

Biodiversity integration into Ontario university curricula

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Introduction

- Biodiversity loss is occurring at an alarming rate²
- Education can inform people about the importance of biodiversity and how they can help conserve it³
- Target 1 of Ontario Biodiversity Strategy⁴: “By 2015, biodiversity is integrated into the elementary, secondary and post-secondary curricula, including schools of business.”

Research objective

- To understand the degree to which biodiversity values have been integrated into university curricula, including schools of business

Research question

- To what degree is biodiversity integrated into Ontario university curricula, including business schools?

Methods

- Completed an index of six Ontario universities, which account for 30% of Ontario’s 20 universities in total⁵
- Combined enrolment represents 35% of university students across Ontario⁶
- Keyword search of academic calendars from six Ontario universities
- Twenty-eight relevant keywords used
- Assessed 386 undergraduate and 327 graduate programs using core and elective courses
- Approx. 18,000 courses evaluated

Biodiversity: “all the various forms of life on Earth including ecosystems, animals, plants, fungi, microorganisms, and genetic diversity”¹



Photo credit: Ontario Biodiversity Council⁷



Figure 1: The six Ontario universities studied for biodiversity integration within their curricula

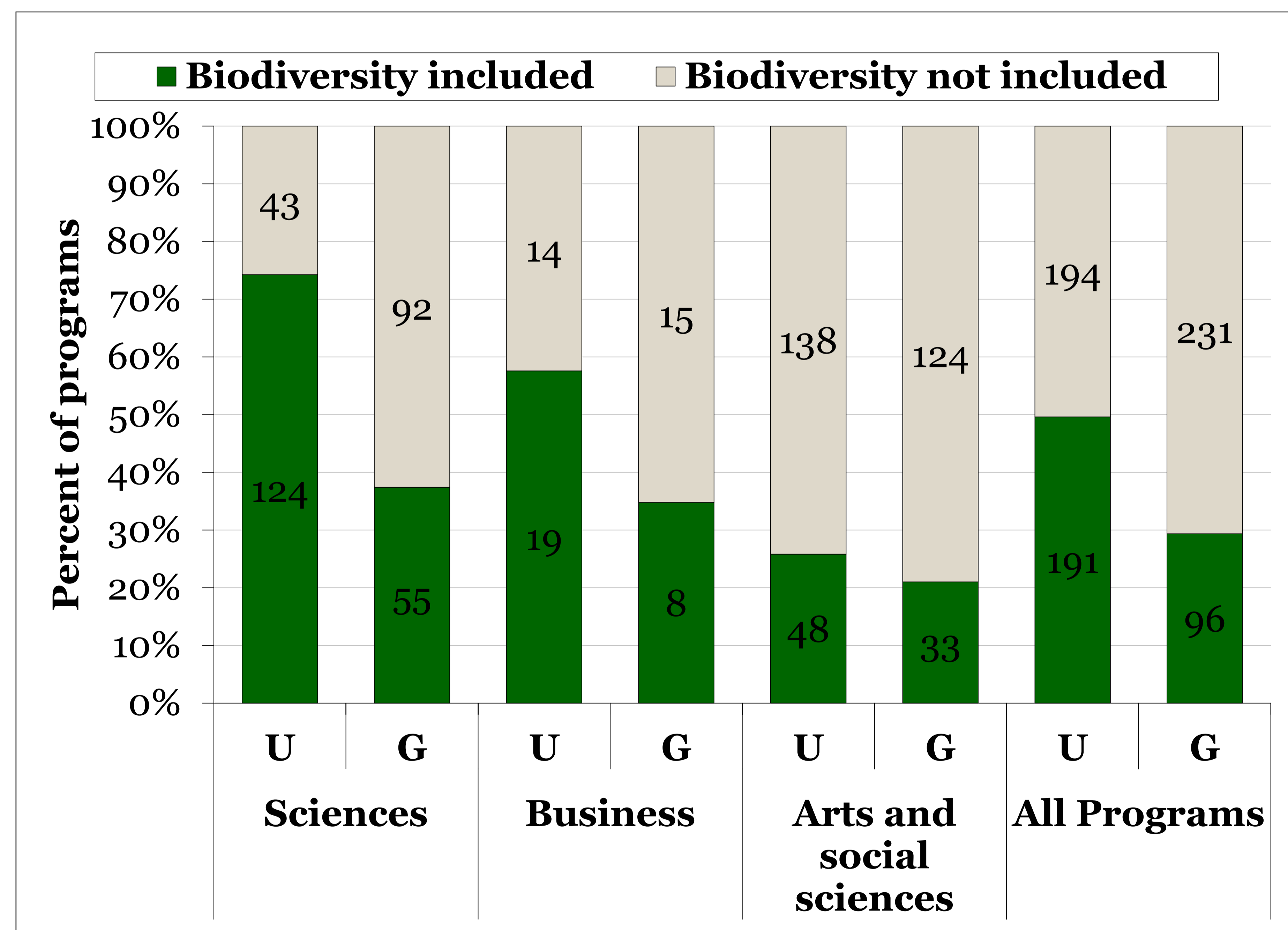


Figure 2: Summary of university biodiversity content overall (all programs) and by category (sciences, business and arts and social sciences) within undergraduate (U) and graduate (G) programs

Results

- Science programs showed the highest degree of biodiversity integration:
 - ◊ 74% of undergraduate, and
 - ◊ 37% of graduate programs
- Business programs:
 - ◊ 58% of undergrad, and
 - ◊ 35% of grad programs
- Arts and social sciences:
 - ◊ 26% of undergrad, and
 - ◊ 21% of grad programs

Discussion

- Results will be published in the State of Ontario’s Biodiversity Report 2015
- These results provide baseline data for further assessment in 2020
- Biodiversity can be incorporated to a higher degree within science, business and arts and social science programs
- Further research is needed to determine if descriptions in academic calendars accurately reflect biodiversity integration in the classroom

References

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