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May 4, 2004

To: David B. Thorud, Acting Provost  
Office of the Provost  
Box 351237

From: Gail Dubrow, Associate Dean  
Academic Programs, The Graduate School

RE: Conservation Biology Policy Graduate Certificate Program 5-Year Review

Dear David:

At its meeting on April 8, 2004, the Graduate School Council met with the Review Committee Chair, Director of the Conservation Biology Policy Graduate Certificate Program, the Co-Directors and Graduate Program Coordinator of the Program of the Environment which oversees the daily operation of the program. The Council recommended unanimously that the Graduate Certificate Program in Conservation Biology Policy be discontinued. The effective date for discontinuation of the program is June 11, 2004, the end of spring quarter. No new students should be admitted to the program.

I concur with the Council's recommendations and comments.

The review committee recommended that the Conservation Biology Policy Graduate Certificate Program be continued on a provisional basis for two years to allow faculty time to address areas of the program that need improvement. They recommended that a strategic planning workshop be held to bring key faculty together for the purpose of developing a more vibrant certificate program. The review committee recommended that the pending proposal to establish the Conservation Biology Science Graduate Certificate Program not be approved, but that it be integrated with the policy program.

Conservation biology is an area that is important to the University and the broader society. Since its inception, the Conservation Biology Policy Graduate Certificate Program has provided a structure to give students recognition for their course work. The program curriculum is comprised of existing courses in various academic units. In its

evaluation of the program, the review committee, however, raised several important issues concerning the condition of the program. These issues question raises concerning the program's quality and long-term viability.

The program curriculum as conceived lacks a coherent focus and requires a better structure to provide students the intended exposure. Core courses in the areas of policy and science and a capstone course are needed to give students a common academic experience. The program does not facilitate the integration of students across science and policy. The courses that students take do not provide experiences in new areas, but reinforce their current program of study.

The lack of a stronger commitment of faculty and students from other areas has hampered attaining the program's original intent. Linkages need to be built with key academic units to engage and re-engage faculty who should be but have not been a part of the program. Faculty in the biological and life sciences whose research and scholarship are important have not been involved with the program. Members of the existing steering committee members from various disciplines acknowledge that they have had minimal involvement.

The review committee noted the absence of a sense of community among students in the program. Faculty reported they did not know which students in their classes were involved with the Conservation Biology Policy program. Although the program is in conservation biology, courses in biology are not offered to students in the program.

Issues raised by the review committee and the Graduate School Council illustrate systemic difficulties with supporting and sustaining interdisciplinary programs at the University of Washington. The review committee suggested consideration of a different administrative location, such as the Program on the Environment, which would provide better support to the program. Leadership of the program is another issue. The program's current condition requires stronger leadership to garner needed faculty involvement and to seek alternative funding sources. The program receives no funding for operations and it does not have a discretionary budget. Minimal support is provided for support of a Graduate Program Coordinator. Funding alone, however, will not address the major issues raised about the program.

### *Background*

In May 1997, the Graduate School received a preliminary proposal from faculty of the Conservation Biology Policy Steering Committee to offer a Graduate Certificate Program in Conservation Biology Policy. The Graduate School Council in June 1997 suggested revisions to a subsequent proposal intended to clarify the curriculum focus and identify ways that students would be brought together as a group in the program. The Graduate School Council on May 21, 1998 reviewed the final proposal and recommended that it be approved. Final approval was given by the Board of Regents in July 1998. The graduate certificate program was implemented in Autumn Quarter 1998.

The graduate certificate program was designed for students who wished to pursue policy-related careers in either the public or private sector, and for students in the natural sciences interested in science careers that influence or effect policy. It allowed students to

pursue the certificate concurrent with their master's or doctoral degree programs and to gain interdisciplinary experience through the program curriculum.

The program was administered in the Department of Zoology with half-time support from a permanent staff member until Spring 1999. At that time, the staff position was not renewed, and administrative responsibility was placed in the Graduate School. In November 2000, the Graduate School in cooperation with the newly established Program on the Environment (PoE) created a new shared, full-time, staff position for a Graduate Program Coordinator to administer and provide advising and outreach for interdisciplinary graduate education.

The program is presently administered in PoE by the Graduate Program Coordinator. Since the inception of the program twenty-nine students have completed the Conservation Biology Policy Graduate Certificate Program concurrent with their master's or doctoral degree programs. Six students recently completed the certificate program requirements but have not completed their respective degree programs. Twenty-four students are currently enrolled in the program.

#### *Graduate School Council Recommendations*

The Council acknowledged the importance of conservation biology within the University. The Council noted that faculty commitment and ownership determines a program's quality and viability. The review team's evaluation gave evidence that faculty commitment is minimal with the Conservation Biology Policy Graduate Certificate Program. The steering committee is not engaged as would ideally be desired. The program as currently conceived does not offer students a coherent academic experience in conservation biology policy. Stable funding to support operation of the program is not forthcoming in the near future.

The Council recommended that the Conservation Biology Policy Graduate Certificate Program be discontinued based on findings of the review committee, the Council's review of the program documents and discussion with leadership of the program, and administrative faculty of the Graduate School and the College of Arts and Sciences. The Council further recommended that students currently in the program be allowed to complete requirements for the certificate but that no new students should be admitted, effective immediately.

- c: Elizabeth L. Feetham, Acting Dean, The Graduate School  
Susan Jeffords, Vice Provost for Academic Planning, Office of the Provost  
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Members of the Conservation Biology Policy Review Committee  
Members of the Graduate School Council  
Augustine McCaffery, Assistant to the Dean/Manager, The Graduate School