WASHINGTON CENTER
@ THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

CURRICULUM FOR THE BIOREGION

Summary Results from a Survey about the Teaching of Climate Change at Colleges and Universities in the Puget Sound Bioregion

Curriculum for the Bioregion is a public service initiative of the Washington Center for Undergraduate Education at The Evergreen State College. Funded entirely by grants, the initiative supports faculty learning communities as they integrate sustainability content and place-based learning experiences across the academic disciplines. Curriculum ideas are shared via the project website at http://bioregion.evergreen.edu

Over 380 individuals visited the online survey about climate change teaching in Spring, 2013. Of these, 347 individuals completed it to the degree that their results could be tabulated.

Highlights of the survey results:

1. Climate change and associated issues are being taught in a **wide array of classes at the 30 campuses** represented by faculty members who completed our survey. This topic is taught the **most extensively in science** or applied science classes at both the introductory and advanced level, among those faculty members who completed this survey.
2. **Faculty members who teach about climate-change emphasize different topics** (see graph on the following page). **Some dimensions of climate change appear not to be taught very much at all** or are only taught in depth by a few faculty members; these topics are climate/energy policy; the moral and inter-generational dimensions of climate change; climate change communications and discourse about climate change in the media; as well as collective responses and social movements related to climate change.
3. **Emotional responses to climate change appear to get little coverage** by any faculty except those in arts and humanities. In our nine years of Curriculum for the Bioregion faculty development activities, faculty have repeatedly commented that one of the most challenging aspects of teaching climate change is the emotional responses to a frightening future—and how challenging it is to handle these emotions in class.
4. Only a very **small number of faculty incorporate any kind of climate change related community-based learning or service-learning**. Those who do involve their students in such activities do not, for the most part, engage with climate change related sites or projects—perhaps reflecting the fact that they are unaware of field sites or service-learning opportunities in their respective communities. The lack of engagement to these projects presents a problem—and a huge opportunity.

5. Only a **small number of faculty development or curriculum development initiatives** related to climate change are occurring on these campuses—even though 19 out of the 30 campuses are signatories to the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. This commitment requires campuses to carry out "broad-scale climate change education and sustainability-across-the-curriculum initiatives."
6. Among this group of interested faculty who completed the survey, there is **substantial interest in participating in an inter-institutional effort to strengthen climate-change education.** Over 70% of the respondents said "Yes," or "Maybe" in answer to the question gauging interest in participating in a faculty and curriculum development project. The survey suggests widespread interest both across campuses and disciplines.

What dimensions of climate change are taught in the classroom?

The graph on the next page summarizes the results to a key question on the survey:

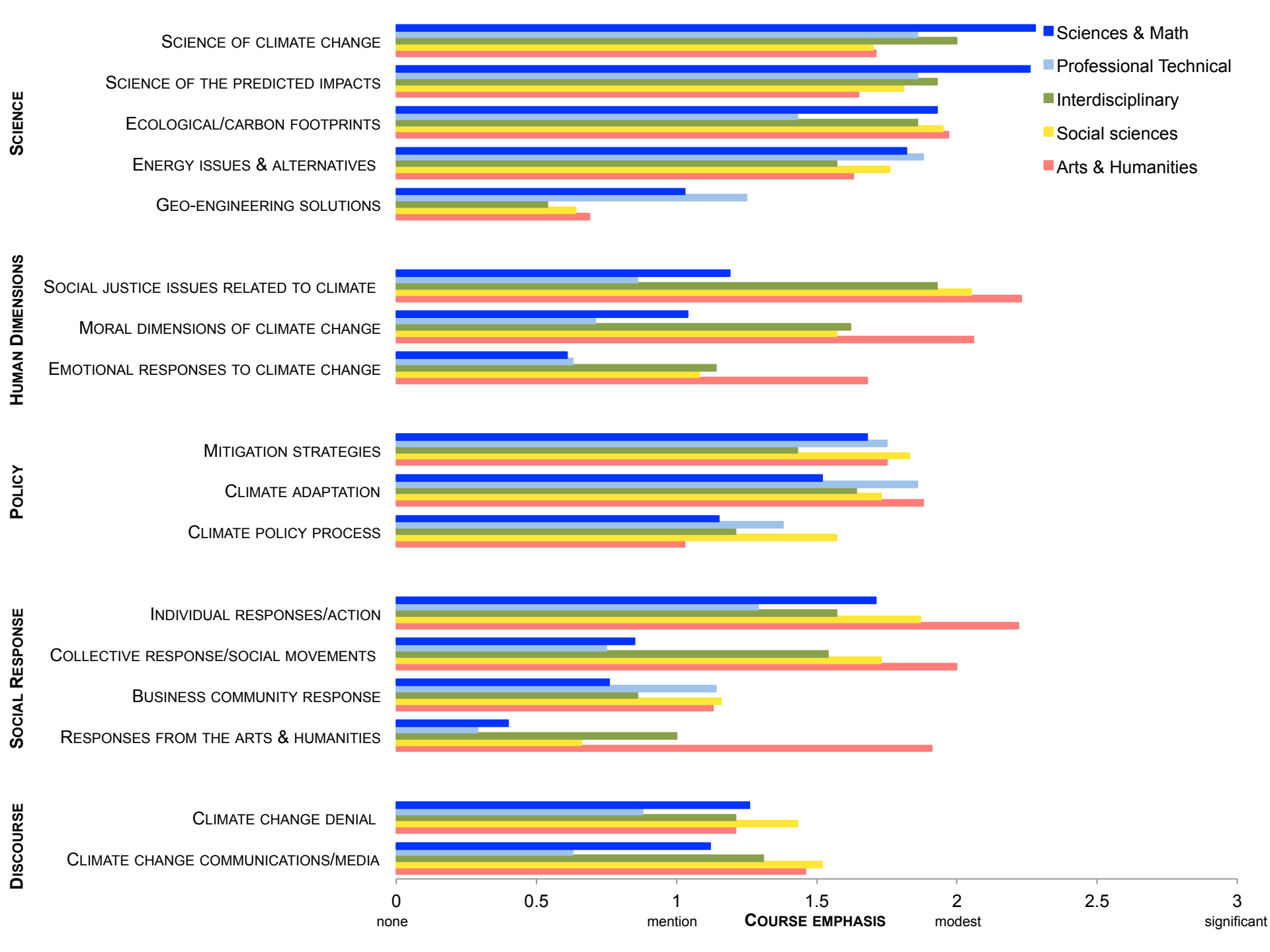
"What aspects of climate change do you emphasize in these courses? What do you focus on the most? For each topic below, please rate the degree of emphasis you give it in any of your courses, using the following scale:"

The choice of possible answers on survey were:	**Value**
I give this no emphasis at all in any of my courses.	0
I make mention of this but not in any depth in any of my courses.	1
I give this modest emphasis in at least one or more of my courses.	2
I give this significant emphasis in at least one or more of my courses.	3

The following page summarizes the results for this question, by discipline.

Numbers of respondents by disciplinary group:

Science, math, engineering computer science	125
Professional/technical	15
Faculty who identified their field as "interdisciplinary"	14
Social Sciences	72
Arts and Humanities	45


Science
Science of climate change
Science of the predicted impacts
Ecological/carbon footprints
Energy issues & alternatives
Geo-engineering solutions
Human Dimensions
Social justice issues related to climate
Moral dimensions of climate change
Emotional responses to climate change
Policy
Mitigation strategies
Climate adaptation
Climate policy process
Social Response
Individual responses/action
Collective response/social movements
Business community response
Responses from the arts & humanities
Discourse
Climate change denial
Climate change communications/media
Sciences & Math
Professional Technical
Interdisciplinary
Social sciences
Arts & Humanities
0
none
0.5
1
mention
1.5
Course emphasis
2
modest
2.5
3
significant