



To: Sheryl Fontaine, Dean, and Jessica Stern, Associate Dean of Student Relations,  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

From: Mark Drayse, Chair, Department of Geography & the Environment

Date: 24 April 2023

Re: Chair's Response to the Deans' Evaluation of the B.A. and M.A. in Geography

The Department of Geography & the Environment discussed the Deans' Evaluation at a faculty meeting on 11 April 2023. We greatly appreciate the support that Deans Fontaine, Stern, and Pérez and the entire staff in the Dean's Office have provided to the department's faculty, staff, and students over the years. We look forward to working with the College as we implement the department's new long-term plan (2023-2030).

This response will address the three main items discussed in the Deans' Evaluation, as well as other department actions identified in the long-term plan.

## **1 Student Recruitment and Retention**

Led by Dr. Zia Salim, our Outreach & Visibility coordinator, the department is actively working to increase undergraduate majors, minors, and certificate candidates. We are encouraged by the increased interaction we're having with students now that the restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have been lifted.

Recent actions to promote the department and recruit students include:

- In March 2023, we held our All Points of the Compass conference for the first time in over three years. Showcasing papers and posters by CSUF Geography & the Environment students, faculty, and alumni, a main goal of the conference is to promote the department to potential majors.
- In March 2023, we held the country's only remote node for the annual American Association of Geographers (AAG) conference. Organized by Drs. DeLyser, Matheus, and Salim, the Fullerton node attracted 33 students. The Geography Club selected sessions to view, and the 4<sup>th</sup> floor was organized as a "mini-AAG" for the weekend of the conference. This has a great "equity"



- benefit, as students could view sessions for free.
- Dr. Salim sent post cards (which he purchased at Joshua Tree National Park) and e-mails to 76 students admitted into CSUF as Geography majors for Fall 2023. These are students who had not yet accepted admission.
  - The College invited Dr. John Carroll to make a presentation on the GIS Certificate program to the HSS Council of Chairs on 12 April 2023.
  - We are about to launch an inter-disciplinary minor in Urban Studies, which we expect will increase the number of students taking urban geography courses.
  - We will continue to promote our Geography minor, GIS Certificate, and Geospatial Technologies Certificate.

To support enrollment in the M.A. program, we have offered the Provost's Graduate Student grants to two applicants, and plan to offer department grants to other applicants who accept admission. We support the Deans' suggestion to develop a TA program for our GEOG 110L lab course. This would provide additional financial and career-related support to graduate students, while enabling us to allow additional sections of the popular lab class.

The department will continue to encourage the presence of faculty on campus. Full-time faculty will be asked to teach at least one class in person per semester, and we will endeavor to maintain a 2-to-1 ratio of in-person to online classes. We recently added another office for lecturers, which increases their visibility and makes it more convenient for lecturers to meet students on campus.

## 2 Resources

Geography students in our department benefit from access to the GIS, Remote Sensing, and Cal-Dendro labs. As the Deans recommend, we will continue to publicize Dr. Matheus' Cal-Dendro Lab and the unique opportunities it provides for students to do hands-on field work and tree-ring analysis. We look forward to the possibility of moving the Cal-Dendro Lab to a larger, better-ventilated space.

We plan to recruit a new faculty member focused on physical geography once our tenure density is below the required threshold for hiring a full-time faculty member.

## 3 Curriculum

The Department is excited to get students out of the classroom and into the field. Dr. Matheus is leading the *GEOG 483 – Mountain Field Geography* in summer 2023, which we are able to offer for the first time in five years. Students will spend two



weeks hiking and camping in the Sierra Nevada and the White Mountains, where they will study mountain landforms, flora, and fauna. In addition, Dr. Salim will be one of the instructors in this summer's Cal State-DC program. We hope to attract several geographers as well as students from other majors to both of these exciting summer experiences.

The Deans' Evaluation emphasized the importance of ensuring that high-impact practices are accessible to all students. As an example of our commitment to this goal, we are using CCF and department funds to support students in the Mountain Field Class.

We recognize the need to attract students from all social and economic backgrounds to Geography & the Environment. Themes of cultural diversity, social justice, and economic sustainability are important in human and environmental geography. To comply with UPS 100.007, our Curriculum Committee will review our curriculum to highlight courses that emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to make recommendations for new or revised courses that address these themes from a geographic perspective.

## **4 Department By-laws and Organization**

In January 2023, the Department formalized the position of Curriculum Committee Chair, the selection of Curriculum Committee members, and the responsibilities of the Curriculum Committee. This is being incorporated into Department By-laws, which we plan to finalize and approve in May 2023. The by-laws will include the following items:

- Department Organization
  - Department Chair
  - Graduate Advisor
  - Undergraduate Advisor
  - Department Personnel Committee (DPC)
  - Graduate Program Committee (GPC)
  - Curriculum Committee
- Faculty Meetings
- Course Assignments
  - Fall and Spring Semesters
  - Winter and Summer Sessions
- Department Space
- Amending By-Laws



## 5 **Alumni Relations**

Our alumni are an important part of the CSUF Geography family. They include most of our lecturers and two of our full-time faculty. Our alumni network creates job opportunities for students and contributes to our scholarship and Geography Excellence funds.

Our students benefit from alumni presentations at our All Points of the Compass conference, and in our classes. In 2020, Dr. DeLyser's students in GEOG 400A (Geography Thought) interviewed alumni to learn about their career paths, which was a great way to integrate a career planning component into one of our classes.

This year we plan to conduct a survey of recent alumni to inform our program and curriculum development. We will also ask alumni about their post-graduate work experience. This will supplement information from the university's "Workforce Outcomes" data, as discussed in the Deans' Evaluation.