

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

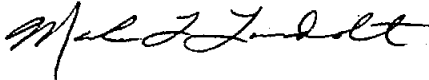
The Graduate School
200 Gerberding Hall
Box 351240
Seattle, Washington 98195-1240

Telephone: (206) 543-5900
Fax: (206) 685-3234

April 22, 1998

To: Lee Huntsman
Provost

From: Marsha Landolt
Dean



Re: Geography 10-year review

Recommended action:

At its meeting of April 16, 1998, the Graduate Council recommended continuation of the authorization to offer BA, MA and PhD degrees through the department of Geography. This is a remarkably strong, innovative, responsive, vibrant and enthusiastic department. The department has grown in faculty numbers over the last few years and lists as its most urgent need support staff, specifically conversion of the half-time local area network manager to full-time, an important position in this department that is one of the leaders on campus in courses using electronic delivery methods. They also note that their office support staff of an 80% administrative assistant and 1.5 secretaries for 17 faculty, 60 graduate students and 200 undergraduate majors is insufficient. Advice to the unit regarding the feasibility of funding for these support services through existing campus initiatives would be helpful. The department also argues that the IRP restricts efficient scheduling of faculty time.

Background:

The department of Geography was last reviewed in 1986 at which time it was noted that the department had declined in intellectual strength from a peak in the 1970s. Between 1986 and 1996, six new faculty were hired. Since the completion of the self-study, four additional faculty have joined the department (one to report in September). Thus, this department has largely been reconstructed since the last review. With the new addition in September, the department will have 17 members, the size of leading departments in the field. The Department has an outstanding national reputation, ranking within the top ten programs. The program is remarkably diverse and is very successful in maintaining a spirit of collegiality and mutual respect among scholars within the different specialties. Hiring individuals who prize such an environment has been key to the success of the department. BA, MA and PhD degrees are offered through the department, with approximately 200 undergraduate majors and 60 graduate students. The self-study, report of the review committee, the department's response to the committee's report and a more recent update by the Chair are attached.

The program is highly committed to the education of students in the societal issues of geography and its graduates at all levels find successful employment in the state and elsewhere. It has a strong internship program and also strong research links to local business and public

agencies dealing with local problems. In this regard, the state dollars devoted to this program pay off in several ways. First, with the education of students who will eventually be employed in the state. Second, through research in collaboration with agencies and businesses dealing with critical state issues. Third, in service through participation with regional agencies struggling with important problems. Indeed, the department embraces a philosophy of "accountability to place" in all areas of activity, teaching, research and service. The involvement of students and faculty with important local issues ensures that these issues are raised in classes at all levels.

The faculty teach 95% of all student credit hours offered by the department. In the past 10 years, the department has more than doubled the number of majors, increased faculty teaching productivity by 40% (calculated from the ratio of student credit hours to faculty FTE), offers 30-40% more BA degrees, but unfortunately, has considerably increased class size to achieve these gains. The department is evaluating ways to enhance access without growing the size of classes, including use of the departmental Intranet, distance learning (including partial distance learning), and the use of a "collaboratory". The collaboratory will allow students to work in teams using computer technology, Internet resources and the innovations of the UWIREN program. They have developed a curricular inventory that helps students navigate offerings by presenting full course descriptions on the Intranet and in hard copy. This very efficient, responsible and responsive department argues that the IRP policy of requiring all faculty to be engaged in classroom teaching each quarter of the academic year diminishes their efficiency. They also report frustration with the scheduling of upper division courses for four lecture and one lab hours per week, arguing that they find the arrangement inefficient and difficult to support pedagogically.

The department is highly successful in recruiting the graduate students it desires, generally failing only when the support package (multi-year fellowship) offered at other outstanding departments exceeds their financial resources. They have produced about 15 graduate degree recipients per year over the past 10 years. The department's funding for research is good for the social sciences, approximately \$20,000 per faculty FTE per year.

The review committee made several suggestions for improvement. Virtually all of these had been anticipated by the department in their self-study and are being addressed. The suggestions included:

1. Improved sequencing of undergraduate courses to allow one to build on another more efficiently.
2. Peer tutoring in the undergraduate program to reduce congestion in gaining access to help in courses
3. Expansion of core course offerings at the graduate level.
4. Ensuring timely advising for incoming graduate students
5. Establishment of mechanisms to educate students about professional life.
6. Seek to place more of the graduating doctoral students in academic positions.

In summary, this program is a model of efficiency and innovation. Its faculty are very productive and hard working. As with all faculty at the University of Washington, they perform this work with substantially less remuneration and support than faculty at peer institutions. The last item, placement of doctoral graduates in academic positions is interesting in this regard. The Graduate Council asked, as has been observed elsewhere on campus, whether students in Geography capable of pursuing academic careers choose not to after having observed the pressures of competing priorities, long hours and meager support and rewards that characterize their professor's professional lives. The answer was that this is certainly an important factor with many of them. This "testimony of the feet" by individuals making life decisions with the knowledge and ability to weigh the competing professional opportunities and rewards of industry and government employment in comparison to a university career is a telling comment on the future prospects of the professorate.

- c. John Simpson, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Susan Jeffords, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Debra Friedman, Associate Provost
Victoria Lawson, Chair, Geography
John Slattery, Associate Dean
Graduate Council
Review Committee