

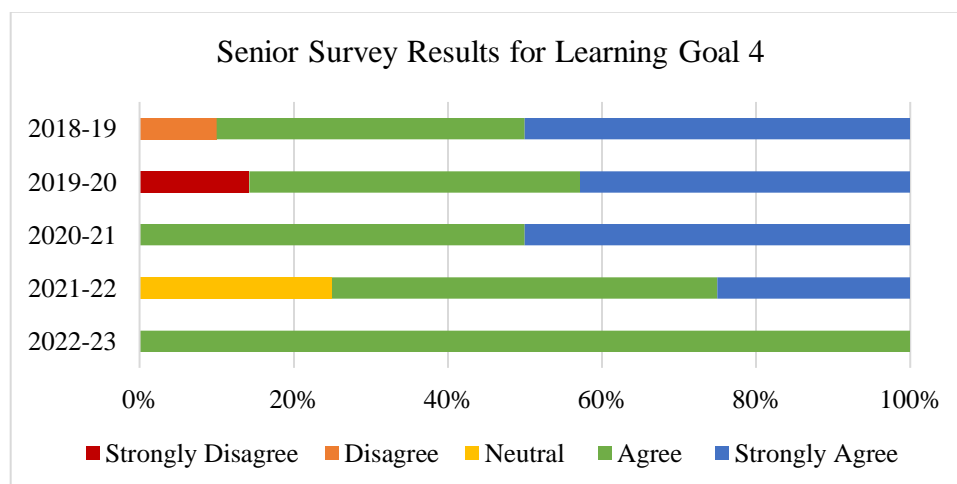
## Environmental Studies Assessment Report 2022-23 Academic Year

In accordance with the Environmental Studies (EVST) Student Assessment Plan (SAP), we evaluated EVST Program Learning Goal 4 at the completion of the 2022-23 academic year. This goal states that students should be able to “*discuss forms of sustainable community life*”. To accomplish this assessment, we used two instruments from our SAP: the senior survey (indirect) and a holistic senior assessment (direct) accomplished via a discussion between the EVST faculty during our annual assessment meeting. Historically, we also used a second direct tool (the senior thesis rubric) to assess our learning goals, however, during discussions over the last few years, there has been growing concern about the utility of this tool since the senior thesis exercise does not require students to achieve all five program learning goals. Thus, we did not use this assessment tool this year, and we have updated our Student Assessment Plan to reflect this change (see attachments).

### Indirect Assessment: Senior Survey

One question on the senior survey specifically addresses EVST Program Learning Goal 4 (LG4). Students are asked to respond, on a five-point Likert scale, to “*I feel that the Hendrix College Environmental Studies curriculum has taught me discuss forms of sustainable community life.*” There were five graduating seniors in 22-23, and two completed the survey. We have included results for this survey question from the previous four years for comparison in the table and figure below.

Year	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Surveys Completed	Number of Seniors	Percent Responded
2018-19	0	1	0	4	5	10	12	83%
2019-20	1	0	0	3	3	7	9	78%
2020-21	0	0	0	1	1	2	6	33%
2021-22	0	0	1	2	1	4	7	57%
2022-23	0	0	0	2	0	2	5	40%



In addition to the Likert scale question (which we ask every year for each of our five program learning goals), we ask students to expand on their response for the specific learning goal being assessed that year. The following bullets are the open responses we received in 22-23 for LG4.

- As ECC chair for two years I feel like I should have a better handle on creating sustainable community life but alas. It is easy to identify challenges surrounding sustainable living in our daily lives. Problems

around food sustainability, heavy reliance on fossil fuels, plastic pollution, habitat destruction, reluctance for policy change around environmental conservation, looming threat of climate change. The list goes on and on. It is easy to get caught up in identifying problems rather than finding solutions, no matter how big or small. Solutions are hard. I get that. I wish there was a class that was more focused on sustainable living, rather than making it an after thought in a sociology or politics class. There is no right or wrong answer to how we can build a more sustainable future. I can see how it would be challenging to make such a course but I think it would be a refreshing take on the doom-and-gloom of most environmental problems we discuss. I enjoyed how the environmental policy course I took with Dr. Gess emphasized the importance of collaboration in the policy process. We came up with fictional solutions to real world problems during in class exercises. Although it did not affect anything in the real world, it felt refreshing to see how actionable solutions are created. I sometimes got frustrated in classes that discussed environmental issues but didn't give great concrete solutions. I think a lot of this frustration stems from the fact that I have been thinking about sustainable living and been changing my own lifestyle in the name of the environment for years. Many of these problems aren't new to me, but are new to others. I see the value in these courses and their curriculum (Food, Culture, and Nature, environmental policy, etc). It would be nice if the next EVST colloquium class was focused on solutions to problems or something like that. I had colloquium with Moran and the class was about issues in the American southwest (very fascinating course). As we currently watch Lake Mead and Lake Powell drain, I begin to wonder what can be done about it. I think for courses that are specifically for EVST majors, there should be a greater emphasis on solutions to environmental problems and real-world examples of sustainable communities. All and all, yes I think the major did a good job for discussing forms of sustainable community life.

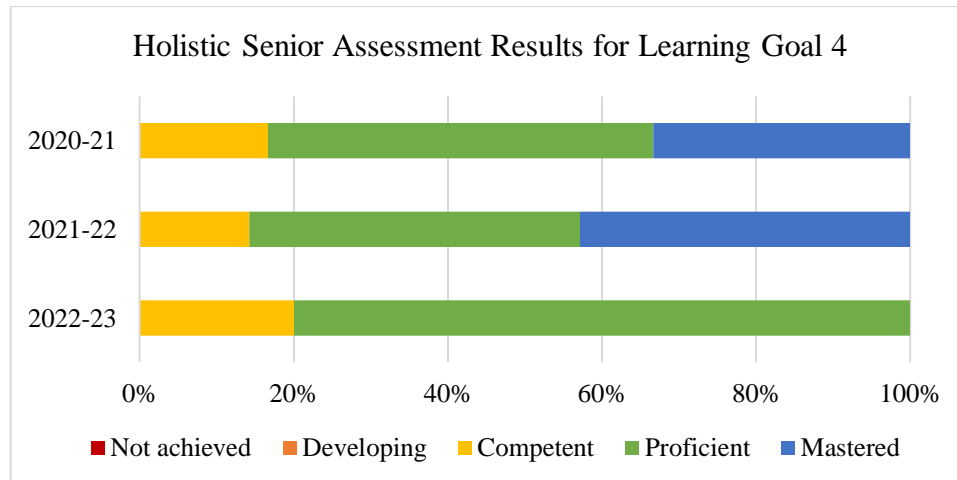
- I learned a lot about how humans interact with and affect the natural environment, often in detrimental ways. The classes that stood out to me as contributing to this learning goal are Environmental Sociology, Colloquium, and Senior Seminar. Environmental Sociology helped us begin to look at environmental issues from through an intersectional lense, and consider sociological implications of environmental issues, as well as make equitable considerations when looking at environmental solutions. Colloquium helped us look at different methods of environmental conservation and explore possible solutions to issues through research and presentation. Lastly, Senior Seminar helped us look at a specific environmental issue and develop sustainable solutions from research and original thought. The Environmental Studies curriculum has a lot of courses which explore environmental issues. I think it might be helpful to have a course dedicated to developing solutions after taking other classes which introduce students to relevant environmental issues.

Though the sample size is small (N=2), both students marked that they “agree” that they met the goal of being able to discuss forms of sustainable community life, though the open responses do indicate they would have appreciated even more opportunities to develop solutions to environmental problems, which they already did in various ways throughout the curriculum. If we take a longer view, Likert responses indicated that seniors felt that the program meets LG4 well, with 88% of respondents (N=25) in the last five years agreeing or strongly agreeing that the program helped them to discuss forms of sustainable community life.

### **Direct Assessment: Holistic Senior Assessment**

This assessment tool involves a discussion among program faculty of our seniors’ achievement of learning goals throughout their time in the EVST program. This discussion occurred during our annual assessment meeting, which took place on May 9, 2023, and was attended all seven EVST faculty. We discussed each senior’s progress towards LG4 in their classes, internship experience, and capstone work, coming to a consensus on their level of achievement. The results of this discussion for LG4 from this year and the previous two years (which is the amount of time we have been conducting these discussions) are presented in the table and figure below.

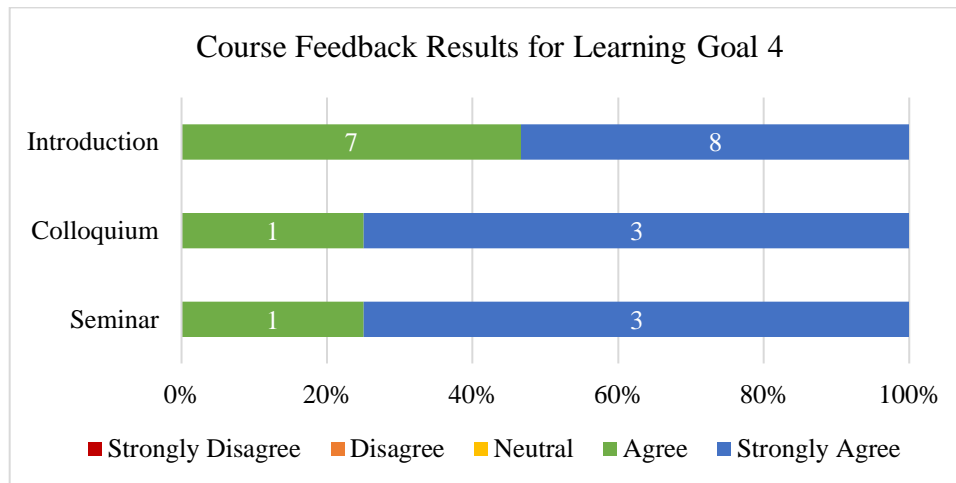
Year	Not achieved	Developing	Competent	Proficient	Mastered	Number of Seniors
2020-21	0	0	1	3	2	6
2021-22	0	0	1	3	3	7
2022-23	0	0	1	4	0	5



These results indicate that 100% our 22-23 seniors demonstrated at least competency in meeting LG4, and 80% were in the proficient category. We recognize that our students could use more practice thinking about and discussing sustainable solutions to environmental problems, and so we considered ways in which we will enhance our approaches to this learning goal. One way we are already doing this work is through community engagement experiences that demonstrate how organizations are working towards environmental solutions. For example, in spring 2023, James Dow worked with the Little Rock office of Audubon Delta to generate field experiences for his Environmental Philosophy students. They kayaked the Fourche Creek urban waterway to learn first-hand about Audubon's efforts to protect it for wildlife and humans. Another example in the works is the Odyssey Professorship secured recently by Brett Hill and Courtney Hatch. Over the next three years, they will engage Hendrix students in environmental monitoring and research on environmental inequities in Arkansas.

Environmental Studies students will be targeted for recruitment for this Odyssey experience, and so they will have more opportunities to help begin to build sustainable communities. In all these efforts, including in our classes, we discussed how it is important that we incorporate targeted reflection opportunities in which students think about how the work they are doing connects with LG4 (and our other learning goals). We will incorporate more intentional opportunities for students to make these connections through reflective writing and discussion.

As a final note, last year in our assessment report, we identified the need to better understand how students are achieving our program's learning goals as they progress through EVST-coded courses so that we might tailor the curriculum to help them master these learning goals. Thus, we implemented indirect assessment through course feedback forms in all three EVST-coded courses in 22-23. Students were asked to respond, on a five-point Likert scale, to whether the course helped them achieve the learning goal of being able to "*discuss forms of sustainable community life*". The results of these surveys are shown in the figure below.



Based on this feedback, which admittedly does not include all students who took the course (enrollments were 31, 8, and 5, for Intro, Colloquium, and Seminar, respectively), students appeared to agree or strongly agree that they achieved the learning goal of discussing forms of sustainable community life. In the future, it could be useful to have instructors evaluate students (in a manner similar to how TEC requests assessment data) to compare whether these indirect and direct approaches to assessment align. Our faculty will discuss the utility of this approach to assessment at our fall meeting.