A. History

Environmental Studies at UWF is rooted in the discipline of Geography and has been affiliated with a variety of departments since the early years of the university. Its origins are traced to the hiring of Arthur H. Doerr, a University of Oklahoma geographer (Ph.D., Northwestern University, 1951) turned administrator who came to UWF as vice-president of academic affairs in 1970. Dr. Doerr, now professor emeritus in the department, subsequently hired several University of Oklahoma geographers, and the nucleus of what was to become the Department of Environmental Studies was created.

The 1970s was the decade in which the foundation of the modern department was created. According to the 1970-71 and 1971-72 catalogs, two geography courses (Cultural Geography and Conservation of Environmental Resources) were taught within the Department of History in what was then Gamma College of the upper-division-only University of West Florida. In 1972-73, an additional five Geography courses were offered — and Art Doerr was listed as Professor of Geography — in the Department of Foreign Languages. Most of these Geography courses were taught by William Sterling Kerr III, who was listed — along with Art Doerr — as faculty in Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, a non-degree granting program in Alpha College. Jerome F. Coling, a doctoral student at the University of Oklahoma (Ph.D., 1978), was hired in 1974 (apparently as a replacement for Kerr), and by the next year a new Geography
course—Methods and Techniques in Environmental Studies—was created. In 1976-77, the UWF catalog offered tracks in Geography and also Environmental Studies within the Social Sciences Interdisciplinary (SSI) B.A. program (housed within the Faculty of History, Sociology, and Social Sciences Interdisciplinary). By the following year, both a social and a scientific option were listed under the Environmental Studies area of emphasis. Art Doerr and Jerry Coling continued to be the primary Earth and Atmospheric Sciences faculty for the remainder of the decade, although James P. Morgan, a preeminent coastal geologist—recently retired from LSU—joined as ‘faculty associate’ in 1977. Bruce E. Davis was listed as instructor in the Department of Sociology and Geography in 1980-81.

In the 1980s, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences (listed as a ‘department’ but housed within the Department of Sociology and Geography) offered a major through the Environmental Resource Management and Planning (ERMP) interdisciplinary program, and coastal studies became an increasingly important part of the offerings. The 1981-82 catalog listed a broad suite of upper-division undergraduate courses, and Jerry Coling was the coordinator of the program. Another University of Oklahoma geographer—David L. Sengenberger (Ph.D., 1973) was hired as associate professor (apparently to replace Bruce Davis). An incipient Master’s program in Coastal Zone Studies (like Environmental Studies, focused upon both policy and science aspects) began at UWF in 1980, and some of the first faculty were housed within Earth and Atmospheric Sciences. The program upgraded Morgan’s Coastal Morphology course to graduate level, and
at least two more coastal classes were added in the 1980s. The Master's program in Coastal Zone Studies eventually split into two prongs—the science prong as an M.S. program in Biology and the policy prong as an M.P.A. program in Political Science. Earth and Atmospheric Sciences (within a Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography by the late 1980s) continued to be a major player in the CZM programs throughout the decade by offering many courses on both the science and the policy sides, and adjunct instructors ('faculty associates') taught many of the courses.

In the 1990s, Environmental Studies grew from an ERMP interdisciplinary program to a stand-alone B.S. program, but it was a rocky road through various departments and colleges that got it to that point. In 1990-91, the ERMP was housed in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Earth and Atmospheric Sciences within the College of Arts and Sciences. Jerry Coling was program 'chair', Art Doerr and Dave Sengenberger were listed as faculty, and adjunct faculty included Jim Morgan and Harry Stopp (a newly hired vice-president of research with a Ph.D. in Geography from LSU). By the following year, soils scientist Alan Goldin and J. Wyckoff were added as regular faculty, and more adjunct faculty were continuously added as enrollments grew. By 1993-94, the program—under the direction of coordinator Jerry Coling—had allied itself with the newly created College of Science and Technology, where it became a B.S. (in ERMP) program housed in the Department of Biology (then the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology). Although the twin emphases
upon science and policy remained integral to the ERMP program, a conscientious decision was made to play down the social science aspects of the program. A Geography minor was created, however, and students in programs such as Communication Arts, Business, Government, Education, and International Studies could still take electives in cultural and regional geography courses. By 1995-96, the name of the B.S. program changed to Environmental Studies, it became housed in the Department of Chemistry, and the two tracks—Environmental Policy and Natural Science—were formally adopted. When Jerry Coling abruptly left to join the seminary, Alan Goldin became program coordinator for two years. By 1997-98, Environmental Studies became a stand-alone department, and Harry Stopp was appointed half-time chair. Four full-time faculty (M. Droubay, A. Goldin, J. Jee, and J. Liebens) plus numerous adjunct instructors taught a broad suite of courses to an ever-growing cadre of students. When Harry Stopp abruptly departed in 1997-98, Johan Liebens became program coordinator until Klaus J. Meyer-Arendt (Ph.D. in Geography, LSU, 1987) was hired in 1998 as full-time chair and faculty member with a coastal research focus. (The coastal specialty had been vacated by the death of Jim Morgan in 1995, and the M.S. in Coastal Zone Studies had been reduced to only a track in Biology.) By 1999, the Department of Environmental Studies was a vibrant member of a newly recombined College of Arts and Sciences.