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INTERDEPARTMENTAL

M E M O

December 14, 2006

To: Melissa Austin, Associate Dean of the Graduate School

From: Edward Miles, Director IPDES Program

Cc: IPDES Steering Committee
IPDES Students
IPDES Faculty
Dean Suzanne Ortega, Graduate School
Dean Arthur Nowell, COFS
Dean Sandra Archibald, The Evans School
Prof. Thomas Leschine, SMA
Victor Yagi, IPDES Staff, PoE
Augustine McCaffery, Senior Academic Program
Specialist, The Graduate School
David Canfield-Budde, The Graduate School

Subject: Response to the Review Committee Report of November 13, 2006

In preparing this response I have consulted with the IPDES Steering Committee and IPDES students. On behalf of us all, therefore, I would like to express our gratitude to the Review Committee for their penetrating review, their correct identification of the strengths and the weaknesses of the current program, and their recommendations for change.

Comments on the weaknesses which have been identified.

With respect to the weaknesses which have been identified, the problem of inadequate staff support has now been solved. That solution will also greatly facilitate keeping track of student information including contracts and progress. The poor ratio of applicants to admissions and poor campus visibility are linked and can be solved by considerably increasing on and off campus advertising beginning with the solicitation for next Fall. Such an effort should therefore commence in Winter Quarter 2007 rather than in Spring 2007. However, it is necessary to point out that the Program has only two six-month fellowships available and the Graduate School does not currently possess the resources to continue to support the Program. It must be acknowledged

that we are very grateful to the Graduate School for providing all the fellowships that we have been able to award from the inception of this experiment.

With respect to the lack of clear metrics for evaluation, three measures of quality were at least in the mind of the Director: the value added to each student's program of studies via the custom-designed contracts; the quality and innovativeness of the M.S. theses and Ph.D. dissertations produced; and the nature of post-graduation employment secured. Since the Program was only beginning the third year of its existence, the Director did not think the time opportune to place great emphasis on this dimension. But given the identification of this lack of emphasis as a weakness by the Review Committee, the Director will consult with the Steering Committee, the students, and the faculty during the Winter Quarter 2007 and seek to achieve an explicit list of agreed measures.

The final weakness noted by the Review Committee was the lack of a current mechanism for the cultivation of a core of committed faculty or to foster the emergence of a future leader. Again, this absence is the result of the perception by the Director that what had been launched was an experiment to determine proof of concept. Concern about institutionalization was regarded as premature. However, the Review Committee has generously concluded that the "... program has transcended the vision of its founder, and reached a state where it could be continued as an integral part of the UW graduate program under an appropriate successor." I thank the Review Committee for this conclusion and will return to a possible mechanism when I discuss our response to the recommendations of the Review Committee.

Comments on the recommendations

The Program will certainly make immediate use of all the measures which have been suggested for raising its visibility on the campus, however, we wish to point out that at present we do not possess the resources to ramp up to a critical mass of 6 to 10 students per year. This means that Recommendation 10 on funding strategy indicates that discussions between the Director and the University should begin as soon as possible.

We embrace the intent of Recommendation 4 about increasing diversity as we increase visibility and move toward critical mass. We note however that the Program as designed recruits interested students from participating units. The only possibility of increasing diversity then arises in discussions between the Program Director and unit Chairs assuming that funds are available to leverage greater emphasis on diversity in the recruiting strategies of particular units.

We accept Recommendation 5 that the Steering Committee should be built from faculty who have participated or who are actively participating in the Program. We also agree that such a shift might well provide a potential pool of rotating leadership. But we think such a transition should be managed over two years rather than be initiated all at once. Two reasons can be adduced for this choice: 1) there needs to be continuity in the executive group; and 2) not all units affirming participation in the Program are as yet actively participating. It is especially important to have the support of the chairs of these units, at least temporarily, in order to facilitate active recruitment of fellows. We also agree that it is time to seek to expand links to the Evans School and the Program on Climate Change.

The Committee also raises a very important point in Recommendation 8 concerning a shift in the name of the Program from IPDES to IDESS. This is a clear example of the vision transcending that of the founder. We therefore have no difficulty with changing the name which not only acknowledges the shift occurring in fact, but perhaps facilitates active participation from units which have not yet chosen to be active. In addition the name IDESS does not jeopardize in any way the policy dimension represented by both the School of Marine Affairs and the Evans School. Finally, both Recommendation 9 on “the Certificate” and Recommendation 11 on the university-wide learning opportunity which has emerged require discussions with University authorities.