

**Chair's Response to the
External Reviewers' Report**

**Department of Geography & the Environment
2023 Program Performance Review**

**Mark H. Drayse
Department Chair
8 March 2023**

Let me begin by thanking Drs. Becky Dolhinow (CSUF), Ed Jackiewicz (CSUN), and Glen MacDonald (UCLA) for meeting with the members of the Department of Geography & the Environment on Tuesday 7 February 2023. The reviewers spoke with full-time faculty, lecturers, staff, undergraduate students, and graduate students, and saw Department offices, classrooms, and labs. It was a pleasure to host our colleagues, and the “review day” was a positive experience for the entire Department.

The Department welcomes the reviewers' thoughtful report, which we have discussed. I will respond to each of their recommendations below.

1 Analyze and Strategize Student Recruitment and Retention

The reviewers recommend developing an Action Plan to recruit undergraduate and graduate majors, promoting the pathway between the undergraduate and graduate programs, and supporting and retaining graduate students. This recommendation supports three of the nine priorities in our Long-Term Plan (Table 1).

Increasing the number of undergraduate Geography majors is our core concern. Our outreach activities organized by Dr. Zia Salim contributed to a significant growth in majors before the pandemic. These include directed outreach

to university applicants, promotion of the major in our GE classes, holding our annual All Points of the Compass event, networking with community college colleagues, and improving the Department's social media presence. With support, the Department could host high school and community college students for internship and research opportunities. This is the first year in which we've been able to fully engage in outreach activities since the pandemic, and we plan to build on them in the future as part of an Action Plan for undergraduate recruitment.

The Department will develop a separate Action Plan to promote recruitment and retention in the M.A. program. We will encourage interested Geography B.A. majors to enroll in the M.A. program. Outreach efforts through the California Geographical Society (CGS) and Association of Pacific Coast Geographers (APCG) will reach out to geography students across the state and region. Once graduate students are in the program, we will ensure that they select a thesis or specialty advisor in their first year. In addition, we will consider adding a project option for the culminating experience, in addition to the thesis and exam options.

2 Identify Space for Growth

Given the spatial constraints of the 4th floor of HSS, the reviewers recommend finding a new, better-ventilated space for the Cal-Dendro Lab on another floor or in another building. This recommendation supports our Long-Term Priority #9 (Table 1). A new Cal-Dendro Lab would provide Dr. Matheus with space to grow, and allow him to teach dendrochronology classes in the lab.

In addition, we would benefit from a dedicated space for our popular physical geography lab classes (GEOG 110L). This would allow us to teach more in-person lab classes, which are an important way to recruit new majors.

3 Provide a New Line for a Hire in Physical Geography

The reviewers recommended hiring a new physical geographer. They stated that this would be a great opportunity to increase the gender and ethnic diversity of

the full-time faculty. This recommendation supports our Long-Term Priority #5 (Table 1).

Once our tenure density is reduced below the 65% threshold (it is currently 68%), we will request a new hire in physical/environmental geography. This will reinforce our ability to offer our physical and environmental geography courses, which meet the demands of students in our major as well as students fulfilling GE requirements. We concur with the reviewers that the new hire should have competence in geospatial analysis.

4 Curriculum

The reviewers recommend including more field trips in our classes, considering joint graduate classes with other CSU Geography programs, serving as a hub for GIS education at CSUF, and including career planning information in the undergraduate curriculum. This supports our Long-Term Priority #6 (Table 1).

- *Field Trips*

We are looking forward to bringing back old field trips and adding new ones; and offering Dr. Matheus' Mountain Field Class. We will continue to incorporate high-impact practices into our program, which could include an urban field class and study-abroad and study-away programs.

- *Joint Graduate Classes*

This semester we reached out to the Department of Geosciences and the Environment at Cal State Los Angeles to see if any of their students wanted to enroll on our classes. One student was interested, but unable to enroll due to different cutoff dates on the two campuses. Nonetheless, this was a good first step in trying to boost our enrollments with students from other CSU campuses.

- *GIS Hub*

We recently created a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) certificate

program that has attracted majors and non-majors alike. With additional faculty expertise, we could expand our GIS offerings and provide specialized GIS courses that would meet the needs of students in other departments. For example, one of our lecturers, Scott Williams, has developed a course in Crime GIS. However, we need him to help Dr. Carroll teach our two upper-division GIS classes, GEOG 481 and GEOG 485.

- *Career Planning*

Drs. DeLyser and Salim have included career planning modules in GEOG 400A (Geographic Thought). We could consider adding this to other majors-based classes to help prepare them for geography-related careers. Our All Points of the Compass event usually has a career panel in which our alumni talk about their jobs; we could also consider holding stand-alone career planning events with alumni.

The Department of Geography & the Environment appreciates the recommendations made by the reviewers, which reinforce the priorities outlined in our Long-Term Plan. We look forward to working with the College to implement these priorities and create a stronger program.

Table 1
Department of Geography & the Environment
Program Performance Review 2023

Long-Term Plan (2023-2030) and
External Reviewers' Recommendations

Long-Term Plan	Reviewers' Recommendations
1 - Increase the Number of Undergraduate Majors, Minors, and Certificate Candidates	<i>1 - Analyze and Strategize Student Recruitment and Retention</i>
2 - Increase the Number of Majors in the Graduate Program	<i>1 - Analyze and Strategize Student Recruitment and Retention</i>
3 - Improve Student Retention and Completion in the Graduate Program	<i>1 - Analyze and Strategize Student Recruitment and Retention</i>
4 - Create Department By-Laws and Strengthen Department Organization	
5 - Implement the Department's Strategic Plan through New Hires, Curriculum, and Potential Programs	<i>3 - Provide a New Line for a Hire in Physical Geography</i>
6 - Support Students through High-Impact Practices and Scholarships	<i>4 - Curriculum (Field Trips/ Joint Graduate Courses/ Career Preparation)</i>
7 - Support Faculty Retention, Tenure, and Promotion	
8 - Build a Thriving Alumni Relations Program with a Regular Communications Strategy	
9 - Improve, Update, and Expand the Department's Classroom and Lab Facilities and Equipment	<i>2 - Identify Space for Growth</i>