

How to Thrive in Environmental Science and Resource Management

The difference between just taking classes and getting an actual education often is a by-product of engagement and integration. As a research-intensive university, the UW offers more opportunities and challenges than high school or community college, so don't be shy about making the UW work for you! Here are a few tips from advisers, librarians and students for achieving a sustaining and satisfying undergraduate experience:

1. Construct a narrative about what you can do (or want to do or will be able to do) as an environmental scientist. Environmental science and resource management is a very broad discipline, so it is important to develop a focused, strong interest (wildlife conservation, environmental legislation, restoration ecology, silviculture, renewable energy, climate change etc.) and use that interest as a way to integrate projects, coursework, research, internships, and extra-curricular activities. You will do best when you find a subject area that you thrive in.

2. Get to know the faculty and graduate students. Schedule meetings, bring them your ideas, ask for their tips on classes to take or books and articles to read or lectures to go to. Find out what they're studying. Get their honest critiques on your work. Remember they are each part of an invisible learning community, both at the UW and beyond, centered around their subject expertise. This is one of the most efficient ways to begin to feel like an insider—a member of a discourse community. As one student put it, "talk to your professors and TAs. They can lead you to your first career faster than spamming your resume to different companies." As another put it, "attach yourself to a professor and don't let go until graduation."

3. Take ESRM seminars. There are multiple seminars offered each quarter, including ESRM 429 and ESRM 455. Seminars provide an opportunity to hear a variety of in-depth talks on a wide array of subjects. Not only can you see how a degree in the environmental sciences can be applied, you also can ask questions and hear how graduate students, faculty, and professionals frame questions. Keep in mind that 400 level seminars also count towards upper-level course requirements.

4. Take related courses in other departments. You want to be a well-rounded student. Making those last few credits complement your work in the major is an invaluable enhancement to your education, and will help you broaden your resume.

5. Showcase the dependable strengths you develop in the major: programs and software you've used; analytical and modeling techniques; project design, implementation, and presentation; collecting field data; learning how to read scholarly articles; learning how to write and defend arguments, etc. Course syllabi often contain learning objectives and learning outcomes—translate some of these into resume language.

6. Get to know your fellow students. They can offer you a lot of unexpected insights and perspectives, critique your work, and help you discover other UW connections and opportunities. They are an often overlooked resource. As one student put it, "It turned out that I learned at least as much from my fellow students than I did from my professors. Not just content, but also how to put things together." Don't turn this into an impersonal commuter campus, but treat it like a real learning community.

7. Think at least three quarters ahead about class scheduling. This means working with SEFS advisers to develop a sense of academic focus, purpose, and direction—a kind of mental map of where you want to go and how to get there. Of course, you can only use (or make) a map if you know where you want to go. Another way of putting this is to say that a list of courses is not the same thing as an inquiry-driven academic plan. (See tip 1). While we can't always know too far in advance whether class offering times will clash (unavoidable in an era of classroom shortages and scheduling constraints), you can use the **[Time Schedule Archive](#)** as a resource to look up when courses were offered in the past.

8. Engage in independent research (including ESRM 491 credits). Working with a faculty member on your own research project can give you the confidence and analytical tools to create a first-rate research project that can be showcased on a resume.

9. Think about graduate school. That credential can be all-important, and you can really sharpen your skills and focus by doing post-undergraduate work. If you're considering graduate school, getting to know the faculty and doing your own research are paramount.

10. Get an internship. Participating in an internship while at school increases the chance you will land a productive and rewarding full-time job when you graduate. The **[SEFS Student Services Blog](#)** as well as **[HuskyJobs](#)** are important tools for searching for internships. The **[Center for Sustainable Forestry at Pack Forest](#)** also offers internships to students seeking to develop and expand their forestry field skills. The **[Career Center's Internship Fair](#)** is a great opportunity to connect with corporate, small business, non-profit, and government employees who are looking for students to hire.

11. Pay attention to job postings early. You may still have a few years left in school, but it's never too early to start studying job descriptions related to your career or academic interests. In particular pay attention to the types of qualifications that employers desire, so that you can start taking classes and internships that will make you more desirable when you are on the market.

12. Get involved in community service or volunteer work. The [SEFS Student Services Blog](#) regularly publishes volunteer opportunities both on and off campus. Another great source is the [Carlson Leadership and Public Service Center](#).

13. Get to know the Environment and Forest Resources Librarian Maureen Nolan and the extensive digital resources available through the UW libraries. Access to this depth and quality of digital sources material is a rare privilege for you while you are at the UW, so take advantage of it. Maureen can help you navigate the information ocean, sharpen your searches and your research focus, find the right sources, use the map library, find out what your professors' academic work is all about, and much more. This is one of the most reliable ways to improve your academic engagement and performance.

14. Know that you are not alone, and take advantage of campus resources. College can be a stressful period of life full of many life changes. In addition to the SEFS Office of Student and Academic Services, you have access to a broader set of resources offered by the University of Washington. Find a list of health and safety resources [here](#), and longer list of academic, financial, and career resources [here](#).