



TO: Academic Board

SPONSOR: Cheryl Misak

CONTACT INFO: (416) 978-2122, provost@utoronto.ca

DATE: March 28, 2012 for April 19, 2012

AGENDA ITEM: 6

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Change in the name of the Department of Geology to the Department of Earth Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Science.

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Name changes in academic divisions (excluding namings) are considered by the Academic Board and confirmed by the Executive Committee. (5.2.7)

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

HIGHLIGHTS:

The Faculty of Arts and Science is proposing that the name of the current Department of Geology be changed to the Department of Earth Sciences. As the proposal outlines, the Department has gone under a variety of names over its history in response to the gradual evolution of the focus of faculty research and academic programming. Current research and teaching in the Department involves not only the geological evolution of the solid Earth, but also interactions among the lithosphere (solid Earth), biosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, and cryosphere. The broadening of research expertise in the department reflects a fundamental evolution in the nature of geo-related sciences; in addition to core geological sciences (which has the connotation of simply the “study of rocks”), critical research frontiers have developed in studies of the broader Earth interactions over wide-ranging timescales. The Department and Faculty consider that the proposed new name “Earth Sciences” better describes the research that is undertaken in the department, the education that students receive, and how the discipline has evolved and is understood.

This proposal has been the subject of extensive reflection and consultation over a number of years beginning as early as 2005. The change of the Department’s name to “Earth Sciences” was made a priority in the Department’s 2010-2015 Academic Plan and discussed at a series of meetings with undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty during the academic year 2011-2012. Members of a number of cognate units including the Departments of Physics, Geography, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and Centre for Environment were kept informed of and provided with the opportunity to participate in these discussions. The proposed change was also discussed with the tri-campus deans and with tri-campus colleagues. The proposal received unanimous approval from the Faculty of Arts and Science Faculty Council on March 7, 2012.

The Department's existing undergraduate programs including the Geology Specialist; Geoscience Major; Geophysics specialist; and environmental geoscience (specialist, major, and minor) program will continue to be offered unchanged. At the same time, the Department intends to seek approval (as a minor modification) for a related proposal to change the name of the existing tri-campus graduate program from "Geology" to "Earth Sciences."

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

Any financial resources required to implement the name change will be absorbed within the normal annual Faculty budget allocation for promotional and communications projects and materials and office supplies. The name change will be incorporated in external communications in the normal course of updating such materials.

RECOMMENDATION:

Be it recommended that the Academic Board approve, subject to confirmation by the Executive Committee:

THAT the name of the Department of Geology be changed to the Department of Earth Sciences effective immediately.