

April 10, 2023

Program Review Office
The Graduate School
University of Washington

To the review committee,

The School of Oceanography thanks the Graduate School and the members of our program review committee for their dedication to the task of helping us improve and for the overall excellent review we received. This response was written by Director Rick Keil based upon ideas and responses from two open meetings where faculty and our complete community were invited to provide feedback and help construct a response-implementation plan. Edits and ideas from nine faculty are incorporated into this document.

As noted in the report, and as emphasized by the large amount of space in the report dedicated to this topic,

the single biggest impediment the School faces is its failing and aging infrastructure.

Deferred maintenance of many facilities, laboratories, and teaching spaces has reached the point where infrastructure is impeding our ability to meet the [university's mission](#) of preserving, increasing, and transmitting knowledge. Given that the university prides itself on being a world leader in research, and given that the School of Oceanography is one of the largest research units on campus, it is must become a principal priority of the College of the Environment and the University of Washington to provide world-class facilities for our students, researchers and faculty. Such investments are already happening nationwide and if the UW does not act we will quickly lose ground to other universities that are moving rapidly in this space. UW must provide modern functional educational and research spaces, including infrastructure to support the University's global research vessel, Thomas G Thompson. *The School looks forward to partnering with our college and the university to immediately begin addressing these needs.* Chief among the charge is to identify Oceanography spaces in the university's master plan such that we understand that our excellence is valued and that our research spaces and infrastructural needs are not deemed secondary to those of our neighbors such as the medical school. As noted in the program review, the master plan for the south campus excludes Oceanography in nearly every regard, despite our 70+ years of nationally and internationally recognized excellence and our need for access to the waterfront. The issue of the sustained excellence of a leading program at UW resides in part in ensuring our lab, sea-going facilities and teaching spaces co-exist such that we can continue to support experiential learning at the water's edge and beyond.

We resoundingly endorse the finding that the deferred maintenance of the Marine Sciences Building now inhibits student training, ship operations and faculty recruitment. *We see the renovation of the Marine Sciences Building to become a centerpiece of our college as the highest infrastructural priority of the college.* The potential destruction of the linkage of Marine Sciences Building and Ocean Sciences Building as proposed by the Master Plan, which evaporates the Ocean Teaching Building (the name itself tells its function to our program), is a threat to the School and to the College.

Dr. Richard Keil, Director & Lowell A. and Frankie L. Wakefield Endowed Professor
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Another area for collaboration between the School of Oceanography and the college and university is in the fostering and caring for junior faculty. Much of the improvement to be gained in this space will come through collaborations within our college, and necessary changes in culture at the university as a whole. These actions are already underway, such as improving on-boarding and setting up mentoring committees for incoming faculty, and we are committed to being a part of this broader effort. The School does recognize that our assistant professors have not always been treated exactly equally and we commit to developing practices to insure a clearer and more equitable future for our existing junior faculty and for the ones we will to hire in the coming years.

The program review also mentions steps that might be taken now to evolve our educational programs. ***The faculty have agreed to immediately prioritize imaginative restructuring our graduate program to remove educational barriers between options, and to provide better clarity and communication to graduate students throughout their journey in our program.*** No other major oceanographic institution has undertaken such an adventure: the School's faculty will engage in this challenge. We also will immediately address specific concerns about certain undergraduate courses, and general concerns about the lack of clarity of the intent of our curriculum. We will do our part to maintain excellence in teaching. Our faculty will continue with new hires to expand our grasp of the growing complex research issues.

To clarify one comment from some undergraduates that they felt a bit unaware of, or left out of, the selection processes that bring experiential sea time opportunities to them. Extensive evidence exists of the widespread communications used to promote at-sea course and research opportunities such as the senior thesis or the OOI Visions cruises. We delivered a research expedition for senior undergraduates during the heart of the pandemic in fall 2020 - one of the *very few* university-sanctioned field events held prior to the release of vaccines - and we began blue-water sailing expeditions as soon as a vaccine was made available to students. We have gone far beyond in trying to ensure each student can go to sea if they so desire. Of this year's 28 graduating seniors we can confirm that 24 spent more than 5 days at sea during their time in our program, despite the pandemic.

Finally, the School's DEI plan will be voted upon this quarter, as has been scheduled for the past year.. Our DEI plan benefitted from the deliberations of many faculty, staff and students with additional input from many sources. The School continues to be the national leader in changing the gender demographic of faculty. The School started in 1987 and now has achieved gender equity: no other program in Ocean Sciences can make that claim. We led: we lead: we will continue to lead.

In closing, the School of Oceanography again extends its thanks to the authors of the program review report and commits to acting on it with the help of our college and university.

Sincerely,



Richard G. Keil
Director, School of Oceanography

**Additional comment from the Dean, College of the Environment
Submitted to the Graduate School on April 19, 2023**

I would like to thank the Graduate School and the program review committee for all the time and careful thought that they put into this review. It is enormously important and valuable to the College of the Environment and the School of Oceanography which is a jewel in the College's crown. I personally found the report insightful and extremely helpful in my thinking about the School and its future needs. I appreciate and agree with the School's response and the areas they have emphasized for collaboration with the College.

In particular, I would like to emphasize that the message about the failing and aging infrastructure, and the importance of prioritizing space for state-of-the-art oceanographic research and teaching in the university's master plan, is critically important. The work underway in the School of Oceanography has never been more vital as we face the climate emergency and a crisis in sustainability. This importance will only continue to grow, and the School of Oceanography is not only one of the top-ranked units at the University of Washington, but also one of the top-ranked in the world. As such, it requires world-class facilities to maintain that stature and impact. I plan to follow up on conversations with the central administration on this as I learn more about the campus master plan, but I fully support the emphasis on this issue in the School's response, and it is a top priority for the College.

Best,
Maya

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