

GAYLORD NELSON INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

The Institute for Environmental Studies was created in 1970 to promote and enhance interdisciplinary environmental instruction, research, and outreach at UW–Madison. In 2002, it was renamed in honor of former Wisconsin governor and U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day and a lifelong champion of environmental stewardship.

The program espouses an integrated approach to learning about the environment. Students are encouraged to consider their interests, strengths, and values beyond the context of their courses and connect the subject of the environment to their other courses as well as their extracurricular experiences. The Nelson Institute is a robust environmental community in which students learn about current environmental issues, and more important, how to link environmental science, policy, literature, art, and philosophy to other fields of study. The focus on the intentional integration of their academic endeavors with their interests, skills, and values provides a powerful source of self-awareness that prepares students for success across a variety of options. Finding one's strength within this interdisciplinary approach affords students access to a wide variety of career settings and postgraduate options.

Approximately 170 faculty members from more than 50 natural and social science, engineering, and humanities departments are affiliated with the Nelson Institute, which offers scores of undergraduate-level courses in cooperation with the university's schools and colleges. The institute offers an undergraduate major and two certificates. The environmental studies major must always be done in tandem with another major on campus. Environmental studies majors have second majors in every school and college on campus, and the student population reflects the interdisciplinary focus of the Nelson Institute and its curricular offerings. All UW–Madison undergraduates are invited to consider the program.