

Human Dimensions of Ecosystem Science and Management, MS, PhD

Department: Environment and Society Department

College: S.J. & Jessie E. Quinney College of Natural Resources

Overview

About This Degree

Formed in 2002, the Department of Environment and Society is the first of its kind in a college of natural resources in this country and has served as a model for the development of similar departments at other institutions of higher learning.

The human dimensions of ecosystem science and management program was created in response to the growing demand for professionals with the ability to analyze human and biophysical aspects of ecosystems and an ability to evaluate policies and decisions that encourage sustainability. The curriculum has its foundations in social science, with infusions of ecology and natural resource management, so that students may learn how to help individuals and organizations operate sustainably and minimize their environmental footprints.

Students in the program learn to describe how human activities interconnect with the natural environments where they occur, explore options for reducing society's impacts on the natural world, and then help turn those findings into real changes in policy, planning, land management, and human behavior. Students are also able to study topics that fit their specific research and career goals such as: environmental communication and education, sustainability, behavioral science, policy analysis, human impacts on the environment, land and resource management, conflict negotiation, and more.

Career Options

Graduates have a broad education in environment and society issues that qualify them to work in the following areas:

- Environmental policy experts
- Outreach specialists
- Interpretive specialists
- Adult and non-formal educators
- Extension professionals
- Natural resource planners and environmental impact specialists
- Advocates and lobbyists for nonprofit groups or industry

What it takes

Admissions Requirements

Applicants from various undergraduate backgrounds may be considered. Depending on the student's desired area of research and previous background, certain prerequisite courses may be required.

To be accepted to the program, it is recommended that applicants first contact a specific faculty member with whom they are interested in working. If the faculty member is accepting graduate students and agrees to work with the student, the student can then apply by completing the following application requirements:

Application Requirements:

- Complete the [online application](#)
- Pay the \$55 application fee
- Score at or above the 40th percentile on in the GRE
- Have a 3.2 or higher GPA on your last 60 semester or 90 quarter credits
- Provide transcripts of all college/university credits
- Provide three contacts for letters of recommendation

International students have [additional admissions requirements](#).

Admissions Deadlines

The department has the following deadline:

- Fall semester – February 15
- The degree programs in the Department of Environment and Society have rolling admission, meaning the department will continue to consider and accept applications until the program is full. The time it takes to process an application is primarily dependent on the speed with which the School of Graduate Studies receives letters of recommendation, transcripts, and test scores. For most students, this process may take six to eight weeks. Applicants should plan accordingly.

Master's Degree Plan Options

Students can receive the MS by pursuing one of two options:

- In the **Plan A** option, students complete graduate-level coursework and must write a research-based thesis.
- In the **Plan B** option, students complete the same graduate-level coursework but must produce a non-research project that reflects equivalent scholarship standards as a thesis.

Financial Assistance

The Department of Environment and Society provides funding for most of its graduate students through [research assistantships](#), available through professors having contracts, grants, or other awards.

A variety of additional funding opportunities are available, including [fellowships](#), [scholarships](#), [tuition awards](#), and [travel support](#). Additionally, students may be eligible for subsidized [health insurance](#) through qualifying assistantships.

Program Requirements

[Click here](#) to see course requirements for the **Master of Science**.

[Click here](#) to see course requirements for the **Doctor of Philosophy**.

Students must prepare and submit an article or other written product for publication by the time they graduate.

PhD Qualifying Exams:

PhD students must pass a comprehensive exam after completing their coursework and before submitting their dissertation. The exam will have a written and an oral component based on the student's area of research.

Contact

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Get Involved

Professional Organizations, Honor Societies, and Clubs

International Association for Society and Natural Resources: IASNR is an interdisciplinary professional association open to individuals who bring a variety of social science and natural science backgrounds to bear on research pertaining to the environment and natural resource issues.

Labs, Centers, Research

Canyonlands Research Center: Canyonlands is a research station centered at the Nature Conservancy's historic Dugout Ranch property. The center's goal is to facilitate research, education, and collaboration for understanding the interactive effects of land use and climate and developing land and water management solutions that meet human needs while maintaining ecological viability on the Colorado Plateau and in semi-arid lands worldwide.

Ecology Center: The Ecology Center is an administrative structure in the university that supports and coordinates ecological research and graduate education in the science of ecology and provides professional information and advice for decision makers considering actions that affect the environment. The Ecology Center at USU has had a string of directors known nationally and worldwide as premier scientists in the field of ecology, and students graduating with a degree in ecology are able to make important contacts with influential faculty that can help them go on to prestigious post-doctoral programs and faculty positions at universities around the world.

S.J. and Jessie E. Quinney Natural Resources Research Library: The Quinney Library maintains collections of materials pertaining to natural resources and the environment in a number of formats that support the programs of study and research in the College of Natural Resources and several partnering centers. The library has more than 60,000 items, both print and electronic, as well as videos, images, and more.

Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter: The Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter, located in Park City, Utah, consists of a 1,200-acre land trust in the Snyderville Basin and a 10,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility dedicated to environmental education. The preserve protects critical wetland and foothill terrain in the heart of one of the state's fastest-growing areas. The EcoCenter, completed in 2009, is a multi-use facility with space for educational and community activities. The facility is LEED platinum certified, the highest standard for design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings.

Utah Botanical Center: The UBC, located in Kaysville, Utah, is home to research and demonstration projects focused on sustainable living in the Intermountain West. Studies of water conservation, horticulture, water quality enhancement, wetland ecology, integrated pest management, urban forestry, agriculture, fish and wildlife, highway enhancement, and storm-water management combine to make the center a living laboratory.

Utah House: Located at the Utah Botanical Center, Utah House is a demonstration home displaying efficient use of resources and sustainability principles. The mission of Utah House is to demonstrate, educate, and empower the public about new ways of building homes and creating landscapes that promote energy efficiency, water conservation, universal design principles, healthy indoor environments, and the sustainable use of all resources.