

# Agroecology Student Handbook

Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook  
for Graduate Work in Agroecology

University of Wisconsin – Madison

Last Revised: July 2017

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## Program Overview

The Agroecology Program aims to train analysts and researchers in a broadened vision of the possibilities of agriculture. Students in this program will explore the underexploited ecological and social opportunities that hold promise for a more beneficent agriculture. By coming to appreciate contextual issues and trends, and through exposure to concepts of systems, ecology, and public process, graduates will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to influence the evolution of agriculture.

## Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook is intended for graduate students who are pursuing an MS in Agroecology. Its content focuses mainly on Program requirements, which extend beyond the foundational requirements of the Graduate School as a whole. To understand the multiple layers of requirements, students should use this handbook in conjunction with the Graduate School's [Academic Policies and Procedures](#), which provide essential information regarding general University requirements. The Grad School's web site contains a wealth of information to help students navigate in this space.

The Agroecology Program's authority to set degree requirements beyond the minimum required by the Graduate School lies with the Agroecology Program's Governance Committee. Degrees and course requirements may change over time. However, the Program Manager will communicate all changes to the student body, and students will be responsible only for the degree and course requirements in effect when they entered the program.

Students should supplement the information in this handbook by individual consultation with their advisor, committee, and the Program Manager so that individual needs/interests and all degree requirements are met. The Learning Plans, included as appendices below, are the main instruments for Agroecology students to plan their coursework and research to meet program requirements, and will help greatly in planning for timely completion of program requirements.

## Key People

The Agroecology Program is supported by the interdisciplinary Agroecology cluster, which resulted in three faculty members hired in 2002: Michael Bell in Community and Environmental Sociology, Claudio Gratton in Entomology, and Randall Jackson in Agronomy.

The Program Manager and main point of contact for current and prospective students is Alan Turnquist. [alturnquist@wisc.edu](mailto:alturnquist@wisc.edu) | 608-890-1456

## Admissions

The Agroecology Program accepts a wide range of undergraduate majors, not limited to the social and natural sciences. The admissions process is highly competitive, so all applicants should have a record of strong grades and GRE scores, Agroecology-relevant experience, and a commitment to learning in a multidisciplinary program.

The process for admission to the Agroecology Program has two linked stages. First, the Admissions Committee reviews all applications for fall entry in early February. The Program Chair will notify all applicants of their status shortly thereafter. However, this is not the end of the process. After this initial acceptance to the program, all prospective students must secure a faculty advisor and have a plan for financial support for their studies before the Agroecology Program will officially recommend them for admission to the Graduate School. While the Agroecology Program will assist admissible students in securing funding and an advisor, the process is ultimately the responsibility of the incoming student, and can take several weeks and in some cases several months.

In seeking out an advisor, students are encouraged to gather information from the [Agroecology Program website](#) and departmental and faculty websites to help identify faculty with matching interests. Students should then directly contact their preferred faculty to discuss their interests and the potential for advising and funding. Polite persistence is helpful in ensuring consideration, and it is often helpful for prospective students to travel to Madison and schedule in-person visits with faculty and the Program Manager in late fall or spring.

For most Agroecology students, financial support for their graduate studies comes in the form of a Graduate Assistantship such as a Teaching, Research, or Project Assistantship that includes tuition remission and a stipend. In many cases, the faculty academic advisor is also the faculty member with whom the student will work as a Graduate Assistant. Thus, the availability of funding can play a strong role in guiding the selection process between prospective students and would-be advisors. Fellowships and other avenues of financial support are possible funding mechanisms for Agroecology Students. All prospective students should be in contact with the Agroecology Program Manager during this process.

For more information on advisors, please see the [advisor policy](#) from the Graduate School.

## Program Tracks and Requirements

The Agroecology Program offers a Master's degree with two tracks. The Public Practice Track trains project developers and program managers at the interfaces of agriculture and other sectors of society. Students enrolled in this track will have the opportunity to combine the academic rigor of their coursework with the practical challenges of managing an applied project and generating useful deliverables for stakeholders. (See Learning Plan in Appendix B)

The Research Track addresses the need for continued research and scholarship to inform scientific discussions and negotiations. Students will have the opportunity to obtain experience in the scholarship of original research, culminating in the writing of a thesis. The research track is more common than the Public Practice track, with about 75 percent of students pursuing the research option. (See Learning Plan in Appendix A)

Students may change Tracks in the course of their studies, but this is dependent on approval from their advisor and the Agroecology Program.

The two program tracks in summary are:

	<b>Public Practice Track</b>	<b>Research Track</b>
<b>Goals</b>	Giving students the skills for engaging broad public discussion concerning the place of agriculture in a multifunctional landscape	Giving students the necessary interdisciplinary foundation for advanced agroecological research and scholarship
<b>Course Work</b>	Core curriculum; cross-training electives	Core curriculum; cross-training electives based on thesis research
<b>Major Product</b>	Project	Thesis
<b>Advising</b>	Electives chosen through Learning Plan signed with Program Manager and advisor; master's project carried out with Project Committee	Electives chosen with Thesis Committee; master's thesis conducted with Thesis Committee

## Sample Semester by Semester Course Plan

### Sample Semester by Semester Plan - Public Practice Option

\*note: see Learning Plan for course descriptions and specific requirements

	<b>year 1</b>	<b>year 2</b>	<b>year 3</b>
<b>Fall</b>	Agroecol 720 (1) Agroecol 724 (3) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	Agroecol 710 (1) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	as needed to fulfill requirements/ complete project
<b>Spring</b>	Agroecol 702 (3) Agroecol 710 (1) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	Agroecol 710 (1) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3) Agroecol 990 (3)	
<b>Summer</b>	Agroecol 990 as needed	Agroecol 990 as needed	

### Sample Semester by Semester Plan - Research Option

\*note: see Learning Plan for course descriptions and specific requirements

	<b>year 1</b>	<b>year 2</b>	<b>year 3</b>
<b>Fall</b>	Agroecol 720 (1) Agroecol 724(3) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	Agroecol 710 (1) Agroecol 990 (3) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	as needed to fulfill requirements/ complete thesis
<b>Spring</b>	Agroecol 710 (1) Agroecol 990 (3) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	Agroecol 710 (1) Agroecol 990 (3) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	
<b>Summer</b>	Agroecol 990, as needed (common with research track)	Agroecol 990, as needed (common with research track)	

## Graduate School Minimum Masters Degree Requirements

All Agroecology Graduate Students must meet Graduate School requirements in addition to Agroecology Program requirements. Graduate School Requirements include a minimum GPA of 3.0 and a minimum of 16 credits of graduate level coursework (300 and above). Please see the Agroecology Learning Plans for specifics on how Graduate School requirements affect Agroecology cross-training electives.

## Joint Degrees

Agroecology students can pursue a joint degree with an affiliated department such as Agronomy, Entomology, Horticulture, Soil Science or Community and Environmental Sociology. A joint degree consists of one graduate degree with two majors. To apply for a joint degree a student must submit a proposal for the degree to the Graduate School along with an Application for Change of Major/Addition of Major for Currently Enrolled Students. The student must also be admitted to the second major. The Graduate School Academic Associate Deans review all such proposals. Students must submit the proposal no later than the beginning of their second year of graduate study. Students interested in pursuing a joint degree should contact the Agroecology Program manager ASAP.

## Funding and Financial Information

Incoming Agroecology students must secure a plan for financial support for their studies as part of the admissions process. Typically, this funding comes in the form of a Graduate Assistantship of 33-50% that includes tuition remission. Other forms of funding such as fellowships are also acceptable substitutes. Students with alternative funding scenarios should contact the Program Manager.

If you do not have a (guaranteed) appointment and are looking for funding to support your graduate studies, the Graduate School provides a [list of steps to follow](#).

### TA and PA Collective Bargaining

The contract between the state and the Teaching Assistant's Association covering TAs and PAs is no longer in force; however, the university is continuing to use the terms of the contract until campus formally adopts new university policies. Since the TAA no longer represents TAs and PAs, sections of the contract referring to "union" rights and responsibilities are no longer in effect. TAs and PAs can find policies in the contract related to: grievance procedures; appointments; orientation, training, and evaluation; non-discrimination; termination; health and safety; and benefits, including sick leave, vacation, and leave of absence.

### Stipend Levels and Paychecks

Stipend rates for graduate assistantships are set by the University. Current rates for TAs, PAs, and RAs are on the Graduate School website [here](#).

Graduate assistants receive stipends on a monthly. They may authorize direct deposit by filling out the Authorization for Direct Deposit of Payroll form (<https://uwservice.wisc.edu/docs/forms/pay-direct-deposit.pdf>) and returning it to Sandra Bennett in the Agronomy Department.

### Tuition Remission and Payment of Segregated Fees

TAs, PAs, RA, and Lecturers (Students Assistants) with appointments of 33.3% or higher (approximately 13 hrs/week) receive remission of their full tuition (in- and out-of-state, as applicable). Students with these appointments are still responsible for paying segregated fees.

### **Health Insurance Benefits**

TAs, PAs, RA, and Lecturers (Student Assistants) with appointments of 33.3% or higher (approximately 13 hrs/week) for at least the length of a semester are eligible to enroll in a health insurance program. Information about health insurance options can be found at <http://www.ohr.wisc.edu/benefits/new-emp/grad.aspx>.

### **Maximum Appointment Levels**

The Graduate School sets [the maximum levels](#) of graduate assistantship appointments. International students should be especially aware of maximum levels of employment.

### **Enrollment Requirements for Graduate Assistants**

Students with graduate assistantships must enroll as full time students (min 8 credits in the fall and spring semesters and 4 credits during the summer). Detailed information about enrollment requirements is located in the Graduate School's academic policies [here](#).

### **Fellowships**

There are many different kinds of fellowships on campus. Some are awarded by the program, some are awarded by the school/college, and still others are awarded by the Graduate School. In addition, a number of students have applied for and won fellowships from federal agencies, professional organizations, and private foundations. The terms and conditions of fellowships across campus vary widely. If you have a fellowship, make sure you understand the obligations and benefits of that fellowship, including stipend, health insurance eligibility, eligibility for tuition remission, pay schedule, etc.

### **Graduate School Fellowships**

The Graduate School administers a number of different fellowships on campus, including: the University Fellowships, Chancellor's Fellowships, Mellon-Wisconsin Fellowships, the Dickie Fellowships, and a variety of external fellowships <https://kb.wisc.edu/gsadminkb/page.php?id=34761>

### **External Funding/Fellowships**

We encourage all students to seek out and apply for funding from sources external to the university (e.g., federal agencies, professional organizations, private foundations). The Graduate School supports selected federal/private fellowships through the provision of tuition support and health insurance, list at <http://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/process>

The Graduate School also provides remission of the non-resident portion of students' tuition (if applicable) to students who win external fellowships that are payrolled through the university and provide an academic year or 12-month appointment.

Once you find a fellowship, scholarship, or award to which you want to apply, consider contacting the [Writing Center](#). The Writing Center staff can provide valuable advice on crafting your application.



### **Fellows with Concurrent Appointments**

Students with fellowships payrolled through the university may hold concurrent graduate assistantships and/or student hourly appointments up to a total maximum combined annual stipend of \$41,616 (2013-2014 maximum). If you have any questions about concurrent work along with your fellowship, please feel free to contact the Office of Fellowships and Funding Resources.

### **Funding for Study Abroad and International Research**

The [Institute for Regional and International Studies](#) provides information about opportunities for international research, grants, scholarships and other funding.

## **Degree Completion**

At the beginning of the semester in which a student anticipates graduating, he or she should report to the Program Manager. Together they will check their coursework against their learning plan and insure the student has completed all Graduate School and Agroecology degree requirements. At this point, the student must set a date with their thesis committee and ask that the Program Manager requests a graduation warrant at least 3 weeks before the anticipated date of their final presentation. All incompletes must be removed before a warrant can be issued for a Master's degree.

Students must be registered for at least two credits in the semester in which they plan to receive a Master's degree. In rare situations the Graduate School will approve the payment of a degree completion fee for students who have met all degree requirements except thesis defense or removal of an incomplete. To be eligible the student must have submitted the thesis paper while registered. The fee is equal to 2 graduate credits at the in-state rate. The department must complete a request for this exception to be made.

### **Degree Completion Checklist**

- Complete coursework, maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA, and clear all incompletes.
- Early in the semester, notify the Program Manager that you intend to graduate.
- You must be registered for at least 2 credits for the semester in which you receive your degree, or pay a degree completion fee. (see [Graduate School Master's Degree Deadlines and Events](#)).
- Schedule a thesis defense (Research Track) or a final presentation (Public Practice Track) in consultation with your committee and the Program Manager
  - Choose a defense/presentation date. This is a public event
  - At least 3 weeks before your scheduled defense/presentation, contact the Program Manager to order a warrant and to reserve a space for your defense/presentation
  - Program Manager will bring the warrant to the defense/presentation, student must collect the signatures and return the warrant to the Program Manager
- Submit electronic version of Thesis to the Program Manager.
- If submitting a thesis to Memorial Library, consult the Graduate School's [Guide to Preparing Your Master's Thesis](#); walk manuscript and advisor's page to Memorial Library before degree deadline

- If attending Commencement, make arrangements according to instructions available from the Commencement Hotline, 262-9076

## Professional Development

The Agroecology program offers a competition designed to fund professional development opportunities for graduate students. Up to \$300 per award is available for travel and expenses related to conferences or collaborative efforts that result in extracurricular learning or networking. The Governance Committee will decide awards based on merit, need, and availability of funds (see appendix C for the competition).

### Campus-wide Resources for Professional Development

In addition to opportunities at the local level, the Graduate School [Office of Professional Development](#) and Engagement (OPDE) provides direct programming in the areas of career development and skill building, and also serves as a clearing house for professional development resources across campus. The best way to stay informed is to watch for the weekly newsletter from OPDE, GradConnections, and to visit the webpage [TBD] for an up-to-date list of events. For example, typical topics covered throughout the year are:

- Individual development plans
- Planning for academic success
- Dissertation writing support
- Communication skills
- Grant writing
- Teaching
- Mentoring
- Research ethics
- Community engagement
- Entrepreneurship
- Career exploration: academic, non-profit, industry, government, etc.
- Job search support
- Pursuing postdoctoral training

Be sure to keep a pulse on programs offered by the following campus services as well.

- Writing Center <http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>
- Grants Information Collection <http://grants.library.wisc.edu/>
- Student Technology Training (STS) <http://sts.doit.wisc.edu/>
- Delta Program <http://www.delta.wisc.edu>
- UW Teaching Academy <https://tle.wisc.edu/teaching-academy>
- UW Center for the Humanities <http://humanities.wisc.edu>
- Wisconsin Entrepreneurial Bootcamp <http://bus.wisc.edu/degrees-programs/non-business-majors/wisconsin-entrepreneurial-bootcamp>

## Satisfactory Progress – Conduct

### Professional Conduct

All students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of professional behavior and ethics. Students should avoid even an appearance of improper behavior or lack of ethical standards while in Graduate School at UW-Madison, in all professional settings, and in their personal lives. Students should conduct themselves according to the standards expected of members of the profession to which the student aspires. Concerns about infractions of Professional Conduct may be effectively handled informally between the instructor/advisor and the student. If a resolution is not achieved, a graduate program representative may be included in the discussion. Separate and apart from a violation of Professional Conduct, a student may face University disciplinary action with regard to the same action. Students are responsible for reading the information here as well as the information published on all the relevant web sites. Lack of knowledge of this information does not excuse any infraction.

1. **Professional Ethics:** Students shall show respect for a diversity of opinions, perspectives and cultures; accurately represent their work and acknowledge the contributions of others; participate in and commit to related opportunities; aim to gain knowledge and contribute to the knowledge base of others; understand the UW Student Code of Conduct; represent their profession and the program; and strive to incorporate and practice disciplinary ideals in their daily lives. Resumes/CVs must reflect accurate information.
2. **Honesty and Integrity:** Students shall demonstrate honesty and integrity as shown by their challenging of themselves in academic pursuits; honesty and ethics in research and IRB applications—including honesty in interpretation of data, commitment to an unbiased interpretation of academic and professional endeavors; and the need to document research activities, protect subject/client confidentiality and HIPPA regulations. Students shall follow-through and pull their weight in group activities and understand where collaboration among students is or is not allowed; not plagiarize others or past work (self-plagiarism), cheat, or purposefully undermine the work of others; and avoid conflicts of interest for the duration of their time in the program. As a professional, honesty and integrity also extends to personal behavior in life outside of the academic setting by realizing that students are representatives of the program, UW-Madison, and the profession as a whole.
3. **Interpersonal and Workplace Relationships:** Students shall interact with peers, faculty, staff and those they encounter in their professional capacity in a manner that is respectful, considerate, and professional. This includes and is not limited to attending all scheduled meetings, honoring agreed upon work schedules, being on-time and prepared for work/meetings, contributing collaboratively to the team, keeping the lines of communication open, offering prompt response to inquiries, and employing respectful use of available equipment/technology/resources. Chronic or unexplained absences are unprofessional in the workplace and could be grounds for termination or removal of funding. To facilitate the free and open exchange of ideas, any criticism shall be offered in a constructive manner, and the right of others to hold different opinions shall be respected.
4. **Commitment to Learning:** Students are expected to meet their educational responsibilities at all times. Be actively prepared for class and be ready for questions and answers. Be on time for

every class and always show courtesy during class or if you have to leave class early. If possible, students should notify the instructor at least one day in advance of a planned absence. Students who are unable to attend class are responsible for finding out what occurred that day and should not expect instructors to give them individual instruction. Recognizing that the pursuit of knowledge is a continuous process, students shall show commitment to learning by persevering despite adversity and seeking guidance in order to adapt to change. Students shall strive for academic excellence and pursue and incorporate all critique, both positive and negative, in the acquisition of knowledge in order to understand and respect the community in which they work.

5. Professional Appearance: Students shall convey a positive, professional appearance in order to represent the program in a dignified manner. Appearance includes a person's dress, hygiene, and appropriate etiquette/protocols for the environment (including safety protocols and protective clothing in environments that require them).

This graduate program, the Graduate School, and the Division of Student Life all uphold the UW-System policies and procedures in place for academic and non-academic misconduct. In addition, graduate students are held to the same standards of responsible conduct of research as faculty and staff. Furthermore, unprofessional behavior towards clients/subjects, faculty, staff, peers and public are significant issues in the evaluation and promotion of students. In turn, we hold expectations for the highest level of academic integrity and expect professional, ethical, and respectful conduct in all interactions. Students may be disciplined or dismissed from the graduate program for misconduct or disregard for professional conduct expectations regardless of their academic standing in the program. Separate and apart from a violation of Professional Conduct, a student may face University disciplinary action with regard to the same action. Students are responsible for reading the information here as well as the information published on all the relevant web sites. Lack of knowledge of this information does not excuse any infraction.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Academic misconduct is an act in which a student (UWS 14.03(1)):

1. seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
2. uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
3. forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
4. intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
5. engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance;
- or
6. assists other students in any of these acts.

Examples of academic misconduct include but are not limited to:

1. cutting and pasting text from the Web without quotation marks or proper citation;
2. paraphrasing from the Web without crediting the source;
3. using notes or a programmable calculator in an exam when such use is not allowed;
4. using another person's ideas, words, or research and presenting it as one's own by not properly crediting the originator;
5. stealing examinations or course materials;
6. changing or creating data in a lab experiment;

7. altering a transcript;
8. signing another person's name to an attendance sheet;
9. hiding a book knowing that another student needs it to prepare for an assignment;
10. collaboration that is contrary to the stated rules of the course; or
11. tampering with a lab experiment or computer program of another student.

Additional information regarding Academic Misconduct:

Graduate School policy and procedure on [academic](#) and [non-academic](#) misconduct.

Dean of Students Office: Information for Students: How to Avoid Academic Misconduct? What Happens If I engage in Academic Misconduct? What Should I do If I know a Classmate is Cheating?

<http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/students.html>

Dean of Students Office: Academic Misconduct Flowchart:

<http://students.wisc.edu/doso/misconductflowchart.html>

University of Wisconsin System: Chapter UWS 14: Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures:

[http://students.wisc.edu/doso/docs/uws\\_chapter\\_14.pdf](http://students.wisc.edu/doso/docs/uws_chapter_14.pdf)

### **Non-Academic Misconduct**

The university may discipline a student in non-academic matters in the following situations:

1. for conduct which constitutes a serious danger to the personal safety of a member of the university community or guest;
2. for stalking or harassment;
3. for conduct that seriously damages or destroys university property or attempts to damage or destroy university property, or the property of a member of the university community or guest;
4. for conduct that obstructs or seriously impairs university-run or university-authorized activities, or that interferes with or impedes the ability of a member of the university community, or guest, to participate in university-run or university-authorized activities;
5. for unauthorized possession of university property or property of another member of the university community or guest;
6. for acts which violate the provisions of UWS 18, Conduct on University Lands;
7. for knowingly making a false statement to any university employee or agent on a university-related matter, or for refusing to identify oneself to such employee or agent;
8. for violating a standard of conduct, or other requirement or restriction imposed in connection with disciplinary action.

Examples of non-academic misconduct include but are not limited to:

1. engaging in conduct that is a crime involving danger to property or persons, as defined in UWS 18.06(22)(d);
2. attacking or otherwise physically abusing, threatening to physically injure, or physically intimidating a member of the university community or a guest;
3. attacking or throwing rocks or other dangerous objects at law enforcement personnel, or inciting others to do so;
4. selling or delivering a controlled substance, as defined in 161 Wis. Stats., or possessing a controlled substance with intent to sell or deliver;

5. removing, tampering with, or otherwise rendering useless university equipment or property intended for use in preserving or protecting the safety of members of the university community, such as fire alarms, fire extinguisher, fire exit signs, first aid equipment, or emergency telephones; or obstructing fire escape routes;
6. preventing or blocking physical entry to or exit from a university building, corridor, or room;
7. engaging in shouted interruptions, whistling, or similar means of interfering with a classroom presentation or a university-sponsored speech or program;
8. obstructing a university officer or employee engaged in the lawful performance of duties;
9. obstructing or interfering with a student engaged in attending classes or participating in university-run or university-authorized activities;
10. knowingly disrupting access to university computing resources or misusing university computing resources.

Additional information regarding Non-Academic Misconduct

Dean of Students Office: Non-Academic Misconduct Standards Statement:

<http://students.wisc.edu/doso/nonacadmisconduct-statement.html>

Dean of Students Office: Non-Academic Misconduct Process

<http://students.wisc.edu/doso/nonacadmisconduct.html>

University of Wisconsin System: Chapter UWS 17: Student Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedures:

<http://students.wisc.edu/doso/docs/NewUWS%2017.pdf>

University of Wisconsin System: Chapter UWS 18: Conduct on University Lands:

<http://students.wisc.edu/doso/docs/NewUWS%2018.pdf>

**Research Misconduct**

Much of graduate education is carried out not in classrooms, but in laboratories and other research venues, often supported by federal or other external funding sources. Indeed, it is often difficult to distinguish between academic misconduct and cases of research misconduct. Graduate students are held to the same standards of responsible conduct of research as faculty and staff. The Graduate School is responsible for investigating allegations of research misconduct. This is often done in consultation with the Division of Student Life as well as with federal and state agencies to monitor, investigate, determine sanctions, and train about the responsible conduct of research. For more information, contact the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research Policy, 333 Bascom Hall, (608) 262-1044.

Please see section on “Grievance Procedures and Misconduct Reporting” for further information on reporting research misconduct of others. Here are links for additional information regarding Research Misconduct and Responsible Conduct:

Graduate School Policies & Procedures: [Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

## List Serves

There is a list serve for all current Agroecology Graduate Students to communicate events and other relevant information. The Program Manager will add all incoming students to this list upon admission, but not before.

The ESSA (Environmental Studies Student Organization) list is useful list serve for incoming, current, and past students. To subscribe, contact [owner-essa@lists.wisc.edu](mailto:owner-essa@lists.wisc.edu)