

April 14, 2009
Dean and Geography Department Response
Academic Review Team Report

The Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Geography Department have reviewed and evaluated the Academic Review Team's report. This response addresses the specific recommendations raised by the report.

The report accurately reflects the Department's recent history, current status, and the changes that need to be made in order move the Department forward. Most of the recommendations and Department's needs were captured by the Department's self study. The Review Team, the Dean, and the Department are thereby in substantial agreement with the next steps to be taken. Providing the resources to successfully accomplish the recommendations may be more difficult. The Review Team made six priority recommendations with other recommendations included in the text of the review. Each recommendation will be addressed below. Some recommendations will require resources beyond the Department's abilities to provide. This response specifically addresses these needs and potential ways resources can be provided. Other recommendations can be implemented by the Department without additional resources. The current status of each of these will be addressed.

Review Team Recommendations (*in italics*) with Responses

- 1) *Continue the strong departmental leadership by recruiting from outside UNM a department chair with expertise in environmental management/GI Science.*

The Dean approved a search for an outside department chair and the search is in progress. Two candidates will be coming to campus in April 2009.

- 2) *Reduce the scope of courses of the departmental curriculum and increase the depth of course offerings with a structured, sequenced curriculum in environmental management and GI Science at the undergraduate and graduate levels.*

While the Department is substantially in agreement with narrowing the focus, the recommended terminology (environmental management) does not mean the same thing to everyone. For some people and in some disciplines the term is very narrow in scope. Geographers generally use the term in a broad fashion. This captures all aspects of environmental management from the physical geography parameters to human ones. The Department is interpreting this recommendation to include all aspects of environmental management. A broad interpretation will still narrow and focus the human/environmental emphasis discussed in our strategic plan.

The Department submitted for approval a major programmatic revision in October 2008. To summarize--19 courses were dropped, 13 new courses were added, 13 courses were modified, and 12 courses were unchanged. Many of the new courses resulted from

consolidation of existing offerings. The net result is a reduction of six courses in the Department's total offering. A matrix was developed that demonstrates how the courses can be staffed and the ratio of tenure track to part-time instructors that will be needed. Because the over-all number of courses has been reduced, the need for part-time faculty has also been reduced. In addition, the matrix shows that courses will be offered in a consistent and regular basis. Major changes have been made not just in courses offered but in departmental direction. The BS degree had emphasized Physical Geography but now is oriented toward Geographic Information Science. Substantial changes in this degree program have been made. The BA degree already had an emphasis on Environmental Management and is little changed except for updating the courses offered within the degree. At the MS level concentrations in Geographic Information Science and Environmental Management had been previously approved but have now been fully developed. The forms A, B, and C required for these changes have all been approved. These changes will appear in the 2009-2010 catalog. Still to be developed are a minor in Geographic Information Science and a graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Science. These will be developed during the 2009-2010 academic year.

3) *Increase the technical and administrative support for the department with a second (preferably full time) office staff person, a computer lab technical person, and a person to handle undergraduate and graduate advising.*

Specific items are:

1. Office staff person—The Dean is committed to working toward a 0.5 FTE position in Geography. This person will be shared with another Department. Funding for this position will occur when the budget permits.
2. A computer lab technical person who could also serve as a GI Science resource person for a campus help desk. The Dean supports a 0.5 FTE position in Geography that will eventually become full time. Funding for this position will occur when the budget permits.
3. Graduate and undergraduate advisor. Coverage of this need will occur within the College's long term advising plan.

4) *Provide additional funding of laboratories for physical geography and GI Science in terms of equipment, software licensing and support, and additional teaching assistant positions.*

Specific items are:

1. Computer equipment for labs—source of funding needs to be stabilized and made predictable in order to plan for equipment replacement. Current funding sources are from the College equipment allocation, student fees, and department IDC. About \$10,000 additional is needed annually.
2. Software licensing--Lab fees currently cover costs.
3. Lab support—covered above in 3-2, but some additional support will be needed which can be covered by lab fees.

4. Classroom and lab remodeling—Plan has been developed and funding source needs to be identified.
5. Additional teaching assistants—The Dean is committed to two and three later. Funding is based on the College reallocation of TA's

5) *Identify tenured/tenure track geography faculty to be responsible for course lecture/lab coordination, teaching assistant orientation, training and oversight.*

Lecture/lab coordination and TA orientation has been implemented to an extent. Physical Geography (101 and 105L) is completed, but more needs to be done in Human Geography (102). The use of extensive part-time faculty and the sabbatical leave of the major tenure track faculty member teaching this course are slowing down complete implementation.

6) *Create a hiring plan for 2-3 additional faculty members in the department's new focus areas. At least eight or nine faculty are the minimum to provide a competitive master's degree program, especially one with scientific and geospatial technical emphases.*

Since the report was submitted the Department lost its lecturer position(July 2008). This needs to be taken into consideration in developing a hiring plan. The Department also benefited from a spousal hire in the spring of 2009. As a result, the current identified needs in the department can be filled with the addition of two faculty members. In order to strengthen our offerings in Geographic information Science and make this part of our program solid, two additional faculty are required. This would bring the Department to 9.5 FTE.

1. Replace vacated Lecturer III with Assistant Professor specializing in Geographic Information Science. The Dean is supportive of this position based on open line and cut backs in part-time faculty needs.
2. New Faculty-- Assistant Professor specializing in Geographic Information Science and capable of teaching physical geography courses. Funding is dependent on budgetary constraints

7) *Other recommendations from the text of the report.*

1. Improve Web Page. A re-design of the web page has been completed and is now on-line. Individual pages and material are being added.
2. Graduate Recruiting. The Department is in the initial phase of developing a recruitment strategy.
3. Newsletter. This is on the agenda for the fall of 2009.

4. Fund Raising/Endowments. The purpose for the Department's only endowment is being changed to recognize contemporary needs. Other possible endowments are in the planning stage.

5. PhD. This is a long term goal recognized by the review team.

The reviewers realized that many of the issues facing the Department resulted from the "difficult times" the Department faced in the last few years. The large number of part-time/temporary faculty and the recent retirement of half the existing faculty have made it difficult to maintain a cohesive and coherent program. The existing graduate and undergraduate students in the program have never observed anything but these conditions. The review team also recognized the recent hires and the planning done for the future means "it is an exciting time for the Department". Faculty members are in complete concurrence with this observation and look forward to implementing our plan and the Review Team's recommendations. Complete success will require some additional resources, but the pay-back potential is large. Geographic Information Science and Environmental Management are in high demand by students and fill needs of the university and the state. We look forward to creating an exciting revitalized program in geography.