

Dept. To Host Anniversary Events | The Daily Nexus



Courtesy of La Cumbre

Dr. Roderick Nash, co-founder of UCSB's Environmental Studies Dept. (center), demonstrates water sampling for the chancellor and General Electric VP in 1972.

UCSB Environmental Studies (ES) Program continues to work toward a greener future as it celebrates its 35th anniversary this weekend, with an event focusing on energy and oil usage across the globe.

Amanda Grundmann, Environmental Studies Program assistant, said the weekend's celebrations, which will be cosponsored by the ES program and the Environmental Studies Association (ESA), will include a variety of events geared toward ES alumni, students and faculty members, and will begin Friday at 3 p.m. Saturday's events will include a talk focusing on sustainable energy alternatives by ES alumnus and Bonneville Environmental Foundation President Tom Starrs, a lecture on invasive species by Dr. Carla D'Antonio and a presentation by several faculty members on the history of the ES program. On Sunday, participants will be able to choose from a number of outdoor activities, including a humpback whale watching trip and a nature walk around Coal Oil Point Reserve.

ES Management Services Officer Jo Little said the program holds an anniversary celebration every five years, and she said the event serves as an alumni reunion that allows former students to meet with current students and faculty members to talk about recent developments in the field. She said this year's event will also honor retiring professor Marc McGinnes, who taught for the department for 33 years.

"It is a chance to bring what the Environmental Studies Program does all together," she said. "The idea with the event is to have an opportunity for the alumni to come back. It is also an opportunity for people concerned with the current state of the environment to discuss some of the issues. They get a chance to talk about what they're doing now and reestablish connections."

ES academic adviser Eric Zimmerman said the ES program was established in 1970, following the Union Oil spill that occurred off of the coast of Santa Barbara in February 1969, when a local environmental group called the Friends of Human Habitat pushed for the creation of an environmental education program at UCSB. According to the ES website, the program aims to "draw on the strengths of many fields and provide a generalist approach to complex environmental issues." Zimmerman said the ES program must be highly adaptive in order to keep up with the ever-changing focus and standards of the field.

"We are constantly adapting to meet the needs of the environmental movement," he said. "Constantly focusing on the progression and maturation of the program, we have to adjust the curriculum to meet current standards. It's hard remaining [an] interdisciplinary [program] while providing students with the skills necessary for the future."

Josh Schimel, chair of the ES program, said the program's focus has changed since its inception 35 years ago.

"The problems have changed and the scholarship that contributes to solutions has changed," Schimel said. "[The study of the environment] has shifted from a multidisciplinary study of environmental affairs to an integrated, interdisciplinary study of the linkage between human and natural systems."

Those interested in attending the anniversary celebration can find a listing of the weekend's activities, dates, and times on the ES program's website at www.es.ucsb.edu.