



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

March 8, 2019

Professor Susan McCahan  
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs  
University of Toronto

Dear Susan,

I am writing in response to the request by the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) in regards to the October 12, 2017 external review of the Department of Geography and Planning and its undergraduate and graduate programs. At its meeting of April 3, 2018, AP&P requested a one-year follow-up report addressing *“the status of the working group and curriculum committee conversations regarding undergraduate curriculum development and the sustainability of offerings in physical and environmental geography science, including possibilities for collaboration with cognate units.”* The Faculty has worked with the Chair of the Department, Professor Richard DiFrancesco, to address the concerns of the AP&P committee, as follows:

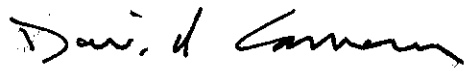
The Department has been engaged in a series of discussions to evaluate curriculum development and the sustainability of programs in physical and environmental geography (PEG). In the fall of 2018, the Chair struck three working groups (the PEG Working Group, the GIS/GIScience Working Group, and the Planning Working Group ) to address issues raised in the external review. With the input of the working groups, the Department is discussing significant curriculum changes. Specifically, the Department is considering reimagining PEG as a program that focusses on understanding the science underlying contemporary environmental change, with an emphasis on computation, as suggested by the reviewers. The Dean’s office notes that any proposal for curriculum change will be reviewed through the normal Arts and Science governance process.

The process of reimagining PEG will take place in tandem with the replacement of a faculty member retiring in July 2019. Consistent with the proposed curricular direction of the program, the Department will request a Teaching Stream faculty member with expertise in Biogeography/Hydrology and GIS/GIScience/Remote Sensing. In the Faculty of Arts and Science, units submit requests for new faculty positions through a formal process to the Faculty Appointments Committee (FAC). Units submit requests in February/March of each year for consideration by the FAC, which includes faculty representatives from across the three Arts and Science sectors (the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences) as well as the Colleges. After considering the full range of requests, the FAC makes recommendations to the Dean. Any request for additional faculty has an impact across the division, and as such, faculty appointments are considered not in isolation, but with respect to needs that exist across the Faculty. The Teaching Stream position request from the Department of Geography and Planning will be considered as part of the FAC process this year. While the Department engages in these changes in curriculum and teaching staff, the Faculty will provide a 2-year CLTA to the Department to ensure that the existing programs are appropriately supported, and to ensure support during this transition period.

While the Department does envision the attainment of a vibrant and sustainable PEG program within the Department of Geography and Planning, the Chair also acknowledges that both PEG and Earth Science programs have the potential to work together in certain areas. In February 2019, the Chair of the Department of Geography and Planning met with the Chair of the Department of Earth Sciences to discuss the potential for unit-level collaboration in the delivery of their respective curricula. Both chairs agreed to strike an interdepartmental working group to study options for synergistic collaborations going forward. Both chairs agreed that there is tremendous complementarity between the two units.

I feel confident that the changes initiated by the program and its faculty address the concerns of the AP&P follow-up request.

Sincerely,



David Cameron  
Dean and Professor of Political Science

cc:

Richard J. DiFrancesco, Chair, Department of Geography and Planning

Poppy Lockwood, Vice-Dean, Academic Planning and Strategic Initiatives, Faculty of Arts & Science

Daniella Mallinick, Director, Academic Programs, Planning and Quality Assurance, Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Andrea Benoit, Academic Review Officer, Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science