

DATE: February 20, 2014

TO: Dr Andrew Dean
Dean, Faculty of Science and Environmental Studies

FROM: Todd Randall
Chair, Department of Geography

RE: Proposed Name Change for Department of Geography

This memo is to formally request permission for the Department of Geography to be renamed the “**Department of Geography and the Environment.**” The content of this memo (below) briefly outlines the rationale for the name choice and the process by which we arrived at it.

As you are well aware, the Department of Geography has been considering a possible name change to better identify its programs and contributions both inside and outside the University. This consideration of a re-brand comes out of the development of a Strategic Academic Plan (for 2012-2017) which was adopted in June 2012 by the Department.

The Department has long been affiliated with the delivery of environmental programs on campus (Environmental Studies and Environmental Science). Geography, as a discipline, is traditionally considered to be the original Environmental Studies discipline, as it covers the breadth of natural and human-built environments and our interactions with these. Many departments (of Geography) have undergone a similar re-branding exercise resulting in names like Department of Geography and Environmental Studies (e.g. Carleton University) or Department of Geography, Planning and Environment (e.g., Concordia University) while others have retained the original Department of Geography (e.g., UBC). After considerable debate and deliberation with our colleagues here at the Thunder Bay campus and consultation on several occasions with the three Geography faculty at the Orillia campus, we decided a rebrand to include ‘the Environment’ was the preferred way to move ahead. While academics may have a clear vision that Geography includes environmental studies and science, we felt that incoming or potential students are not making that same connection as reliably.

The proposed new name (Geography and the Environment) also better reflects the enrolment patterns and trends in our Department. The data below (in Table 1) is a static look at enrolment in Geography programs (including Concurrent Education) as of November 2013. These indicate that nearly two-thirds of our majors (23 of 38) are in the HBES.GEOG and HBESc.GEOG programs and that almost one-third of concurrent education majors (13 of 47)

are in our environmental programs. Table 1 does not highlight temporal trends but I can attest that during the past decade in the Department, we have seen a steady movement of students away from the HBA.GEOG and HBSc.GEOG degree programs towards the HBES.GEOG and HBESc.GEOG degree programs. Anecdotally, I have advised students who changed programs (HBA to HBES) in the final year of their program simply because they wanted the word “Environmental Studies” in their degree. In addition, the Department Chair (of Geography) is a member of the Division of Environmental Studies that coordinates the University’s Environmental Studies and Environmental Sciences programs.

Beyond better reflecting the types of programming the Department delivers, the proposed name Geography and the Environment also better reflects the nature of community outreach and services contributions by our faculty complement. For example, three of the six of us (Drs Randall, Stewart and Cornwell) are members of working groups for Thunder Bay EarthCare and have contributed to the recently revised “Sustainability Plan” for EarthCare (and ultimately to be adopted by City Council) and the EarthCare Community Forum (held Feb 7th, 2014). As well, our Department is host to RAP (Remedial Action Plan), led by Dr Robert Stewart, focusing on the Area of Concern in Thunder Bay, Nipigon Bay and environs, and Dr B. Wilson is a member on SREC (Sustainable Renewable Energy Cooperative).

Table 1: Enrolment numbers in Geography programs (GEOG and EDUC_GEOG) as of November 1, 2013, indicating a significant proportion in our Environmental Studies and Environmental Science degree programs (HBES.GEOG and HBESc.GEOG, respectively).

		GEOG						
Program	Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	T
BA.GEOG	BA (Geography)		1	2				3
BSc.GEOG	BSc (Geography)	1						1
HBA.GEOG	HBA (Geography)	3	2		1			6
HBES.GEOG	HBES (Geography)	4	4	5	6			19
HBESc.GEOG	HBESc (Geography)	1	2		1			4
HBSc.GEOG	HBSc (Geography)		1	1	1			3
HBSc.GEOG.GEOL	HBSc (Geog with Geol)		2					2
	Subtotals:	9	12	8	9	0	0	38



EDUC_GEOG								
Program	Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	T
BABED.GEOG.IS	BABEd IS (Geography)	2	2	5				9
BABED.GEOG.JI	BABEd JI (Geography)	2	1					3
BABED.GEOG.PJ	BABEd PJ (Geography)	2	1					3
BSCBED.GEOG.IS	BScBEEd IS (Geography)			1				1
HBABED.GEOG.IS	HBABEd IS (Geography)	2	1	4	4			11
HBABED.GEOG.JI	HBABEd JI (Geography)		1	1				2
HBABED.GEOG.PJ	HBABEd PJ (Geography)	2	2	1				5
HBESBED.GEOG.IS	HBESBEEd IS (Geography)	5	7					12
HBESCBED.GEOG.IS	HBEScBEEd IS (Geography)		1					1
	Subtotals:	15	16	12	4	0	0	47

The Department of Geography formally approved a motion in December 2013 to adopt the new name “Department of Geography and the Environment”. We look forward to your endorsement of this request for a change of name and assistance in the re-branding

Sincerely,

Todd Randall
Chair, Department of Geography