



Environmental Science & Policy | 2017-2018 Assessment Report

1. Please give a brief overview of the assessment data you collected this year.

The assessment data collected this year was related specifically to the ES&P learning objective (#6) involved with “the ability to design and implement research strategies, collect, organize, and evaluate data, and produce written reports of professional quality, including hands-on skills in using computers to achieve these objectives”. The method we used to collect our assessment data was based primarily on the production of TWO rigorous research papers suitable for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Furthermore, we also required each student to design an e-portfolio with five required items—resume, artifacts demonstrating field or research experience (related in part to the in-class research assignment), volunteer work, grants/fellowships, and conferences or invited presentations. For assessment, students provided the website for their e-Portfolio and each one was evaluated for the required items and timely submission.

2. How will you use what you’ve learned from the data that was collected?

The 9 graduate students enrolled in the class formed 2 separate research teams and focused on two research themes including 1) the spatial distribution and microhabitat selection of a sheet-web weaving spider, and 2) the relative impact of landscape and climate variables on northern pike annual production of larvae. This process started with previously collected datasets that required a great deal of “manicuring” using excel before becoming useful. Research teams then developed working objectives/hypotheses, applied statistical procedures to test hypotheses, and constructed figures/tables to tell the best story possible. Manuscript text was crafted in a collaborative fashion using a template-based approach. All team members were responsible for conducting and submitting independent summaries of the primary literature. We anticipate that this effort will culminate in research papers submitted to the Journal of Animal Ecology (spiders) and The Journal of Great Lakes Research (northern pike). The assessment data collected from this experience (mostly observational and qualitative) will be used to identify and inform gaps in the current curriculum that were biggest barriers students to achieving this extremely important learning objective.