

Peru State creates first Distinguished Chair Position in Nebraska State College System (KLZA)--**The Board of Trustees at Peru State College has voted to create an endowment for the Al Wheeler, Jr. Distinguished Chair in Environmental Management, Policy, and Sustainability. Dr. Al Wheeler, Jr., provided a generous gift that made the position possible. It will be the first endowed chair in the Nebraska State College system. The search for the inaugural holder is currently in process.**

Dr. Wheeler approached Peru State College in the summer of 2022 with an idea for a degree program bringing an environmental perspective into the planning process for students to help businesses, farms, cities, and towns meet their long-term goals. This idea developed into the “Environmental Management, Policy, and Sustainability” (EMPS) program, which will be the first in Nebraska with that title. The program will also make Peru State College the only public institution in Nebraska to offer an undergraduate major focusing on environmental sustainability.

The inaugural holder of the Wheeler Distinguished Chair position will develop the new EMPS degree program and teach a normal load within the program, including as many sections of the new “Earth and its Biodiversity” course as feasible. Other duties will include creating and leading significant student-engagement experiences related to the EMPS program. One such experience that the new Chair will be encouraged to develop will be an optional two-or-three-week research experience at UNL- Cedar Point Biological station or similar field station.

The EMPS degree will prepare Peru State students to view real-world environmental problems through the lenses of policy and management and apply that view to various career fields. Sustainability careers will remain in demand as industries continue emphasizing environmental consciousness and sustainability goals.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects 7,800 openings for environmental scientists and specialists each year, on average, over the next decade.