



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

The Graduate School

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November 5th, 2020

To: Lisa Graumlich, Dean, College of the Environment

From: Joy Williamson-Lott, Dean

Kima Cargill, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Planning

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Joy Williamson-Lott".

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kima Cargill, Ph.D.".

RE: Review of the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences (2019 – 2020)

This memorandum outlines the Graduate School's final recommendations from the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences academic program review. Detailed comments on the review can be found in the documents that were part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (May 30th, 2019)
- Self-Study (January 23rd, 2020)
- Site visit (February 3rd-4th, 2020)
- Review committee report (March 13th, 2020)
- School of Environmental and Forest Sciences response to the report (May 1st, 2020)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (November 5th, 2020)

The review committee consisted of:

Michael Brett, Professor, UW Civil and Environmental Engineering (Committee Chair)

Juliet Crider, Associate Professor, UW Earth and Space Sciences

Shelie Miller, Associate Professor, School for Environmental and Sustainability, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering; Director, Program in the Environment, University of Michigan

Frank Davis, Professor, Bren School of Environmental Science and Management, University of California, Santa Barbara

The School of Environmental and Forest Sciences at the University of Washington (UW) offers the following degrees: Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Terrestrial Resource Management, Bachelor of Science in Bioresource Science and Engineering, Minor in Environmental Science and Terrestrial Resource Management, Minor in Ecological Restoration, Master of Science, Master of Environmental Horticulture, Master of Forest Resources in Forest Management, Doctor of Philosophy. The School of Environmental and Forest Sciences is located in the College of the Environment at the University of

Washington.

Members of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting on November 5th, 2020. A summary of this report, composed by Graduate School Council Members, is attached to this document.

Graduate School Council Recommendations

The Graduate School Council commends School of Environmental and Forest Sciences on the strength of its programs, faculty, and students. After discussion, the Council recommended the following:

- Full academic program review in 10 years (2029-2030)

We concur with the Council's recommendations.

cc: Mark Richards, Provost and Executive Vice President
Patricia Moy, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the Provost
Janice DeCosmo, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs
Dan Brown, Director and Professor, School of Environmental and Forest Sciences
Becky Corriell, Director, Academic Affairs & Planning, the Graduate School
Academic Unit Review Committee Members
Members of the Graduate School Council
GPSS President

Attachment

University of Washington | Graduate Council

Summary of the review of School of Environmental and Forest Sciences

Academic Unit Name: School of Environmental and Forest Sciences

Degrees/Certificates Included in the Review:

- Bachelor of Science with a major in Environmental Science and Terrestrial Resource Management. Transcribed Options in: Sustainable Forest Management; Restoration Ecology and Environmental Horticulture; Natural Resource and Environmental Management; and Wildlife Conservation
- Minor in Environmental Science and Terrestrial Resource Management
- Minor in Ecological Restoration
- Bachelor of Science with a major in Bioresource Science and Engineering. Transcribed Option in: Business
- Master of Environmental Horticulture
- Master of Forest Resources in Forest Management
- Master of Science
- Doctor of Philosophy

Program Strengths:

The Academic Program Review committee was very complementary to the School. They concluded that the School contained an “ambitious and talented group of scholars, with healthy academic programs” and the “program enjoys a strong national reputation” and “has an outstanding, productive and engaged faculty, and engages some of the top graduate scholars in the nation”. Further, they noted that “(g)raduate students stated enthusiasm about the diversity of expertise and intellectual resources in the School.” They further commended the undergraduate majors:

- BS in Bioresource Science and Engineering “...is a strong, successful undergraduate program with stable enrollment and high job placement. Students are enthusiastic and engaged.”
- BS in Environmental Science and Resource Management “is a popular and successful major; enrollments have doubled in the last decade...students we spoke to have strong sense of identity, purpose, and belonging”

Finally, the review committee noted the success and strength of the staff. “Director Dan Brown has strong support of the faculty and staff that we met....SEFS academic advising staff are appreciated by students and faculty.”

Enrollment in the School’s undergraduate majors have grown from 262 students in 2009-10 to 398 in 2018-19, while enrollment in graduate programs have declined during the period (masters programs declining from 84 to 54; PhD program declining from 71 to 60).

Challenges and Risks:

There are three main concerns: facilities, budget, and integrating a diverse faculty.

1. The top concern among the review committee was with regard to facilities. They noted: “urgent need for facilities upgrades and new resources to support the emerging vision of the unit...there are critical upgrades required to support the educational and research missions of the School. Casual faculty and staff comments about repeatedly flooded research laboratories in Bloedel Hall belie recurring infrastructure failures that could ultimately undermine faculty and student success. That the core academic home for SEFS, Anderson Hall, is not ADA accessible is shocking, and indicates that renovations are urgently needed and long-neglected.... We see tremendous mismatch between the quality of the scholarship in SEFS and the state of their facilities. Do not permit further delay in the renovation of Anderson Hall.... Ensure that deferred maintenance in Bloedel Hall is addressed, and that it is also in the queue for renovation. It is unreasonable that the cost of these upgrades be borne by the unit or the college.”
2. The second major concern is with regard to lack of financial resources. The review committee concluded that “budget constraints place the School in a precarious condition”. Insufficient funding for graduate students seems to be limiting the School’s growth and hampering the undergraduate program. “Recent volatility in RCR revenue suggests that faculty may be reticent to admit students when external support is uncertain....The Elected Faculty Council (EFC) advocates for establishing a guaranteed minimum funding for all students admitted to the research program, a goal echoed in many conversations over our two-day visit....The EFC advocates for pooled TA resources and additional attention paid to equity in SEFS fellowship allocations.”

The review committee noted that the Masters in Environmental Horticulture’s enrollment “has fluctuated from a few to 10 graduates per year over the past decade” “departure of two faculty in environmental horticulture has led SEFS to suspend admission to the MEH. The committee heard concerns from faculty and staff about the viability of this program in the absence of new faculty to teach and advise students in this area.” The Masters in Forest Resources in Forest Management “has a steady but very small enrollment, graduating a few students each year” “Given the small number of students and faculty engaged, however, questions about the program’s long-term future are emerging.”

Finally, the review committee noted that “SEFS academic advising staff are... shorthanded. Staff do not presently have bandwidth to conduct important student outcomes tracking that will be essential to evaluate changes to the program in the next decade or to expand professional development opportunities that are in high demand.”

BS degree in Bioresource Science and Engineering “is grossly understaffed. Enrollment is limited by capacity in core courses.” Regarding the BS in Environmental Science and Resource Management: “Demands of the growing undergraduate program have stretched already limited TA resources, and place strain on teaching in the graduate program.”

3. A third challenge is with the intellectual diversity of the faculty. The review committee noted, “(t)here are evident and on-going challenges to integrating the diverse and already heavily committed group of faculty members. We heard about efforts to build and maintain a sense of

intellectual community beyond faculty interest areas, and the persistent challenge of overcoming traditional disciplinary boundaries and the structural legacy of the old College of Forest Resources.”

Areas of concurrence:

- There is an urgent need for facility upgrades.
- The School is making great strides in promoting transparency, equity and inclusion. Clear policies with regard to faculty promotion and tenure were noted as a strength.
- There is a need for more staffing of the BSE program and the unit response noted that they, “recently submitted hiring plan takes a theme-based approach to hiring in the school, with a more open approach to hiring that both allows for hiring across multiple disciplines”

Future Direction/Goals

The School should continue its efforts to improve facilities. As noted in their Unit Response, they are “working with University capital planning and facilities to pursue a major renovation of Anderson Hall to address accessibility, safety, functionality, and comfort” and “working with UW facilities to repair or replace major systems in Bloedel Hall ...and addressing other deferred maintenance.” We believe that they should focus on these efforts given the concerns that have been raised by many. The School should continue its efforts to reduce the “historical ‘green/brown divide’ and reducing “traditional disciplinary boundaries”

Graduate School Council Recommendation

Concurrent with the recommendation of the Academic Program Review, it is recommended that the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences undergo another review in 10 years (2029-2030).