



January 3, 2018

Ruth V. Watkins  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs  
205 Park Bldg.  
Campus

RE: Graduate Council Review  
Department of Geography

*R. Watkins*  
*1-4-18*

*David B. Kieda*  
*1-9-18*

Dear Vice President Watkins:

Enclosed is the Graduate Council's review of the Department of Geography. Included in this review packet are the report prepared by the Graduate Council, the Department Profile, and the Memorandum of Understanding resulting from the review wrap-up meeting.

After your approval, please forward this packet to President David Pershing for his review. It will then be sent to the Academic Senate to be placed on the information calendar for the next Senate meeting.

Sincerely,

David B. Kieda  
Dean, The Graduate School

Encl.

XC: Andrea R. Brunelle, Chair, Department of Geography  
Cynthia Berg, Dean, College of Social and Behavioral Science

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The Graduate School - The University of Utah

GRADUATE COUNCIL REPORT TO THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT  
FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND THE ACADEMIC SENATE

*September 5, 2017*

The Graduate Council has completed its review of the **Department of Geography**. The External Review Committee included:

Patricia Gober, PhD  
Research Professor  
School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning  
Arizona State University

Andrew Marcus, PhD  
Professor, Department of Geography  
Tykeson Dean, College of Arts and Sciences  
University of Oregon

Glen MacDonald, PhD  
John Muir Memorial Chair and  
Distinguished Professor of Geography, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology  
Department of Geography  
University of California, Los Angeles

The Internal Review Committee of the University of Utah included:

Kevin DeLuca, PhD  
Professor  
Department of Communication

William P. Johnson, PhD  
Professor  
Department of Geology and Geophysics

Maureen A. Mathison, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Department of Writing and Rhetoric

This report of the Graduate Council is based on the self-study submitted by the Department of Geography, the reports of the external and internal review committees, and responses to the external and internal reports from the Department Chair and College Dean.

## DEPARTMENT PROFILE

### Program Overview

The Department of Geography (hereinafter the "Department"), as reported in the self-study, consists of 13 tenure-line faculty (one whose appointment is split) and 21 career-line faculty, with the former expected to increase by one by Fall 2017. Teaching and scholarly activities are organized under three focus areas: 1. Urban/economic systems, 2. Earth systems science, and 3. Geographical information science. The Department offers BS, BA, MS, and PhD degrees in Geography, with eight formal emphases offered for undergraduates along with two minors. Research productivity in the Department is high, despite relatively small faculty numbers and high teaching loads. Career-line faculty provide a valuable complement to the tenure-track faculty in research, teaching, and service. The Department culture is collegial, and leadership from the Chair has been excellent.

The Department has responded to most of the recommendations from the previous program review in 2009, including: reorganization of staff duties and hiring additional / new staff; developing a mechanism to reduce tenure-line course loads for research active faculty; slightly increasing faculty numbers; and the addition of improved new laboratory facilities. However, the external review committee notes "curricular, graduate advising, and workload concerns today closely mirror the concerns raised by the 2009 site team." Faculty retention continues to be a challenge for the Department, in many cases for reasons beyond their control, and the number of tenure-track faculty lines has not grown significantly since the last review.

### Faculty

The Department has 12.33 tenure-line faculty members, with 6 appointed as full professors, 3 associate professors, and 4 assistant professors. Since 2009, the Department has had 6 faculty members resign and 1 retire, replacing these with 8 new hires. The faculty is relatively young with an average age of 45. High turnover rates were not found to represent systemic problems within the Department, but rather reflect a highly competitive market for qualified scholars who are being lured away from the Department for a variety of reasons. On the one hand, this reflects excellent recruiting and faculty development within the Department; however, the external review committee notes persistent difficulties recruiting top doctoral students, and states that "unless this is addressed, faculty will continue to be attracted to competing programs that are more competitive in terms of graduate student funding."

The Department maintains a highly productive record of scholarly publishing and success obtaining research funding. Faculty members average approximately four publications per year, and research funding totaled \$13 million since 2009. The external review committee commented that faculty in the Department have a relatively high teaching load, which when reduced for research active faculty should increase productivity. Meanwhile, the internal review committee notes an imbalance across the three focus areas, and that "the human geography component of the Department needs to grow in order to be able to retain human geography faculty." The 21 career-line faculty members provide valuable contributions to the

Department in areas of teaching, research, and service, and help recruit new majors. The tenure-track and career-line faculty are “effective and committed teachers” (external review committee).

The number of tenure-track faculty lines is low compared to peer institutions and in terms of the number of courses and degree emphases offered. The internal and external review committees give figures of 15 and 16 tenure-track faculty lines, respectively, as a goal for the Department. There is a desire for growth among current faculty members in order to offer new graduate courses, move high-enrollment courses from adjunct faculty, and distribute teaching loads to improve research productivity. However, the external review committee in particular notes the strong need for strategic planning with respect to new hires and growth, “informed by new models of the discipline that have more integrated, and often solution-seeking themes.” The Chair and Dean’s response letters indicate that action on this recommendation is already moving forward.

The Department has made intensive efforts to improve diversity among the faculty, with positive results; current tenure-line faculty consist of 4 females and 9 males, and of the eight new hires, three are women, five white, two Asian, and one is Hispanic/Latino. Career-line faculty are: 8 female, 13 male, and predominantly white (19/21). Efforts to diversify the Department’s faculty candidate pools have been successful in increasing gender and racial/ethnic diversity.

## **Students**

Undergraduate students in the Department express a high degree of satisfaction with respect to “advising, accessibility of professors, and the care faculty put into their classes” (external review committee), and course evaluations are at or above university averages. Students express a strong sense of community; however, lax prerequisite enforcement and late declaration of majors limits the development of student cohorts. Gender diversity has increased slightly among undergraduates since the last Department review in 2009 (25% to 31% female), while racial/ethnic diversity has remained flat or increased only slightly (13% to 15%).

The Department has graduated on average 36 undergraduate majors per year between 2009 and 2016. Undergraduate enrollment has declined slightly since the last review, which the external review committee notes is a “major concern” and may indicate “the need for serious structural changes in the curriculum.” Department efforts to increase enrollment have included creation of new introductory level courses, participation in university-wide outreach activities, an improved website, as well as maintaining strong ties with the local community college.

The number of graduate students in the Department has grown since the last review; however, most of this growth has come in the addition of new master’s students while the number of PhD students has declined. While the external review committee recommends to “scale back” the Department’s master’s program in favor of PhD students, the Chair in her response notes a “more thoughtful approach is needed” that considers student’s needs. It is clear that decisions regarding future growth of the graduate program need to and will be made with careful consideration. Increased emphasis on growing the number of PhD students should augment the Department’s scholarly profile.

Gender diversity among graduate students in the Department is high, with roughly equal numbers of female/male students. Racial/ethnic diversity among graduate students, however, remains relatively low.

Interviews with graduate students indicated low morale; however, most students in turn expressed very positive experiences with graduate teams and advisors. Chief among complaints were low stipends for graduate students and limits on the duration of funding. In her response letter, the Chair indicates the Department has already acted on the issue of stipends, increasing academic year salaries for MS and PhD students. Graduate students expressed additional frustrations related to course offerings, advising, and the small number of faculty members supervising theses. The Department has responded by holding a town-hall discussion, but continued efforts are needed to raise graduate student morale.

## **Curriculum**

Emphases in the Geography major previously numbered 8 but have recently been reduced to 5: climate change and landscape dynamics; population, development, and sustainability; hazards, resilience, and human security; geographic information science; and remote sensing of the environment. This reduction reflects an effort to consolidate teaching and reorganize focus areas around modern problems and core competencies. However, the review committees make several recommendations that can be addressed through continued curriculum revision, including further reducing the number of specialization areas in order to streamline teaching responsibilities, improving flow through undergraduate courses, and growing student cohorts. As noted by the external review committee: "The bottom line is that the Department offers a very large number of courses and lacks structured paths..."

The lack of enforcement of course prerequisites was noted to limit the coherent flow of knowledge between courses as well as formation of student cohorts, and students expressed frustration with material being repeated across courses. Students spoke highly of the Department's undergraduate advisor. Meanwhile, graduate students commented on a lack of specialty courses for their relevant disciplines. Together these issues point to a need to further refine the Department's undergraduate curriculum in a way that improves structure, reduces teaching loads for faculty, and simultaneously allows creation of new specialty graduate courses. Limited course offerings in human geography will likely be alleviated with the planned addition of a new human geography faculty member. Growth of online course offerings may also be considered.

## **Program Effectiveness and Outcomes Assessment**

The Department has the stated mission "to generate high quality research and teaching focused on the interactions between the human and physical environment" (self-study), and has identified four basic geographic concepts that all students should understand: 1. Basic understanding of the scientific discovery process in the discipline of geography, 2. Basic understanding of at least one geographic subfield, 3. Ability to think spatially and conduct basic station analysis, and 4. Ability to critically understand knowledge communicated in written and cartographic forms. Courses have been selected that teach these concepts, and successful learning is assessed based on end-of-term exams. The external review committee, however, comments that "there appears to be no real analysis of these examinations" in a comprehensive manner to ensure the learning goals have been achieved.

The Department collects data on student recruitment, retention, graduation rates, diversity, alumni satisfaction and employment using various methods. These include OBIA reports, internal databases for

incoming undergraduate and graduate students, and exit surveys. There is no formal tracking of students after they leave the program, which the internal review committee notes “is an institution-side weakness that deserves greater consideration from Central Administration.” The external review committee notes that the Department “has access to the usual institutional data ... but does not really analyze these data for insights into how their student population has changed over time and how it compares to other majors.” Further efforts to improve program effectiveness assessment are warranted.

## **Facilities and Resources**

The Department is currently transitioning between physical space in the past split between two distant buildings and new space in the College of Social & Behavioral Science (CSBS) building where all department offices and labs will be collocated. The transitional situation is difficult for faculty and students, with less than optimal class, office, and meeting space. However, the outlook on new physical facilities is very positive and the external review committee notes these new facilities “should increase research productivity and help with recruitment and retention of high quality faculty and graduate students.” ... “The new facilities represent a major step forward for the Department.”

The new productivity funds budget model for the university is adversely impacting the Department’s budget. Productivity funds support “critical teaching faculty and administrative staff positions, as well as all other operational expenses required to conduct our department business” (self-study). Constraints leveed under this new budget model are expected to affect career-line faculty and staff support, and “could have severe impacts on the productivity of the Department” (external review committee). The Department is exploring options to fill this budget gap, and it is clear that careful planning will be necessary to ensure base levels of support for critical functions under the new productivity funds budget model.

Graduate student stipends and the duration of graduate student funding were highlighted by the external review committee as “the single biggest issue that surfaced around resources,” as discussed previously. The number of teaching assistants was also a significant concern to faculty and students. Together these issues may adversely impact faculty retention and graduate student recruitment. While graduate stipends were recently increased, further planning at the Department and PI level are needed to increase the number of TA positions and duration of graduate student support.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The Department is praised for its collegial atmosphere and strong community mentality. Leadership from the Chair has been excellent, and faculty-staff partnerships are productive.
2. The faculty are highly productive in scholarly research, and offer a broad curriculum in the geographical sciences. They have taken positive steps to consolidate the program and curriculum. The Department is commended for excellent recruiting of top quality new faculty.
3. The Department has made a strong effort to improve faculty diversity since the last program review, with positive results especially in gender diversity across faculty and career-line staff.

4. Undergraduate students are highly satisfied, with high morale. Graduate students report very positive experiences with research teams and advisors. Faculty and career-line staff are committed teachers.
5. Vast improvements in physical facilities are expected to have a positive impact on student, faculty and staff morale, and should aid graduate student recruitment and faculty retention.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a strong need to conduct a formalized strategic planning exercise, ideally aided by an external advisor. The strategic plan should focus on updating the Department's thematic emphases, provide direction for new hires and growth, and help the Department distinguish a renewed identity.
2. Support for graduate students needs further improvement. While stipends were recently raised, they need to be further bolstered and maintained competitively over time, and the duration of guaranteed funding for PhD students needs to be increased beyond 3 years. Efforts should also be made to increase the number of TA positions available.
3. Graduate student morale should be surveyed regularly, and action taken to improve graduate student satisfaction and in turn recruitment of top applicants. The Department should consider a target proportion of MS/PhD students that optimizes use of available resources while maximizing outputs.
4. The undergraduate curriculum should be examined to keep it contemporary, structured, and responsive to students' needs. Streamlining specializations would reduce teaching loads, thus simultaneously allowing creation of specialty graduate courses. Prerequisites should be enforced in undergraduate courses. The Department should ensure their outcomes assessment cycle is complete by analyzing and reporting on assessment data already being collected.
5. Continued efforts should be made to improve diversity among the faculty, staff and student populations, especially in the area of racial/ethnic diversity.

Submitted by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Graduate Council:

Jeffrey R. Moore (Chair)  
Assistant Professor, Department of Geology and Geophysics

Isabel Dulfano  
Associate Professor, Department of World Languages and Cultures

Elisabeth Pankl  
Head, Graduate and Undergraduate Services, Marriott Library

Jessica Straley (Undergraduate Council Representative)  
Associate Professor, Department of English

College Name  
College of Social & Behavioral Science

Department Name  
Geography

Program Name  
All

## Faculty Headcount

		2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
With Doctoral Degrees Including MFA and Other Terminal Degrees	Full Time Tenured Faculty	7	7	7	7	7	8	8
	Full Time Tenure Track	4	2	5	6	4	5	6
	Full Time Career Line/Adjunct Faculty	4	4	4	2	3	5	6
	Part Time Tenure/Tenure Track	1	1	1				
	Part Time Career Line/Adjunct Faculty	0	1	1	3	2	1	2
	Total	16	15	18	18	16	19	22
With Masters Degrees	Full Time Tenured Faculty	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Full Time Tenure Track	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Full Time Career Line/Adjunct Faculty	0	0	0	2	2	2	2
	Part Time Tenure/Tenure Track	0	0	0				
	Part Time Career Line/Adjunct Faculty	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
	Total	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
With Bachelor Degrees	Full Time Tenured Faculty	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Full Time Tenure Track	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Full Time Career Line/Adjunct Faculty	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Part Time Tenure/Tenure Track	0	0	0				
	Part Time Career Line/Adjunct Faculty	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total Headcount Faculty	Full Time Tenured Faculty	7	7	7	7	7	8	8
	Full Time Tenure Track	4	2	5	6	4	5	6
	Full Time Career Line/Adjunct Faculty	4	4	4	4	5	7	8
	Part Time Tenure/Tenure Track	1	1	1				
	Part Time Career Line/Adjunct Faculty	1	2	2	3	3	2	3
	Total	17	16	19	20	19	22	25

## Cost Study

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Direct Instructional Expenditures	1,577,457	1,610,808	1,827,806	2,162,416	2,133,070	2,421,087	2,615,349
Cost Per Student FTE	5,456	5,526	6,050	7,537	8,293	8,125	7,885

## FTE from Cost Study

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Full-Time Salaried	14	12	18	16	15	19	22
Part-Time or Auxiliary Faculty	2	3	3	2	1	1	11
Teaching Assistants	1	2	2	1	2	1	0

## Funding

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Total Grants	1,035,624	904,296	752,435	1,006,305	1,474,178	1,253,677	1,006,303
State Appropriated Funds	1,238,174	1,278,841	1,365,986	1,574,549	1,651,716	2,026,420	1,931,359
Teaching Grants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Special Legislative Appropriation*							
Differential Tuition*							

A.



## Student Credit Hours and FTE

		2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
SCH	Lower Division	2,389	2,576	2,781	2,360	1,892	2,499	2,543
	Upper Division	5,182	5,063	5,040	4,911	4,626	5,165	5,642
	Basic Graduate	459	400	494	590	576	712	1,002
	Advanced Graduate	276	337	334	301	223	138	175
FTE	Lower Division	80	86	93	79	63	83	85
	Upper Division	173	169	168	164	154	172	188
	Basic Graduate	23	20	25	30	29	36	50
	Advanced Graduate	14	17	17	15	11	7	9
FTE/FTE	LD FTE per Total Faculty FTE	5	6	4	4	4	4	3
	UD FTE per Total Faculty FTE	11	11	8	9	9	9	6
	BG FTE per Total Faculty FTE	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
	AG FTE per Total Faculty FTE	1	1	1	1	1	0	0

## Enrolled Majors

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Undergraduate Pre-Majors	5	9	10	11	12	8	8
Undergraduate Majors	79	68	66	72	52	59	56
Enrolled in Masters Program	27	16	19	25	30	39	40
Enrolled in Doctoral Program	23	28	28	21	18	14	18
Enrolled in First Professional Program							

## Degrees Awarded

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Undergraduate Certificate	13	25	22	11	16	17	21
Graduate Certificate						1	4
Bachelors	42	42	38	24	40	37	28
Masters	5	11	9	3	3	15	10
Doctorate	2	4	6	5	3	8	1
First-Professional							



## **Memorandum of Understanding Department of Geography Graduate Council Review 2016-17**

This memorandum of understanding is a summary of decisions reached at a wrap-up meeting on November 1, 2017, and concludes the Graduate Council Review of the Department of Geography. Ruth V. Watkins, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Cynthia Berg, Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Science; Andrea R. Brunelle, Chair of the Department of Geography; David B. Kieda, Dean of the Graduate School; and Katharine S. Ullman, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, were present.

The discussion centered on but was not limited to the recommendations contained in the review summary report presented to the Graduate Council on September 5, 2017. The working group agreed to endorse the following actions:

**Recommendation 1: There is a strong need to conduct a formalized strategic planning exercise, ideally aided by an external advisor. The strategic plan should focus on updating the Department's thematic emphases, provide direction for new hires and growth, and help the Department distinguish a renewed identity.**

The Department has been very responsive to this suggestion, enlisting the help of Dr. Glen MacDonald to facilitate a multi-day strategic planning exercise. Dr. MacDonald was an external reviewer for this Graduate Council review, so he is highly familiar with the Department and its history. In addition, he is a particularly well-suited advisor for the strategic plan as his department at UCLA provides an aspirational model in the PAC-12 and because his service as president of the American Association of Geographers links him tightly to national trends in the field. With support from the College, the Department has scheduled this event for March 2018 and Chair Brunelle expects a draft plan to be complete and ready to review with Dean Berg in Fall 2018. SVP Watkins expressed great support for the strategic planning process. Throughout discussion at this meeting, it was apparent that keeping a range of issues on the table and staying flexible would be worthwhile – even in the case of issues where faculty may feel they have already weighed in, such as the best name for the Department and the MS/PhD balance question. The group discussed thematic emphases of the Department as well, both in terms of aligning them with curricular emphases and in terms of making them highly visible through marketing and branding (finding additional ways to highlight the positive job prospects in this field to undergraduates could be part of this). Tightening curriculum to create efficiencies is another aspect of strategic planning, as are several other items discussed in the recommendations below. Overall, this is an exciting time to galvanize department members around a forward-looking strategic vision in the context of the new facility and the Department's bright future prospects.

**Recommendation 2. Support for graduate students needs further improvement. While stipends were recently raised, they need to be further bolstered and maintained competitively over time, and the duration of guaranteed funding for PhD students needs to be increased beyond 3 years. Efforts should also be made to increase the number of TA positions available.**

To start, Dean Berg emphasized how critical the topic of graduate student support is in order for the Department to be competitive in attracting students *and* faculty. She has given resources for an additional TA slot and the Department has raised the TA salary to \$18K for PhD students. Ideally though, offering salary in the range of \$20-24K/year and a guarantee of 4 years of support seem essential in the current climate. The consensus view at this meeting was that the Department should make a decision as a community that their resources are robust enough (given that RAs are supported by a strong portfolio of grants) that they can make a 4-year guarantee, knowing that with some adjustments this will work out. In order to create a sustainable financial model to support PhD students at a competitive level, additional possibilities discussed were developing a donation stream directed at graduate funding, charging differential tuition for the MS-GIS, and pursuing external funding opportunities, such as training grants and NSF graduate research fellowships. While ideally there would not be a large discrepancy between TA and RA salaries, it was also pointed out that keeping RA salaries somewhat higher can provide incentive for students to transition to a focus on research. Finally, although not a cost-saving measure, the question of whether staff or career-line faculty could have some lab-based teaching responsibility may enter into a full picture (see Recommendation 3).

Following the meeting, Chair Brunelle proposed commitments from the College and University that would help the Department achieve the goal of 4-year guarantees to doctoral students at a minimum of \$20K per year. These requests are made in the context of substantial service teaching that the Department does in the Business School, which in turn results in differential tuition funds returned to the College. While this MOU does not reflect a discussion of these specific requests, they should be the basis of further conversation between the Chair and Dean Berg. With the expectation that a plan will soon be put in place with some or all of the elements above, the Graduate School requests an update on this recommendation in one year.

**Recommendation 3. Graduate student morale should be surveyed regularly, and action taken to improve graduate student satisfaction and in turn recruitment of top applicants. The Department should consider a target proportion of MS/PhD students that optimizes use of available resources while maximizing outputs.**

The Chair and Director of Graduate Studies have already held a town-hall meeting and this proved to be very helpful. They identified problems that they have been able to address. Dean Kieda encouraged regular town-hall meetings, particularly to keep students apprised of the moving process, but generally these forums

are an efficient way to gather input, keep students engaged, and build community. Graduate student morale, stipend levels, and MS/PhD balance are all intertwined topics and a very important conversation to be having during the process of strategic planning. Finding the right cohort size for PhD students is critical. While the external reviewers suggested a drastic shift in the MS/PhD ratio, it may be that a relatively small shift would make a big difference. While the Department is correctly cautious not to train an excessive number of doctoral students, the full potential for their employment -- beyond just academic positions -- should be considered, as there are likely other capacities that make use of advanced training in the discipline and in critical, research-oriented thinking. A measured increase in doctoral students may be justified and could help drive departmental research and reputation. Another factor influencing PhD student numbers is a need for TAs in lab- and field-based classes. This can be addressed to some extent by efficiency of offerings, and the Chair indicated that courses had already been pruned. Turning to non-tenure-line faculty for some of these teaching roles is another tactic currently being employed. This option may still be warranted even if a larger number of doctoral students are present so that these trainees have ample chance to shift their focus to research.

**Recommendation 4. The undergraduate curriculum should be examined to keep it contemporary, structured, and responsive to students' needs. Streamlining specializations would reduce teaching loads, thus simultaneously allowing creation of specialty graduate courses. Prerequisites should be enforced in undergraduate courses. The Department should ensure their outcomes assessment cycle is complete by analyzing and reporting on assessment data already being collected.**

The recent shift from 8 to 5 thematic emphases in the undergraduate curriculum is a first step in the streamlining process. The Chair indicated that she envisions that once the GIS major in development is implemented, this will eliminate one thematic emphasis and that another step could be to combine the two current human geography emphases into one. These changes seem well on track and should help to align and focus faculty effort in undergraduate education, while at the same time freeing time for research efforts and graduate student training. The transcribed emphases are a strategic way to raise the profile of topics covered within geography and were thoughtfully crafted to point toward contemporary problem-oriented themes. As further evolution takes place, Dean Kieda mentioned that Google statistics can be used as a tool to align descriptions with terms being used to search for programs. Improvements to enforcement of prerequisites has taken place, with 37% of courses now having tight requirements. This was seen as a proportion that allowed progression through a program of study without putting up unnecessary roadblocks. Prerequisites will improve a step-wise progression of knowledge and have the added benefit of contributing to a cohort community, which reviewers viewed as beneficial. An additional factor noted by the Department as a challenge to cohort development is that students typically select Geography as a major late in their undergraduate training. The Department is actively addressing this issue. Among their efforts are 1) development of courses that attract students to the major sooner, 2) outreach efforts at the high school level, and 3) close coordination with Salt Lake Community College to articulate their coursework so that transfer students transition smoothly. To the last point of this recommendation, the Department is actively engaged in outcomes assessment and supplied details of this in their letter of response. Thus, the Department is

working actively on all of these fronts and is well-poised to build proactively on this foundation. Future updates to the Graduate School should include curricular developments at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

**Recommendation 5. Continued efforts should be made to improve diversity among the faculty, staff and student populations, especially in the area of racial/ethnic diversity.**

The Department has a demonstrated commitment to this goal. First, they have been successful in hiring a Hispanic faculty member. They have also revamped a recruiting brochure to reflect diversity. In addition, they brought a group of prospective undergraduates from a community college in Wyoming with many Native American students. These are all positive steps and the Chair was encouraged to continue to take advantage of University resources available for supporting diversity. Although not discussed at the meeting, it is worth mentioning that Dr. Araceli Frias, the Assistant Dean for Diversity in the Graduate School, is also available to help with recruiting at the graduate student level.

SVP Watkins expressed her gratitude to the Chair for her leadership and indicated that the Department was an extremely strong one by many performance indicators. In addition, she noted that the Department has been a model of success for the Transformative Excellence Program.

This memorandum of understanding is to be followed by regular letters of progress, upon request of the Graduate School, from the Chair of the Department of Geography. Letters will be submitted until all of the actions described in the preceding paragraphs have been completed. In addition, a three-year follow-up meeting may be scheduled during AY 2019-20 to discuss progress made in addressing the review recommendations.

Ruth V. Watkins  
Cynthia Berg  
Andrea R. Brunelle  
David B. Kieda  
Katharine S. Ullman



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David B. Kieda  
Dean, The Graduate School  
January 3, 2018