

Earth System Scientists as Salesmen?

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After the Trustees of the University voted “yes” on our proposal for a new Earth system science program, we gave each other “high fives” in the parking lot. That victory was the product of a lot of hard labor by the group. After all, it took over a year to work out all the details of the different curricula and the administrative structure and to write the proposal. But there it was—done and successful!

Over the next few days, however, the implications of it all started to settle in. We had actually obtained approval of a new undergraduate degree. It was now on the books. It had “teeth”, and we felt it could turn out graduates who will be better prepared to work and do research with colleagues from other disciplines, in the midst of all the specialties that comprise the Earth system as a whole.

But paper degrees without physical degree-earners are meaningless. So we have begun the task of recruiting enrollees—a task that requires imagination, flexibility, and salesmanship. Those writing the proposal were trained to sell ideas to funding agencies like NSF and NASA for field work, laboratory work, and publication of the results, but suddenly there was a different audience. Suddenly, we had to advertise a different sort of product—in a way that would attract existing and incoming students, their teachers, and their parents.

Thus commenced the chores of creating brochures and posters, writing a UW Bulletin statement, making announcements in large classes, having information available at resource and recruiting fairs, communicating with high school career counselors and math and science teachers, and finding resources to support the program. These activities seem a long way from our “high fives” in the parking lot but constitute our reality for the foreseeable future. By the way, did I mention? Enrollees for the new UW ESS degree are needed!

ESS at the University of Wyoming
<http://www.uwyo.edu/ess/>

