

PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND GEOLOGY

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors to change the name of the Department of Geology to the Department of Environmental Science and Geology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, effective Fall 2020.

Background

Until recently, the Department of Geology was administered under the Department of Biology with a shared department chair. As of fall 2018, the department was separated and given its own chair. Three of the five Department of Geology faculty are environmental scientists, and the department has expanded faculty expertise in this area in recent years. A renamed Department of Geology will reflect growing faculty expertise in Environmental Science and the expanded focus of the department going forward.

Students are increasingly concerned about the rapid changes that are taking place in our environment, primarily caused by population growth and very high demand for energy resources. This global change has manifested through phenomena such as global warming, changes in regional weather patterns including patterns of drought and flooding, the loss of biodiversity, degradation of water quality, sea level changes, destabilization of continental glaciers, and possible spread of tropical diseases such as malaria in warmer planet. Nationally, student's desire expanded curriculum and career options in Environmental Science. Faculty in Environmental Science are planning to expand undergraduate coursework and create both in-person and online Master's level degree programs in the near future. Other local universities (e.g., University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Western Michigan University) have also renamed their Geology Departments in recent years, due to changing student interests and expanded faculty expertise, as well as the urgency of global environmental problems. Thus, this proposal is in line with national trends in higher education. This name change also signifies recognition of student interests by giving the program a visible department-level home.

This name change will help the department's faculty by better reflecting the diversity of their expertise. No changes in faculty assignment will result from this name change.

Current Students

Since its launch in 2003, the Environmental Science Program has been a non-departmentalized program administered out of CLAS Dean's Office and taught out of both the Department of Biology and the Department of Geology. While Biology faculty will still play an essential role in managing the curriculum and in teaching, the program will now be administered out of the Department of Geology. This name change will have no detrimental effect on current students. Current students will continue to follow their current plans of work (there is no accompanying change in curriculum at this time).

Budget and Resource Requirements

The operating budget of the department will not be significantly affected by this name change. Minimal one-time expenditures will be required for changes to physical signage.

Approvals

The proposed name change of the department has been approved by the faculty of Department of Geology and faculty from the Department of Biology who teach in the Environmental Science Program, by the CLAS Faculty Council, the CLAS Faculty Assembly, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Provost.