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Date: April 18, 2022

To: Phoolendra Mishra, Chair  
Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering

From: Susamma Barua, Dean *Susamma Barua*  
College of Engineering and Computer Science

Subject: Dean's Comments and Recommendations - Program Performance Review of Civil Engineering MS

The Program Performance Review (PPR) Self-Study Report for the Civil Engineering MS, the Review Team Report, and the Response from the Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) Department Chair have been reviewed at the Dean's level.

We appreciate and are encouraged by the several areas of strengths recognized by the Review Team. The Team suggested eight program improvements for consideration:

**1. A 30% increase in enrollment would support the department's desired flexibility in course offerings.**

Opportunities presented by the university's initiative on College-based admission and the College's decision to provide support from the ECS Associate Graduate and International Admissions Coordinator to each department for developing and implementing student outreach and recruitment activities will allow the department to respond adequately to this recommendation from the Review team.

**2. Develop graduate level courses in the area of Transportation Engineering: An immediate faculty hire is currently required to support the development of a transportation engineering focus area.**

The department currently has one full-time tenured faculty with expertise in transportation engineering. In addition, two tenure-track faculty positions (baseline) are currently available for the department. Consideration of this recommendation must be done strategically in order to align the implementation with the immediate and long-term goals of the department.



**3. Faculty very strongly noted that their ability to engage graduate students as research mentors is limited by demands on their time.**

Multiple approaches and levels of support are available for addressing this recommendation. The ECS Dean's office and the CEE Department will work collaboratively and strategically to create an optimal structure and operational efficiency in addressing this recommendation.

**4. It was further noted that the ability to engage graduate students in research is limited by lack of a dedicated space for graduate students to work in.**

We are very aware of the need to build infrastructure capacity to facilitate faculty-student engagement in research and design projects. The College Dean, CEE Department Chair and the ECS Academic Resource Manager will work collaboratively and strategically to create an optimal structure and operational efficiency to support the space needs of the department.

**5. Several department faculty noted that more formalized graduate advising structures, in particular to aid support for URM students, would be valuable.**

Multiple approaches and levels of support are available from both the Dean's office and the university to address this recommendation. The ECS Dean's office and the CEE Department will work collaboratively and strategically to create an optimal structure and operational efficiency to provide effective graduate advising.

**6. The department has recently seen significant turnover in support personnel, in particular lab technicians.**

This is a temporary situation and searches are already underway for filling the staff positions that are recently vacated. Lab upgrades and maintenance have always remained a high priority for the College and the Department. Provost's office also has been very supportive in our efforts to provide state-of-the-art lab facility to support instruction and hands-on design project experience.

**7. Enhance of existing flexibility in course offerings for Friday / Saturday course modules and hybrid courses.**

The Department in collaboration with the Dean's office has already started exploring the possibility of various course offering modalities such as in-person, online and hybrid. The College already offers Friday and Saturday classes in order to maximize the utilization of



our classrooms and labs and also for enhancing graduate student's flexibility in taking classes.

**8. Establish graduate student scholarship funds by exploring various department supporters and donors. Develop a platform to connect current students with department alumni to expand graduate students' professional network.**

Working in collaboration with the ECS Development Team, the College and the Department have increased the number of scholarships over the last few years. We will continue to develop new partnerships and foster existing ones with our alumni, donors and corporate partners in enhancing the support for our students and their workforce readiness through scholarships, sponsored projects, and internships.

The Department and the College are fully aware of the need to build the human and infrastructure capacity to take advantage of the opportunities we are presented with. The College Dean, CEE Department Chair and the ECS Academic Resource Manager will work collaboratively and strategically to create an optimal structure and operational efficiency to support the space, faculty and staffing needs of the Department and to provide a transformative educational experience for our students.