subject at their full potential. We also included a line item for speakers, as they often are an important supplement to core and elective courses alike. The rotation of faculty into and out of the program also necessitates a pool of money for classroom supplies, as we do not have a consistent set of faculty with a consistent set of supplies. Finally, faculty across the college have been required to purchase their own desk copies as publishers no longer provide them due to low sales. We have included a line item for textbooks to reflect this undeniable need. Ultimately, we would like to have faculty propose a budget request for the classes they are to teach each year, just like in the undergraduate curriculum. This will allow faculty to design courses knowing they will be able to plan trips or purchase the materials necessary to deliver an excellent curriculum.

As a graduate program with an academically rigorous thesis requirement, it is also important that students are supported in their research. Because we are not a research institution that is flush with grant dollars, our students often discover their thesis topic on their own without any monetary support. Anything the program can do to help our students develop and finish a thesis project will help with our retention and graduation rates, thus continuing to raise the quality of our program and increase application numbers. In the past few years, we have encouraged students to attend conferences and find funding through other sources as well – we have seen many students snatch up these opportunities and would like to do our best to be able to provide more to as many students as possible. We encourage our students to present at conferences– we are asking for travel funds for students who wish to attend a very popular graduate student conference in Canada offered every February. Students who have attended in the past have found it beneficial for their future research and presentation skills. These funds can also be used for other conferences.

Finally, it is important to note that students in the Graduate Program on the Environment qualify as STEM students considering Washington's newest definition of STEM includes natural resources. In the last seven years, MES graduates have equaled, on average, about 13% of the total STEM graduates at Evergreen (MES, BS, and BA/BS grads). The allocation of 13% of the STEM funding already at Evergreen toward MES will allow the program to continue providing a quality experience to students as they contribute to the state and its environmental needs through internships and thesis research. This percentage will likely increase over the next few years as the program improves its recruitment and retention and graduates a consistently larger number of students.

Other sources of funding include working with alumni and established MES donors to build upon the Foundation funds that already exist. We seek more consistent support from Advancement in this endeavor. These funding sources, along with increased tuition revenue, will make this budget request possible.