



Date: November 12, 2018

To: Jennifer Summit, Provost and Vice  
President for Academic Affairs

From: Carmen Domingo, Interim Dean  
College of Science & Engineering

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carmen Domingo".

CC: Jerry Davis, Chair of the Department of Geography and Environment

RE: Department of Geography and Environment 7<sup>th</sup> Cycle Review Dean's Response

The external 7<sup>th</sup> Cycle reviewers concluded that the Geography and Environment Department support high-quality programs. Moreover, the faculty and students conduct research across a broad area that is consistent with current trends in geography and environmental science. The addition of a new B.S. in Environmental Sciences in 2015 was noted as a strength given the increase in student enrollments as well as an increase in the number of underrepresented minorities. The Institute for Geographic Information Science Center (IGISc) is a strength and recognized across the CSU system. The graduates of their programs have been very successful as demonstrated by their broad career paths. The faculty bring research strengths in physical, environmental, and GIScience. The chair, Jerry Davis, is commended for his dedicated leadership.

To continue to grow and improve their educational and research environment, the reviewers made several important recommendations, which I highlight below.

- Invest greater effort in securing external funding for graduate student support
- Offer an M.S. in Environmental Science
- Establish an elected Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)
- Develop a 5-year strategic plan
- Improving undergraduate program
- Obtain additional space for students, staff and faculty

With regards to external funding, faculty in the department are conducting exciting research that has the potential to attract external funding. This would have the possibility of bringing additional resources to our campus that can help support their graduate students as well as their research activities. Resources from ORSP and CoSE can be provided to help support more grant writing assistance to faculty, especially junior faculty, to make sure that they can initiate a strong research program at SF State.

The external reviewers are supportive of the department's efforts to propose a new M.S. in Environmental Sciences. This was seen as a strength as it will leverage existing resources to build a new program. While I support the new proposed master's program, I do remain concerned with the existing three graduate programs. All of them have low enrollments and are graduating on average 2-5 students each year. Thus, it seems important to consider whether some of the existing graduate programs should be eliminated or combined in order to make room for a new graduate program.

The creation of a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) that can develop, implement, and update department policies would be beneficial to the overall management of the department. This committee, along with the chair, can standardize the RTP process, identify faculty mentors and program advisors, as well as oversee elections.

The development of a 5-year strategic plan will be helpful to all members of the department. It should include a hiring plan as well as anticipated curricular changes needed to keep up with changing workforce needs.

The reviewers suggested focusing efforts on improving its current undergraduate programs. They suggested considering honors courses, more research projects and enhanced internship opportunities. I concur that these efforts would positively impact the experiences of their undergraduates.

The reviewers mentioned the need for more space. I concur with this assessment. Most faculty in Geography and Environment have shared offices and very limited lab space in HSS. In order to enhance their research and training activities for undergraduate and master-level students, additional space is needed. The current space allocation is not meeting the current needs of the department and should be re-evaluated.