

**The University Senate of Michigan Technological University**  
**Proposal 24-21**  
**(Voting Units: Academic)**

**Proposal to rename the minor in *Environmental Studies***  
**to a minor in *Sustainability Science and Society***

**Submitted by: The Department of Social Sciences**

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**I. Introduction: Description and Characteristics of the Program**

The Department of Social Science is proposing to change the name of its “Environmental Studies” minor (SSES) to a minor in “Sustainability Science and Society.” The SSES minor has been offered through the Department of Social Sciences since 2000 and was established to provide students with an opportunity to examine the social and political dimensions of contemporary environmental issues.

The courses associated with the SSES minor are also integral to the department’s new B.S. in Sustainability Science and Society. When the minor was established in 2000, the B.S. in Sustainability Science and Society did not yet exist. This proposal will align the name of the minor with the name of associated major. While learning goals for minors are not officially tracked at the university, the goals of the Sustainability Science and Society minor are in alignment with those of the Sustainability Science and Society major. These coursework in the minor, students will demonstrate:

1. An understanding of the core themes, issues, and developments in the social science dimensions of sustainability science, such as the complexities of human-natural systems and approaches to analyzing the cost-benefit tradeoffs in environmental decision-making.
2. The use of sustainability social science in analyzing interactions among human, environmental, and engineered systems to understand and contribute to real world solutions.
3. The ability to do research in a professional and ethical manner, and communicate results.

**II. Title of the Program**

Sustainability Science and Society minor

**III. Rationale**

Sustainability is an area of teaching and research that has become a major focus at Michigan Tech (e.g., Tech Forward Sustainability Initiative, the Sustainability Demonstration House, Alternative Energy and Green Campus Enterprises, etc.). The goal of sustainability science is to develop systems of natural resource management, food and energy production, transportation, and other human activities that are environmentally sustainable over the long term. The B.S. in Sustainability Science and Society degree focuses on integrative knowledge in policy, social science, public participation, and natural science. The courses associated with the current SSES Minor align with this goal, so we would like to update the title of this minor to match the degree program.

More specifically:

1. The courses associated with the SSES minor are also part of the Sustainability Science and Society major. By changing the name of the minor, there will be a clearer connection for students who are interested in this area of study, but unable to do the major. They could take the minor and engage with a similar curriculum on a smaller scale. Students taking the Sustainability Science and Society BS degree will be prohibited from taking this minor.
2. The name “Sustainability Science and Society” is aligned with the research interests of the faculty who teach the relevant courses and accurately reflects the focus of the minor. The term “sustainability science and society” is also more aligned with the interests of students likely to be interested in the courses associated with the minor.

#### **IV. Related Programs**

This minor is distinct from the Ecology minor or the Sustainable Biomaterials minor at Michigan Tech as it draws primarily on social science rather than natural science and/or engineering coursework.

#### **V. Enrollment**

Currently, ten students are enrolled in the Environmental Studies minor. We expect this number will remain steady under the new name and will not require a change in workload for the advisor or faculty.

#### **VI. Curriculum Design**

We are not proposing any changes to the curriculum of the minor. This request is simply for a change in the name of the minor. (The minor is periodically adjusted through the ordinary “binder” process when relevant courses are dropped from or added to the

catalog.) We have attached a copy of the current degree audit with details on the courses and prerequisites.

## **VII. New Course Descriptions**

None. All courses currently exist. This is a name change only.

## **VIII. Model Schedule**

The minor is very flexible. The following is simply one example of how a schedule might look after the student has taken the pre-requisite classes of UN1025 and UN1015 for most upper-level SS classes.

Fall Second Year: SS 2300 Environment and Society (3)  
Spring Second Year: SS 3630 Environmental Policy and Politics (3)  
Fall Third Year: SS 3313 Sustainability Science (3)  
Spring Third Year: SS 3800 Energy Policy and Technology (3)  
Fall Fourth Year: SS 4200 Environmental Anthropology (3)  
Spring Fourth Year: SS 3110 Food Systems and Sustainability (3)

## **IX. Additional Resources**

None. No additional resources are required for this name change.

## **X. Library and other learning resources**

Nothing new or different required.

## **XI. Description of Available/Needed Equipment**

None

## **XII. Program Costs**

Nothing new or different required.

## **XIII. Accreditation Requirements**

None

## **XIV. Planned Implementation**

The name change would go into effect Fall of 2021. Students who have elected the Environmental Studies minor before that time would continue in this program under this name by default until their graduation, unless they elect to drop the minor under that name and declare the Sustainability Science and Society minor name instead starting with

the 2021-2022 catalog year. Starting Fall 2021, students would no longer be able to declare the Environmental Studies minor. Only the Sustainability Science and Society minor would be available to them. In this way, we hope to cause no disruptions and minimize confusion about the name change. We expect it will be about four years until the Environmental Studies minor name would be officially retired, that is once the last student graduates who chose to stay with this name for the minor. The advisor and department chair will track students under these two minor names and notify the Registrar when the last student graduates. At that time the name Environmental Studies minor will be officially shelved.