Contact: Rachel Boon

REQUEST TO TERMINATE GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN EARTH SCIENCE AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Committee Action Requested: Recommend to the Board approval of the request to terminate the Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Earth Science in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Iowa State University.

The Council of Provosts and Board office staff reviewed the proposal and recommend approval.

Description of the program: Earth science is a broad field encompassing the study of Earth processes, natural resources, environmental management, natural hazards and risk, among other topics. Earth science and geology are related degrees and share the same program classification. Geology focuses on the composition, structure, physical processes and history of the Earth. Earth science is sometimes viewed as a broad area of study that includes the geosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere and biosphere and their interconnections, plus its relationship with planetary studies. Within the Department of Earth Atmosphere and Climate (EAC), the Earth science program has evolved as a variant of geology that can focus on geosciences such as water, GIS, societal aspects of sustainability and risk, or education.

Reason for proposed termination: As implemented at ISU, there is no clear line between the earth science and geology programs at the graduate level, and students enter into one program or the other based on personal preference. The programs share administrative leadership, graduate student handbook and graduate faculty. Because students can study the same topics through the geology graduate program, the department needs only one graduate program related to geosciences. This request is for the MS and PhD in Earth Science to be eliminated.

Effect on current students: There were no students that entered the earth science program in Fall 2026. Current students will be given the option to switch to the renamed Geology and Earth Science MS/PhD program. If they choose not to, the department will continue to suspend new admissions to the program and will formally end granting degrees in the MS/PhD by May 2030.

Enrollment and Completion Trends:

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Majors	1	2	1	1	3
Graduates	0	0	1	1	0

Impact on resources: There are no costs associated with maintaining this degree and no anticipated cost savings. Students can matriculate through the graduate geology program. The program will be removed from the catalog, graduate handbook and website.

Impact on workforce: The MS/PhD geology program will continue and will provide the same training, thus, there will be no impact on workforce training in the state.

Alternative programs: The University of Iowa has MS and PhD programs in Geography as well as Geoscience. The University of Northern Iowa has an MA in Geography.

Date of Implementation: Upon approval of the Board.