



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

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*Undergraduate Academic Affairs  
&  
The Graduate School*

November 25, 2009

To: Phyllis M. Wise, Provost  
Douglas J. Wadden, Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Planning

From: Gerald J. Baldasty, Vice Provost and Dean  
James S. Antony, Associate Dean and Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

RE: Review of the College of Forest Resources

This memo outlines the Graduate School's recommendations on the ten-year review of the College of Forest Resources B.S., M.S., M.F.R., M.E.H. and Ph.D. degree programs. More detailed comments on the programs can be found in the documents referred to below. The review included the following milestones and documentation:

- Forest Resources self-study (November 14, 2008)
- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (January 21, 2009)
- Site visit (February 23-24, 2009)
- Review committee report (March 27, 2009)
- Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) Report (March 31, 2009)
- Forest Resources response to the report (March 30, 2009)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (June 4, 2009)

The review committee consisted of:

Thomas P. Quinn, Professor, UW School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences,  
(Committee Chair)  
Donald H. Miller, Professor, UW Department of Urban Design and Planning  
William H. Rodgers, Jr., Stimson Bullitt Professor of Environmental Law,  
UW School of Law  
C. Tattersall Smith, Dean and Professor, Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto  
Richard B. Standiford, Associate Vice President, Division of Agriculture and Natural  
Resources, University of California, Berkeley

A subcommittee of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting June 4, 2009. The review occurred at a time of the pending transition to the new College of the Environment (CoEnv) and an administrative structural change from a College to a School.

## **Program Strengths**

Forest Resources is a high quality, well-respected unit both nationally and internationally. The faculty is productive; they have garnered significant external funding and have published extensively. The faculty has long had a strong reputation for high quality research in basic and applied aspects of forestry and forest sciences. Due to the faculty's successful strategic planning, the new faculty hired, in cutting edge specialty areas are expected to bring new intellectual vitality and increase research funding. The ten centers and institutes offer mechanisms to involve stakeholders in their research mission and can potentially serve as resources for the new College of the Environment.

Since the 1996 review, the unit has undergone positive changes resulting in a stronger faculty, student body, and staff. Following several decades of internal struggles due to dramatic changes in forest practices, the College leadership implemented changes that enhanced the curriculum, governance, staffing, and morale of the unit. It successfully changed its direction of scholarship and teaching in the area of sustainability and environmental change. Noteworthy is the organized mentoring of the cohort of assistant professors that is important to their future success.

In 2004, the faculty made significant revisions in consolidating its undergraduate and graduate curriculum that addressed: demographic changes in the student body, a shift from traditional forest management to conservation and stewardship, and the need for a more integrative interdisciplinary approach to the environment. Quality of the graduate program increased due to improved faculty quality, accessibility, mentoring of students, the admission of highly qualified students that undergo rigorous examination processes, and an outstanding support staff. Its undergraduate and graduate enrollments also increased in recent years. The emphasis on quality teaching and mentoring, a better fit with student interests, and a more complex and traditional curriculum increased the undergraduate program quality. The Paper Science and Engineering program, re-accredited by ABET in 2007, is exploring new areas of teaching and research.

## **Challenges and Risks**

When the review occurred, the College faced budgetary matters related to the state and national financial situation. It faced uncertainty with its anticipated transition to the CoEnv, possible conflicts between natural resource and physical science programs, the change in administrative leadership, and the lack of experienced leadership to address fiscal challenges.

Due to underfunding of its operating budget the College used unfilled faculty lines to meet some of its needs. With several established faculty retiring, a temporary reduction in grant revenues is anticipated as junior faculty establish new revenue streams. Long-term budgetary trends, recent cuts, and reduction in grant revenues have had a significant effect on the ability of the College to attract and support graduate students, especially in the Ph.D. program.

Curricular changes require eventual assessment. Metrics must be developed to assess whether the new curriculum prepares students for a diversity of employment opportunities. The PSE program is small but vital, and the teaching load is high for faculty. Teaching of the required courses remains dependent upon faculty who recently retired. Finally, as the directors of centers and institutes near retirement, new leadership will be needed that reflects a rationalized strategic plan for each unit's relevance to the mission of Forest Resources and the CoEnv.

## **Areas of Concurrence**

The Council and Forest Resources concurred with the review committee that the next review be conducted in ten years. The College agreed with issues the review committee identified and has begun to address several of them which are outlined in their response to the report.

## **Council Recommendations**

The Council concurred with the review committee's recommendation for continuing status of the Forest Resources degree programs with the next review to occur in ten years, specifically in 2018-2019. The Graduate School Council amended the review committee's report on the following items:

- Through an interdisciplinary mix of biological, physical and social sciences that pressing concerns be addressed regarding stewardship of natural and management environments and the sustainable use of their products and services.
- The GPSS report raised concerns about accessibility of mentoring and the lack of clarity in the way funding is distributed among graduate students.
- In the last decade, the number of female students doubled to nearly 50 percent and students of color to 16 percent, yet efforts to attract faculty and students who are African Americans, Latinos/as, and Native Americans remain unsatisfactory. They comprise 7.5% of undergraduate majors, 5.3% of master's students, and 3.4% of Ph.D. students

We concur with the Council's comments and recommendations.

- c: Thomas Hinckley, Professor and Interim Director, School of Forest Resources  
Dennis Hartmann, Dean, College of the Environment  
Edward Taylor, Dean and Vice Provost, Undergraduate Academic Affairs  
John Sahr, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs  
Forest Resources Review Committee  
Graduate School Council  
Jacob Faleschini, President, Graduate and Professional Student Senate  
Augustine McCaffery, Senior Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School