

## **Visiting Committee Meeting**

West Virginia University Department of Geology and Geography  
Brooks Hall, Morgantown, West Virginia  
October 10, 2008

Attendees: Dr. Trevor Harris, Dr. Helen Lang, Dr. Tim Warner, Roger Cottrell, Brian Raber, Heather Ramsey, Ron Mullenex, Dr. Alan Brown, Linda Culp, Craig Edmonds, Jennifer Sincock and Joe Sewash

Remaining Committee Members: Robert Dulli, Marshall Miller, Amy Pratt, Geary Schindel

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### Purpose

This was the first meeting of the Geology and Geography Visiting Committee at West Virginia University (WVU). The purpose of the meeting was to introduce faculty, staff, and students at WVU to the members of the Visiting Committee, tour the new facilities at Brooks Hall, review the research interests of faculty, and outline the goals and objectives of the new committee.

### Meeting Notes

The meeting began with a few opening comments from Dr. Trevor Harris, which included a review of the day's agenda and his gratitude to committee members for attending the meeting.

Introductions followed Trevor's comments as follows:

- Dr. Trevor Harris
  - Eberly Distinguished Professor of Geography
  - Research interests in immersive visualization, GIS in sensitive and reflexive environments, GIS applications in social sciences
- Dr. Helen Lang
  - Associate Chair for Geology
  - 25 years with department
  - metamorphic geology (variety of environments)
  - mineralogy and petrology sequence / undergraduate emphasis
- Dr. Tim Warner
  - Assoc. Chair for Geography
  - remote sensing, energy remote sensing, biogeographical applications
- Roger Cottrell
  - Senior Project Manager for URS Corporation, Raleigh, NC
  - MA Geography 1996
- Jennifer Sincock
  - Philadelphia, EPA
  - WV / Chesapeake Bay focus
  - MS Geology 1998

- Brian Raber
  - BA Geography 1980, MS Geography University of Idaho 1986
  - Merrick and Company, Denver
  - Geospatial solutions, 100 staff, \$100 M annual, FEMA data acquisition
- Linda Culp
  - Planner San Diego Association of Governments, CA
  - BA Geography 1986, MA Geography 1989, MPA 1992
- Heather Ramsey
  - BS Geology 2001, MS Geology, UNC Chapel Hill
  - Chesapeake Energy, Charleston, WV
  - Seismic research
- Craig Edmonds
  - MS Geology 2004
  - Dominion Exploration and Production, Jane Lew, WV
- Ron Mullinex
  - BS Geology 1971, MS 1974
  - Marshall Miller & Assoc, Bluefield VA
  - wire line geophysics, hydrogeology / energy geology
- Dr. Alan Brown
  - MS Geology 1981
  - Schlumberger, Houston TX
  - supporting Schlumberger software with department
  - advisory board LSU
  - PhD Geol LSU 2002
- Joe Sewash
  - BA Geography 1992, MA Geography 1995
  - North Carolina Center for GIS, Raleigh NC

Trevor Harris stated that the committee's focus should be to bring life experiences to faculty and staff.

- College is encouraging departments to convene visiting committees
- 12 faculty in each program (Geology, Geography)
- Complementary programs
- Seven degrees (undergraduate, graduate and Ph.D. in both programs, BA in Environmental Geoscience)

#### Visiting Committee Review - Trevor Harris

- Trevor outlined seven points/objectives for the visiting committee to consider:
  - 1) Committee members need to enjoy and gain satisfaction from this effort; make it enjoyable
  - 2) Provide a forum between students, faculty, and alumni

- a. individual relationships have driven past activities
  - b. mobilize the alumni
  - c. bring life experience to the students
  - d. generate candidates for alumni awards
- 3) Greater mentor opportunities for students
- a. career and interview advice
  - b. network for internships
  - c. industry trends
  - d. what are the opportunities to link the department to the business world and industry
  - e. what are the skills that students need to be prepared for the real world
- 4) Committee can provide expert advice that can justify resource requests
- 5) Assist with fundraising and scholarships
- 6) Act as a support group for the department
- a. Committee can provide an external review of the department and activities
  - b. Opportunity for a strong alumni voice on behalf of the department
- 7) Committee needs to be self organizing
- a. Appointments have college regulations
  - b. Meeting times and scheduling
  - c. Department publicity tools
  - d. Tim Carr led push for the latest newsletter
  - e. Website revamp
  - f. Blogging software for faculty to maintain sections of the department's website
  - g. Alumni / Friends section can be forum for the visiting committee

### Department Overview

Trevor continued with a review of the department, including an emphasis on how the new Brooks Hall has been a great benefit for recruiting faculty and students:

- 26 faculty, including Eberly College of Arts and Sciences (ECAS) Dean Mazey and Randy Jackson, Director of the Regional Research Institute (RRI)
- Lost three geography positions in the previous few years
- Ken Martis will begin phased retirement (three year commitment)
- Four new faculty within geography
- Dan Weiner has moved on, currently looking to refill this position
- Energy geology position is being developed
  - Two positions have been made available to the college; and one position has been identified for geoseismic work
  - Alan Brown will be serving on the department search committee
  - second position will be dedicated to energy policy position; placement within college and department will be based on candidates and the search committees; Tim Carr is representing the department on this issue

- Phased retirement is critical to continuity for both programs
  - Joe Lebold will be coming on board in January '09, and will support summer field camp; will focus on technology adaptation and summer geology camp
  - Dick Smosna will begin phased retirement in Summer '09
- Teaching side of programs
- Approximately 100 undergraduate and 30 graduates in each program
- Department submitted Board of Governor's review; achieve "program of excellence" status for geography graduate and undergraduate and geology undergraduate; Trevor's goal is to get geology graduate and environmental geosciences.
- Department teaches over 6000 credit hours more than peer institutions
- Department generates over \$500K more than peer institutions
- WVU is up to 28,500 students; faculty positions have not increased. ECAS Dean measures approximately 100 positions short college-wide

#### Geography Program Review - Tim Warner

- Program has 3 tracks – human, environmental, and GIScience
- Brooks Hall makes G&G a new department and new experience
  - new educational environment
  - faculty offices are now integrated
  - faculty research labs make a difference; student interaction and integration into research
  - students have a higher expectation
  - better social interaction
  - doubled amount of space available to department compared to White Hall
  - Electronic testing and other classroom technology
  - lets faculty improve teaching styles
- faculty changes
- opportunity to remake program through position openings
- very proud of program reviews
- programs of excellence
- Strong placement of graduate and undergraduates
- strong sponsored research
- three active NSF grants

#### Geology Program Review - Helen Lang

- Boost from Brooks Hall environment
- Boost from introductory geology program survey courses
- look to continue excellent teaching traditions
  - energy situation and direction will drive future research
- AAPG imperial barrel regional competition ; WVU students finished fifth in international competition
- Geology PhD program is carrying momentum

- Co2 sequestration work
- Steve Kite is past president of faculty senate
- program was not allowed to replace Shumaker or Donaldson after retirement
- it will take time to adapt teaching to new technology
- field camp is no longer at Camp Wood

### Initial Committee Member Discussion

- newsletter fiscal realities push toward digital distribution
  - keeping touch with Alumni
  - group discussion re: e-mail accounts for alumni
  - archive for available newsletter
  - alumni status can help connect alumni and motivate undergrads
  - job announcements
- Alan Brown: LSU alumni list has been failure
  - no support inside the university
  - no ownership of alumni list or tasking for updates and prompts by both the alumni board and the department
  - there are some list updates that come from the Foundation efforts at LSU and the person working for the foundation understands the departments needs and not only gets money for the University but direct funds to the department. We need to coordinate this effort between the WVU foundation and the department.
- issues re: interaction between department and WVU Foundation
  - see comments above
- “Bucks for Brains” legislature sets aside \$50M available for match to WVU and Marshall to support research that will lead to economic development
  - nanotechnology
  - energy
  - forensics
- Alan Brown: Key to ensure G&G alumni understand solicitation of participation is not equated to money, but can be service, seminars, talking to students, finding internships is as important as funding individuals. (One other discrepancy that I see in the department not discussed at the meeting is the lack of highly funded chairs for Professors to designate a specific area of focus for the department. I know this is a money issue but is an area we need to discuss if we are to aid the department in getting the quality of Professor we would like.)
- A pizza lunch provided the opportunity for mingling with students and other faculty members.
- Committee members were then introduced to staff and faculty as follows:

### Meet the staff

- Tracye Tennant

- Randy Crowe
- Hope Stewart

### New faculty introductions

- Karen Culcasi
  - PhD Syracuse
  - cartographic representations of middle east
  - Research in London and Cairo
  - understand cartographic uses post World War I western world views “Middle East”; while Middle Easterners take a holistic view of “Arab region”
  - teaching survey courses
  - future research will be in food and water resource security
  - good mix of balance of teaching and research
- Brendon McNeil
  - thematic areas of forest ecology
  - good opportunity to work with other faculty skill sets
  - ecosystems services research
  - application of hyper-spectral imaging to ecosystems services research
  - GIScience upper division (GIS & natural systems), physical geography, Natural Resources
- Jeremia Njeru
  - Native of Nairobi Kenya
  - dissertation on impacts of urban deforestation
  - adaptation of prescribed IMF policies had affected deforestation
  - wanted to work with other department faculty
  - Teaching urban & regional planning, urban geography, political ecology
- Jamison Conley
  - cluster analysis
  - disease patterns relative to Mapping geographic entities
  - evidence theory
  - Teaching digital earth (150),

### Visiting Committee Closing Discussion

- Staff and faculty introductions was followed by an open discussion on the following topics
  - Alumni outreach
  - Support to the department when necessary
  - visiting committee communication
  - Recruitment strategies
  - Identify trends
  - Help recruit students at all levels

- Look to focus on specific area of need
- provide review of departmental materials
- meeting frequency
- group consensus
- one meeting per semester
- October and April in-person meetings in Morgantown
- January conference calls via WebEx or other media
- Movement on alumni activities
- Heather will be primary contact for alumni database
- push toward working groups for identified topics
- web access: JS
- internships and job announcements: Brent McCuster (geography); Tom Wilson (geology)
- The committee achieved consensus on the following interim officer positions:
  - Interim Geology Chair – Alan Brown
  - Interim Geography Chair – Linda Culp
  - Interim Secretary – Roger Cottrell
  - Interim Technology Officer – Joe Sewash
  - Interim Alumni Representative – Heather Ramsey
- Official offices and officers will be determined at the April meeting in Morgantown.

January Activities – Conference Call to be scheduled with Department and Committee:

- E-mail / communication list complete
- Web presence complete
- Mission statement from department solidified
- Group consideration for terms
- Set agenda for April in-person meeting

Action Items

- Provide mission statement to committee – Trevor Harris
- Provide dates for January call and April meeting – Trevor Harris
- Investigate link on department web site – Joe Sewash
- Work with Hope Stewart on alumni contact list (database) – Heather Ramsey, Trevor Harris (privacy issues)
- Schedule January meeting and set up logistics – Alan Brown
- Coordinate with Brent M. to post GIS internship opportunity with URS – Roger Cottrell
- Consider subcommittees with all visiting committee members – group
- Provide updates to committee member contact information to Tim Warner - group