

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

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

Action Requested: Consider recommending approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa to change the name of the Department of Earth Science to the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences in the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences.

Executive Summary: The proposed department name change will align the school name with its program offerings and reflect the range of disciplines 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 Earth Science offers content and conducts research in the areas of geology, astronomy, and meteorology, as well as earth and space science education and the cross-disciplinary area of environmental science. There are three degree programs in the department – Bachelor of Arts Program in Earth Science; Bachelor of Arts Program in Earth Science Teaching; and Bachelor of Arts Program in Environmental Science.

Students with an interest in geology can conduct field investigations as well as laboratory based research in the department's well equipped facilities. Astronomy students use two on-campus observatories, and have access to numerous on-line data bases, including those at NASA and the *Hubble Space Telescope Science Institute*. Meteorology students have access to the latest computer forecasting models and weather data from around the world. There are also laboratory and field equipment for students to conduct research in air and water quality.

- ◇ **Reason for proposed name change.** The name change would clarify the opportunities available for students in the degree programs and would accurately reflect the range of disciplines and expertise. Enrollment in the Earth Science and Environmental Science areas is equally distributed and the proposed name change would reflect that distribution.

The current name does not provide a clear picture to the university community and the general public about the services, resources, and opportunities availability from faculty in the department. The proposed name change would communicate to the general public about the Environmental Science outreach, research, and educational services provided to the state.

- ◇ **Effect on students.** Current students in the Environmental Science program will have a greater sense of identify; prospective students will have greater awareness of the availability of the degree program; contact information will be more obvious to prospective students.

- ◇ Comparable name at other institutions. In 2012, the University of Iowa's Department of Geosciences changed its name to Earth and Environmental Sciences. Across the country, other geoscience/geology programs have adopted the name 'Earth Science.' The name of UNI's department reflects the definition of earth science used in K-12 education with the addition of space science (astronomy).
- ◇ Consistency with accreditation requirements. Neither the department nor the programs are accredited.
- ◇ Effect on program configuration. There will be no program configuration changes as a result of the department name change.
- ◇ Effect on costs/resources. Short-term costs will be incurred to change printed materials, such as stationary, brochures, and signage. The changes will be implemented with existing department resources.
- ◇ Proposed name consistent with College mission. While there is no mission state for the College, the mission statement for the department states, "The mission of the Department of Earth Science is to instruct, to conduct scholarly inquiry, and to inform the general public about astronomy, geology, meteorology, oceanography, hydrology, and environmental science and the methods for educating in these areas. To achieve this, the Department offers courses for the Liberal Arts Core Program and provides comprehensive undergraduate programs in Earth Science, Earth Science Teaching, and Environmental Science. In addition, minors are offered in Earth Science and Earth Science Teaching. These programs all include significant experiential learning components that enhance students' understanding of the earth and its processes. The Department also contributes to graduate and undergraduate programs in science education, and has a strong commitment to public outreach and service to the community."
- ◇ Effect of name change on workforce. Graduates work in both the private and public sectors, with employment in geoscience settings, atmospheric science and air quality monitoring offices, environmental assessment/testing companies and bureau, and K-12 education. Graduates often follow careers in natural resource management in a variety of settings, including county conservation boards, county, state and national parks, and state departments of natural resources. Data about graduates are collected annually by the department.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics and Labor Market Information/Employment Project Iowa employment data¹ on growth of opportunities for environmental science and protection technicians indicate an increase in employment of 24.2% through 2024. For environmental scientists and specialists, the growth rate is 14.7% through 2024, and for geoscientists, the growth rate is 5.2%. Other careers that graduates have pursued have the following 10-year projected growth rates in Iowa – atmospheric and space scientists (13.0%); postsecondary earth science educators (12.3%); and natural sciences managers (9.9%).
- ◇ Date of implementation. The proposed department name change will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents.

¹ www.projectionscentral.com