

## THE SENIOR EXPERIENCE

The culmination of the minor program in Environmental Studies is The Senior Experience, which consists of a practicum project (ENVA 497), independent studies project (ENVA 499), or a research project (ENVA 498). Students may enroll in one of these options (up to a maximum of 3 credit hours) after completing at least 12 hours of course work in the program. A proposal must be submitted for approval through an ENVA program faculty member. A Loyola ENVA faculty member could direct the practicum, studies, or research project. In this case, the Loyola faculty member is the Project Director (See the Environmental Studies Program website ([www.loyno.edu/~envir/](http://www.loyno.edu/~envir/)) for a list of all current ENVA Loyola faculty.) Alternatively, a person outside of Loyola's ENVA faculty could serve as the Project Director. In this case, the student must see to it that a Loyola ENVA faculty member serves as a Project Sponsor. The Project Director of the senior experience oversees all practicum, studies, and research aspects of the project including the final write-up (see below). The Loyola ENVA faculty Project Sponsor acts as the liaison between the Project Director and university by overseeing completion of the formalities for university credit, including grading the effort after consultation with the Project Director. This also includes overseeing that deadlines are met and all forms completed and turned in to the Environmental Studies Program Chair.

Environmental Studies students have participated in a large spectrum of Senior Experiences that have contributed to their environmental studies education and prepared them for future work in environmental fields. Senior Experience projects have included environmental education, nature conservation work, communications, public relations, marketing, research on environmental and ecological issues, legal research, interviewing, meeting with community groups and public bodies, library research, and work in other countries at the grassroots level. Students may design a Senior Experience that combines aspects of several such projects. Students may wish to consult the Environmental Studies Program website for a listing of specific agencies where past Senior Experiences have taken place.

ENVA 497 – this is the course number assigned for a practicum experience that usually involves service learning-type projects or other volunteer work at some community, government, tourism, or non-government organization; however, it is not limited to these organizations. It is expected that students will receive no salary compensation for this work, to avoid conflicts of interest. If students have any questions regarding this requirement they should consult the Environmental Studies Program Chair.

ENVA 498 – this is the course number assigned for a research experience that involves original ideas developed through data collection or library study. This type of experience is often viewed as traditional scholarship in the broadest sense.

ENVA 499 – this is the course number assigned for an independent study experience that involves formal supervised activities providing educational experiences focused on Environmental Studies. A wide latitude of experiences are possible here, so care must be taken in formulating the agreement between student and Project Director to spell out exact requirements for completion of this effort.

The specific requirements for completion of The Senior Experience are listed below. It must be understood that it is the student's responsibility to see to it that these steps are completed and finally

approved first by the Loyola ENVA faculty Project Director or Sponsor and then by the Environmental Studies Program Chair before graduation in the minor.

- An Independent Studies course form must be completed, usually at the beginning of the semester in which The Senior Experience takes place. This standard university administered form is used for all three courses – ENVA 497, 498, 499 – and it is available in the Dean’s office. A Loyola Environmental Studies faculty must sign the completed form (filled out with the title for The Senior Experience and one of the three course numbers) whether serving as Director or Sponsor of the project (see above).
- A practicum/study/research Agreement Sheet (signed by the student, Project Director, and Sponsor – if needed) must be filled out before the project begins. This form is available from an ENVA faculty or the Environmental Studies Program Chair.
- It is expected that a student will complete at least 120 hours for The Senior Experience.
- An interim report by the student must be submitted to the ENVA Project Director/Sponsor. The nature and due date of this report will be specified by the Project Director/Sponsor at the beginning of the project.
- At the completion of the project, the student will submit a final written report on The Senior Experience to the Project Director/Sponsor. A copy of the final report should also be deposited with the Environmental Studies Program Chair. Included in this final report should be a discussion on how this experience contributed to his or her environmental studies education. The nature and length of the paper is to be negotiated between the student and the Project Director/Sponsor.
- If there is a Project Sponsor for The Senior Experience, the student must have his or her Project Director submit to the Sponsor and Environmental Studies Program Chair a practicum/study/research Evaluation Sheet at the completion of the project. This form is available from an ENVA faculty or the Environmental Studies Program Chair.
- All of the above must be completed by May 1<sup>st</sup> of the graduation year or August 1<sup>st</sup> of the graduation summer.
- The faculty Project Director/Sponsor will assign a grade for the course that assesses the student’s performance based on the Project Director’s/Sponsor’s evaluation and the student’s written report.
- The Environmental Studies Program Chair and Sponsor will write the Director of the student (if not a Loyola Environmental Studies faculty) a note of appreciation for his or her time and effort.