

VII. STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Establishment of the Master of Geographic Information Systems

RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is the recommendation of the administration and the Academic and Student Affairs Committee that the Board of Regents grant authority to the Department of Geography to offer the Master of Geographic Information Systems degree program, effective Autumn Quarter 2010. This is a self-sustaining professional program offered in coordination with UW Educational Outreach (UWEO). The degree program will have provisional status with a review to be scheduled in the 2015-2016 academic year. At such time that continuing status is granted, a ten-year review cycle would begin.

BACKGROUND

In October 2009, the Graduate School received a proposal from the graduate faculty in the Department of Geography requesting authority to offer the self-sustaining Master of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) degree program. Implementation is planned for Autumn Quarter 2010, with the program anticipating 23 degrees granted per year at maturity.

The Master of Geographic Information Systems is a 45-credit professional degree that will consist of a GIS core and a concentration in a specific subject area. The first concentration will focus on GIS and sustainability. A GIS is one of the principal information technologies in the geospatial information technology industry, one that has demonstrated steady regional, national, and international growth over the past decade. The master's program will address the interconnection among social/cultural, environmental, and economic issues, fostering insights about the balance and tradeoffs among processes and outcomes at a variety of geographic scales (local, regional, national, and global). The initial concentration will present perspectives in a multidisciplinary manner using various perspectives to address the fundamentals of sustainability. The program will be delivered through a hybrid format (in person and online) to early- and midcareer professionals who can enroll in the program either part-time or full-time.

In November, 2009, the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School appointed two reviewers to evaluate the Master of GIS proposal. The reviewers both supported approval of the degree program. Each reviewer made specific recommendations on the program, to which the program provided detailed responses.

The Graduate School Council met on January 7, 2010, to discuss the Master of GIS degree proposal. The Council recommended unanimously that the proposal

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be forwarded to the Higher Education Coordinating Board for review and approval. The Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School concurred with this recommendation.

On February 16, 2010, the Higher Education Coordinating Board Education Committee discussed the Master of GIS proposal, which was then considered by the full Higher Education Coordinating Board on March 10, 2010. The Board approved the proposal by the Department of Geography at the University of Washington to offer the Master of Geographic Information Systems.

The Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, and the Provost have reviewed and approved the recommendation. The Higher Education Coordinating Board will be informed of the Board of Regents' action on the Master of Geographic Information Systems.