



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

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June 3, 2008

To: Phyllis Wise, Provost  
Douglas J. Wadden, Executive Vice Provost  
Office of the Provost, Box 351237

From: Suzanne T. Ortega, Vice Provost and Dean  
James S. Antony, Associate Dean for Academic Programs

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James Antony", written over the printed name of James S. Antony.

RE: Review of the Department of Geography

At its meeting of May 29, 2008, the Graduate School Council met with one member of the committee that reviewed the Department of Geography (Joel S. Migdal, review committee chair and Professor, Jackson School of International Studies; review committee members Ann S. Anagnost, Professor in Anthropology, and Nikhil Pal Singh, Associate Professor in History, were not able to attend) and with Judith A. Howard, Divisional Dean for Social Sciences, College of Arts & Sciences, William B. Beyers, Professor and Chair, Department of Geography, and Katharyne Mitchell, Professor, Department of Geography. The program review process included a charge meeting on December 4, 2007, between members of the review committee and administrators involved in the review. The site visit, held on January 28-29, 2008, included in-person participation by external reviewers Janice Jones Monk, Professor, University of Arizona, and Jamie Peck, Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Speaking to the Graduate School Council on May 29, Professor Migdal outlined several findings from the Review Committee Report (submitted March 5, 2008). The primary recommendation was that the department's undergraduate and graduate programs maintain continuing status, with the next review in ten years. The committee found a very strong and collegial department with first-class faculty who maintain an admirably high level of national and international visibility in their research. The department has been an innovator in the domain of undergraduate teaching, and its graduate program is strong, attracting a high-quality applicant pool. The unit is challenged in enrolling its top applicants, which is perceived as related to the level of graduate student funding packages. The committee recommended that a concerted effort be made to address this funding challenge in creative ways. The review committee's written report comments in more detail on this and makes recommendations about increasing diversity in the student body, providing a more coherent intellectual community for the graduate program,

offering additional career mentoring, and creating among faculty a shared sense of purpose in, and involvement with, the graduate program. One noteworthy review committee recommendation to the College and Graduate School is to establish a task force that addresses, as a University-wide issue, the challenge of attracting top students when only minimal funding is available.

The review committee noted that, given its focus on human geography, the department can play an engaged part in the campus-wide initiatives surrounding the environment, global health, and international studies. But at the same time, the department faces one of its major challenges in remaining crucial and central as the university moves to support these initiatives.

The Department of Geography submitted its response to the review committee report on April 1, 2008. During the Graduate School Council discussion, the chair outlined several steps the department has already taken to address the review committee's comments, including establishing working "clusters" of faculty and students to examine undergraduate education, the graduate program, and diversity. The department has changed its recruiting model this year to offer longer support to fewer applicants, which has increased the acceptance rate of those identified as top applicants. Additional information on campus-wide funding issues would aid the department as it strives to enroll top applicants in the future. Detailed responses to the committee's recommendations as well as descriptions of additional actions taken since the review can be found in the department's written response to the review committee report.

The Council unanimously recommends granting continuing status to the Department of Geography's degree programs, with the next review in 2017-2018. The Council strongly encourages the department to continue its initiative to create a diverse student body. One avenue for increasing diversity in the graduate program may be through developing relationships with colleagues at other institutions with higher proportions of underrepresented undergraduates.

cc: Ana Mari Cauce, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences  
Judith A. Howard, Divisional Dean of Social Sciences, College of Arts & Sciences  
William B. Beyers, Chair, Department of Geography  
John D. Sahr, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs  
David Brown, GPSS President  
Geography Review Committee  
Graduate School Council  
David Canfield-Budde, Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School