

# THE GREENING OF HIGHER EDUCATION AT UCSB

*A letter from Professor Emeritus Roderick Frazier Nash, founding chair, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Environmental Studies Program at UC Santa Barbara.*

Two score and ten years ago a group of mostly young UCSB faculty brought forth a new way of teaching and learning dedicated to the idea of making higher education relevant again.

The motivation for change came from the infamous Santa Barbara oil spill beginning January 28, 1969. I joined those walking the blackened beaches and cried with my small daughters over the oil-soaked and dying sea birds and mammals. For presentation on January 28, 1970 I wrote THE SANTA BARBARA DECLARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS, but it was clear I could not do much as an individual about oil company policy and lax government regulation. However, I could make a difference on my job site. For that reason, I agreed to chair the Chancellor's Committee on Environmental Studies early that same year. Senior colleagues in the Department of History advised me as an assistant professor to stay away from the project, stick to business as usual. But my business had been writing books like WILDERNESS AND THE AMERICAN MIND (1967; fifth edition 2014) and I believed environmental education was an idea whose time had come.

It was a tumultuous time. Revolution was in the air. Young Americans faulted the leadership of their society on issues such as race, foreign war, and environmental abuse, and universities were not exempt from the anger. Protests virtually closed UCSB the first six months of 1970. Where, students asked, was instruction about reducing racism, getting out of the Vietnam War and ending degradation of the ecosystem? At one point in the spring quarter Professor Richard Martin, a chemist who taught the very first course in Environmental Studies, walked with me into a campus building littered with glass from broken doors and windows to plan a new major. "Maybe," I wondered, "we shouldn't be in here." Looking around at the debris, Professor Martin simply replied that this was "exactly why we should be here."

Two main ideas guided us in shaping Environmental Studies for its debut in the fall of 1970. One was that university teaching and learning should pay more attention to real-world problems like the oil spill, and biodiversity and climate change. For too long scholars had retreated to the so-called "ivory tower" of pure research. Wasn't it time to apply knowledge to the big problems of our society? The second impelling idea fifty years ago was to transcend disciplinary boundaries and the departmental boundaries that enhanced them. What was the point of dividing a curriculum into sciences, social sciences and humanities when holistic issues like environmental quality were involved? For this reason I am glad that in our name we continue to use "studies", not "science," and that we are a "program" not a "department."

On this fiftieth anniversary of Environmental Studies I wish to celebrate the faculty, supporting staff and the thousands of students who carried on the torch we kindled back in the day. Thanks to them UCSB continues to sustain the vision that the world can be different and better.

**Roderick Frazier Nash**

January, 2020

## About Professor Rod Nash:

Dr. Roderick Nash was one of 21 UCSB faculty members who joined together in response to the 1969 Santa Barbara Oil Spill and pushed for the creation of the Environmental Studies Program. He was the first ES chairman in 1970 and is considered one of America's foremost wilderness historian. He is regarded as a national leader in the field of environmental history and management and environmental education. Among his numerous books and over 150 essays, Professor Roderick Frazier Nash is best known for *Wilderness and the American Mind*, which has received many reprintings, revised editions, and foreign translations. For a detailed history on Dr. Nash visit: <https://aapra.org/pugsley-bios/roderick-frazier-nash>

For more on the history of the ES Program and to read Professor Rod Nash's article *Environmental Studies: The Santa Barbara Experience*, published in the *Journal of Environmental Education* in Fall, 1974 visit the History of ES Program webpage: <http://es.ucsb.edu/about/history>

To view the *1970 Santa Barbara Declaration of Environmental Rights* visit: <https://www.es.ucsb.edu/about/history/declaration>

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1970

UCSB DAILY NEXUS

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# Environmental Studies Department serves as model for universities across the nation

By MIKE CALLAHAN  
DN Feature Editor

UCSB has embarked upon an academic endeavor that could be unparalleled across the country and may come to serve as a model for colleges and universities nationwide. This quarter marks the initiation of a new major in Environmental Studies which hopes to attack the complex problems caused by man's abuse and ignorance of the delicate systems of nature.

Much of the credit for making this program a reality is due to Associate Professor Roderick Nash, an acclaimed defender of our wilderness and American historian. Nash, author of the Santa Barbara Declaration of Rights, chaired the Chancellor's Committee on Environmental Studies which began the groundwork for the new major last spring.

In its report, the Committee states that "unthinking concentration on growth and technological development has set .... crucial balances askew. Either major reforms in environmental management will be affected in the next several decades or disastrous consequences will ensue for the living world."

The report goes on to stress the university's responsibility to "offer an unbiased arena in which to study environmental problems and formulate solutions." It is pointed out that UCSB especially has a unique opportunity to lead the way in this field with its faculty resources, geographical area, research facilities and national interest and support.

Nash points to three reasons why Environmental Studies at UCSB will be unique. The main feature of the program is that it is multi-disciplinary. He states that environmental problems are too

complex to follow traditional departmental lines. Nearly all disciplines can and must contribute to their solutions.

Problem oriented study rather than pure research is another reason this new major is unique. Students in ES courses will learn the factual knowledge only necessary to afford them the background needed to study and understand specific environmental problems. A final novel facet of the program is that the classes will be team taught by scholars who are specialists in the many fields involved in this type of study.

As an example, Environmental Studies I, being offered this quarter, will be taught by a chemist, a geologist, a geographer and a physicist. The course is entitled "Introductory Physical Environment" and will be coordinated by Chemistry Assistant Professor Richard Martin. It is a five unit course with four lectures and one discussion group per week.

Martin says that the staff members will probe the problems

most closely related to physical sources. Some of the areas to be examined will be air and water pollution, nuclear power and radioactivity, land use, resource limitations and transportation. He also says that staff conducted and self-conducted field trips are planned.

In Winter Quarter, ES II, "Introductory Biological Environment," will be offered in which healthy and diseased environments and basics of ecology will be studied, ES III, Introduction to Social Environment, will draw upon historical, sociological, psychological, political and cultural backgrounds of environmental problems during Spring Quarter.

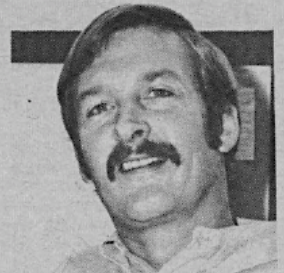
Students planning to major in Environmental Studies are required to take ES 1-6, the last three of which are intermediate examinations of the same three general areas of emphasis. ES 197 A-B is a two quarter seminar planned for extensive study of particular problems which will

begin in 1971-72. In the meantime, a full complement of upper division courses are being established in a variety of fields.

The Environmental Studies major is designed to prepare students for careers in government, law, business, journalism and teaching. Persons headed for graduate study are encouraged to minor in ES which requires 30 units, 15 of which are from ES 1-6. The minor is also recommended to continuing and transfer students.

Students who have already taken related classes may have them approved as substitutes by the Committee on Environmental Studies. It is anticipated that ES 1-6 will fulfill some of the General Education requirements.

Proponents of the Environmental Studies Program have received much support and are confident of a successful inaugural year. The response from all interested groups has been extremely encouraging. As many as 100+ majors and perhaps 250 enrollments in ES are hoped for. The only ingredient they need to begin is students.

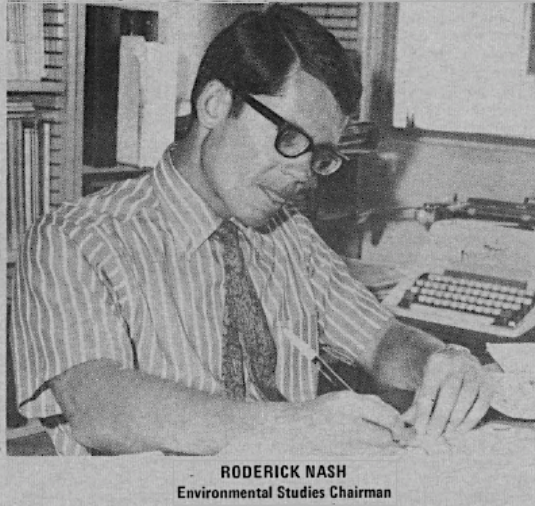


RICHARD MARTIN  
Coordinator of Environmental  
Studies I

## Free school

The Isla Vista Free School is planned as a non-coercive, self-directed, school belonging to everyone involved in it, where children four years and up, can thrive and learn with joy, wonder, curiosity and excitement.

We wish to keep the costs as low as possible, and accept volunteer help and donated resources. A meeting is planned Tuesday, Oct. 6, 7:30 p.m. for interested parents and helpers. For more information, call 968-6968 or 965-7159.



RODERICK NASH  
Environmental Studies Chairman

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