

December 23, 2008

From: Michael Mahoney, Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs

To: Diedre Badejo, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS)
David Larson, Chair, Geography and Environmental Studies

Subject: MOU Meeting – B.A., B.S. Geography, B.A. Environmental Studies, M.A. Geography

On December 12, 2008, I met with Diedre Badejo, Dean, CLASS; Gale Young, Interim Associate Dean, CLASS; Jim Okutsu, Associate Dean, CLASS, David Larson, Chair, Geography and Environmental Studies, Michael Lee, Professor, Geography and Environmental Studies; Aline Soules, Chair, CAPR; and Carl Bellone, AVP Academic Programs and Graduate Studies to discuss the Program Review for the B.A. and B.S. in Geography, the B.A. in Environmental Studies, and the M.A. in Geography in order to develop an MOU as required by CAPR 9.

The Department of Geography and Environmental Studies has six tenured faculty members who support both Geography and Environmental Studies. These faculty members have been together for ten years. Over 85% of the courses in the Department are taught by tenure track faculty. There is concern that the Department has not had a new tenure-track hire for a decade. A recent request for a new position was rated highly by the college but was not approved due to budget constraints.

The Department sees its undergraduate Geography and Environmental degrees as interdisciplinary areas of studies with many other departments contributing courses. The Department's degrees contribute to the university Academic Plan's focus on environmental issues and global awareness as well as to General Education.

The M.A. in Geography has traditionally been small with an enrollment of about sixteen students. The Department would like to put "Environment" in the title which would be more accurate and would potentially be more attractive to students.

The Department viewed the Program Review process as an opportunity to reinvent itself. Environmental Studies wants to reduce the number of units in the major from about 100 to the mid 80s to make it easier for students. A proposal for a modification of the B.S. in Geography is being prepared for CLASS and the Senate's CIC. The revised degrees will focus on 1) Geospatial Studies, 2) Global Studies, and 3) Sustainable Resource Management. Certificate proposals are also being developed. The B.A. in Geography will keep its liberal arts focus.

CAPR praised the Department's thorough and balanced self-review and the proposed revisions of the curriculum. The CAPR review included several recommendations which can be categorized as follows: 1) expansion and upgrading of the geospatial lab; 2) renaming the M.A. in Geography; 3) improvement of the assessment activities; and 4) continuation of alliances with other departments and programs as a way of increasing enrollment.

The results of the MOU meeting are as follows:

1. The Geospatial Lab will help the Department increase enrollment. It is good news that the number of workstations in the Geospatial Lab will be increased. The Department is encouraged to continue to work with University Advancement to seek outside funding for Lab expansion since the university budget is unable to fund expansion at this time.
2. The Department is encouraged to rename and revise its M.A. in Geography to more accurately reflect the Environmental Studies content of the degree and to make it more attractive to students. AVP Bellone can assist the Department in developing a strategy and timeline for approval at the campus and Chancellor's Office levels.
3. The Department needs to improve its assessment efforts. Assessment progress has been made but the Department is encouraged to follow the recommendations for improvement of assessment in the CAPR Review and to implement its own assessment plan for student learning outcomes utilizing rubrics in key courses (including a capstone course). The Department is encouraged to work with the CLASS Office to strengthen its capacity for good assessment.
4. The Department is encouraged to continue its alliances with other departments and programs as a way of increasing enrollment. In addition to these alliances, the Department should also explore other means of increasing enrollment such as offering some courses online (especially for professionals needing updating), expanded articulation of lower division courses with community colleges (such as the project currently underway with Ohlone College), and continued or expanded participation in the freshmen clusters program.
5. The Department is encouraged to resubmit its request for a new tenure-track position when the budget situation improves (hopefully in 2010).

AVP Carl Bellone and I sincerely appreciate the challenging and impressive work that Chair Larson and the other faculty members of the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies have done to run, update and improve their programs. We'd also like to thank the CAPR members for their time and informative report.

Cc: Gale Young
Jim Okutsu
Sue Opp
Aline Soules
Carl Bellone