Contact: Rachel Boon

REQUEST FOR CHANGE FROM GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SCIENCE TO GEOGRAPHY AND GEOSPATIAL SCIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Committee Action Requested: Recommend to the Board approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa to change the program in Geographic Information Science to Geography and Geospatial Sciences in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

The Council of Provosts and Board office support approval of this request.

Proposed Change: In response to student demand and workforce needs, the University of Northern Iowa seeks to rename the Geographic Information Science (GIS) degree to Geography and Geospatial Sciences, which will provide a single point of entry, a common core and specific concentration aligned with career opportunities such as conservation scientists, compliance officers, educators, environmental science and health technicians, urban and regional planners, data scientists, etc. The renamed and revised degree will require students to complete a robust common core (16 credits) as well as two concentration areas carefully designed around career competencies and workforce opportunities.

The reorganized Geography and Geospatial Sciences degree (51-53 credit hours) is slightly shorter than the current Geographic Information Services degree (54-56 credit hours). The proposed change will increase student flexibility by providing a common pathway into different specializations later in the student career and streamline recruiting, advising and course scheduling.

Reason for the Change: The degree name change and reorganization will allow UNI to streamline three existing majors (Geography B.A, Environmental Resource Management, and Geographic Information Sciences) into one major. Students who often struggled to understand the similarities and differences among these three majors will now be presented with a single entry point, comprehensive advising and resources focused on the core requirements and the career outcomes related to the different specialization options.

Effect on Students: By consolidating and clarifying degree pathways, the proposed change will improve recruitment, reduce student uncertainty about program options, increase flexibility in meeting educational goals, streamline the curriculum and support more efficient scheduling and resource allocation.

Resource implications: No new faculty appointments are necessary to enact these changes. Some efficiencies will be gained through the reduction in course sharing, advertising materials, advising and administrative overhead.

This change is meant to pursue efficiencies in course offerings and to create clarity in pathways for students. By consolidating Geographic Information Science, Environmental Resource Management and Geography into Geography and Geospatial Science Sciences, costs related to instruction, marketing and recruitment, and administrative overhead will decrease.

Instructional Cost Efficiencies: 15 credits of common core that will be shared: $40,000 in savings to program (using the adjunct rate)

3 credit hour reduction: $8000 in savings

Marketing & recruitment streamlining efficiencies: $5,000 in savings

Administrative cost savings: Simplified curriculum, scheduling, streamlined advising and administrative tracking leading to $5,000 in savings

Total Estimated Cost Saving: $58,000

Accreditation: This program does not have programmatic accreditation.

Date of Implementation: August 2027.