



To: Academic Program Review team

From: Andrew Harris, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Washington
Tacoma

Date: March 25, 2024

Re: UW Tacoma School of Engineering and Technology Program Review response

This memo serves as the EVCAA response for the SET 10-year program review. I commend the SET faculty on its thoughtful and comprehensive self-study and thank the external review team for its insight, diligence and analysis of our school's accomplishments, potential and challenges. We appreciate the committee's recognition of our current programs' quality and the quality of our faculty, staff and students after a period of unusual growth. This response aims to provide campus context and support for the Dean's response sent previously and will also speak to several items noted in the external reviewer's report, while respecting that the Dean's response will appropriately engage a broader set of issues and at a deeper level.

Workload. I agree with the contention made by external reviewers and the dean that we need to develop a workload policy that takes into account the different kinds of instructional time relevant for programs with significant variation between lecture, labs, and graduate and undergraduate project supervision. This aligns with both the faculty workload equity project initiated by the UWT Faculty Assembly and supported by UWT Academic Affairs, and the expectations of all UW units overall recently communicated by the Provost's office that every unit needs to have a normative faculty workload policy. With other units at UW, we aim to have ours at least preliminarily drafted by May 2024. In that context, I also seek further clarification about teaching loads being high relative to comparable institutions; it would be helpful for us to benchmark and to do so, we would need to know the comparable institutions to which the external reviewers referred.

Program growth. I support the assessments of overly rapid growth in our PhD program, and look forward to the school's development of an appropriate policy and structure to manage both growth and support the students' experience and progress in the program. We also look to build greater capacity at the campus level to support graduate programs and their students, which has been a noted concern here for several years. While we note the reviewers' interest in growing niche programs and retaining a focus on the south sound, my assessment is that we need to expand our capacity in the traditional programs we have already launched and serve demand beyond the south sound if there is unmet student demand in those parts of the region. Niche programs require high levels of investment in serving smaller student populations and we believe we have room to grow in the foundational parts of our program. That said, I want to underscore the need in coming years to build in organizational infrastructure to support existing programs, their incremental expansion, and the faculty and staff who work in them, and slow down our growth in new programs.

Student success and equity. I appreciate the committee's observation that as we expand into the first two years and into more male-dominated engineering fields, this will both challenge our interest in gender equity and lower our overall retention and graduation rates given the lower retention rates in general for students starting right out of high school. Our student success efforts will, at the school and campus levels, need to cognizant of this and intentional in building in support structures to minimize any such decline. SET is already hiring staff to work specifically with first and second year students. I also appreciate the critical insight and recommendation in favor of programmatic and

advising supports for curricular off-ramps: programs for students to enter if starting in SET but who choose to continue in a non-SET program. We must provide them with alternatives.

Space. The program currently suffers from a projected lack of faculty office space as well as research space. This is going to require integration with long-term capital planning since the campus has no additional space that is unallocated and no new buildings or renovations currently approved or funded. Faculty office space problems may be solvable in the short term with campus-wide distribution of faculty offices, and stem from building decisions in the design of Milgard Hall that did not provide sufficient space for growing faculty. The point about advisors being combined is surprising, given that this was intentional and responsive to advisors willing to share space given their hybrid work schedules.

Structure. The external reviewers have provided an excellent set of considerations in thinking through departmentalization. These are similar to the issues undertaken by SIAS in its own current departmentalization process, with the minor correction that SIAS does not currently have five “divisions” as noted by reviewers; it has informal divisions responsible for only part of what “departments” would normally manage. That is one of the challenges they are currently trying to resolve. I also encourage the school to begin such conversations once they have absorbed the current wave of faculty hiring.