

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR A DEPARTMENT NAME CHANGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA:
FROM DEPARTMENT OF GEOSCIENCE TO
DEPARTMENT OF EARTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to change the name of the Department of Geoscience to the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Executive Summary: The proposed name change will enhance communication about the program to current and prospective students and reflect the growth of areas of expertise in the department. This request has been reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to pursue “educational excellence and impact” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and effective.”

Background:

- ◇ **Description of department.** The Department of Geoscience provides education and conducts research in earth processes, earth history, and environmental sustainability using physical, chemical, and biological methods. The Department offers Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, and Ph.D. programs in Geoscience. The Department also administers the interdisciplinary Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science programs in Environmental Sciences, in which other departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering participate. This major will retain its interdisciplinary structure and its academic outcomes as well as its title.
- ◇ **Reason for proposed name change.** The proposed name change will more clearly communicate to prospective students, employers of current students and alumni, and the general public that the Department offers programs that reflect the broad subheadings of “earth science” (geology, paleontology, geochemistry, structural geology, tectonics, geophysics, geomorphology, paleoclimates) and the heading of “environmental science” (hydrogeology, applied geomorphology, ecosystem evolution, soil science). The proposed name change is also expected to attract more resources for the Environmental Sciences program and to open the possibility of offering graduate degrees in both Geoscience and Environmental Sciences.
- ◇ **Proposed name change consistent with College mission.** The proposed name will demonstrate more clearly the commitment of the university and the college to offer courses and programs on the environment and environmental change – an area of study that is increasingly important to students, Iowa, and the nation.
- ◇ **Comparable name at other institutions.** The title of “Earth and Environmental Sciences” is an increasingly common name for departments with faculty expertise similar to that found in the Department of Geoscience. For example, Columbia University, the University of Michigan, Pennsylvania State University, Rutgers University, Rensselaer Polytechnic University, and Boston University have departments with that title. The proposed name change will maintain the traditional focus of the department on earth sciences while expanding the definition to include the environment as a key component.

- ◇ Consistency with accreditation requirements. Neither the department nor any of its programs are accredited.
- ◇ Effect on program configuration. The proposed department name change will not alter the configuration of any of its programs. The names of the current academic programs will not change as a result of the department name change.
- ◇ Effect on students. Current students will not be affected by the proposed department name change. The proposed name will communicate more clearly the focus and strengths of the department and will help to align student expectations with the mission of the department.
- ◇ Effect on resources. No new costs will be incurred as a result of the department name change. The College is in the process of updating the department's website and the online General Catalog. If approved, the new name will be incorporated as the updates occur.
- ◇ Date of implementation. The proposed name change will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be included in the University's General Catalog and other appropriate media.