



University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

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Date: May 14, 2019

To: Provost and Vice Chancellor, Patricia Kleine

From: MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE ACADEMIC POLICIES COMMITTEE

Subject: APC report regarding program review of the Department of Geology

The Academic Policies Committee (APC) appreciates the time and effort of Chair, Kent Syverson of the Department of Geology, the members of the Internal Review Committee (Patricia Cleary, Eric Jamelske, David Lonzarich) and the external reviewer (Dr. Carey Gazis) for the review of the Department of Geology. The internal review committee and external reviewer reports provided the committee useful information to assist us in forming our recommendations. While the APC recommendations are generally summarized on the attached spreadsheet APC is providing additional details in the form of this letter.

COMMENDATIONS:

The Department of Geology is to be commended for the following:

1. The department's continued commitments of participation in the Honors Program and First Year Experience.
2. The continued high-level of participation and quality instruction in the LE program.
3. The department's continued commitments to High Impact Practices (HIPs) inside and outside of the classroom.
4. The department's commitment to securing extramural funding to support faculty and undergraduate student collaborative research.
5. The department's commitment to building partnerships with industry and success with the Responsible Mining Initiative.
6. The department's commitment to staying connected with alumni from the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop a Five-year Staffing Plan. The Department of Geology expects faculty turnover in the next seven years due to retirement. According to the external reviewer, it is crucial that future retirements be replaced in a timely manner because of the potential detriments to service to the university, course offerings, and student experiential learning. There is currently no plan in place and very few discussions have taken place to address this looming concern. The department needs a plan that clearly identifies academic program priorities including the proper balance between instruction, scholarship and service. The plan should include specifics on how future job descriptions will require participation in the field-camp sequence, especially if the Field Geology Coordinator Position is not restored (see below). The purpose of this exercise is to indicate what the university can expect in terms of course availability, scholarship, service activities, and industry expertise in the future. In this exercise the department is forced to set priorities and to make the most effective use of university resources. The exercise also makes it clear to all individuals (both internal and external constituents) that different levels of staffing will result in different levels of service to the program, university, and community.

EXCELLENCE: Our measure, our motto, our goal.

Academic Policies Committee

University Senate

2. Restore the Field Geology Coordinator Position. Due to institutional and system wide budget cuts, this position was eliminated in 2016. The Department prides itself in providing a field-based geology program. This position provided the necessary preparation for the many field camps undertaken through the department. These preparation efforts typically begin at the end of August and continue through spring break, sometimes requiring working through holidays. The eliminations of this position have resulted in an increase level of work stress amongst faculty who lead these excursions and take on these additional responsibilities without adequate compensation and/or reassignment of other duties. The current situation for faculty is not sustainable and may be prohibitive in the hiring process for new faculty or existing junior faculty.

Summary Recommendation:

The Department of Geology is doing a great job in providing a distinctive, rigorous, and highly regarded undergraduate program. For the program to continue in these efforts, the APC recommends these immediate actions:

- Support reassignment time for Dr. Kent Syverson and Lori Snyder
- Improve communication with students about field camp/field trip preparation
- Reconsider the purpose of the Environmental Science emphasis
- Continue to explore ways to enhance EDI initiatives within the department via student recruitment, embedding in coursework, and/or professional development

APC strongly supports the recommendation from all the other review levels to “continue in present form” considering the recommendations made above.

Cc.

Dr. Kent Syverson, Chair, Department of Geology

Dr. Mary Hoffman, Director of Academic Planning and Assessment