

Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate

MEMO

To: The UVM Faculty Senate
From: Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Colby Kervick, Co-Chair
Date: November 4, 2021
Re: Approval of a proposal from the College of Arts and Sciences requesting a name change for the Department of Geography

On November 4, 2021, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a proposal from the College Arts and Sciences to enact a name change for the Department of Geography to Department of Geography and Geosciences.

The proposal grew out of extensive discussions among faculty in the Departments of Geography and Geology to collaborate on curricular offerings that leverage their strengths in nature-society studies and earth system sciences, areas of longstanding academic interests for both geographers and geologists at UVM and within their disciplines more broadly.

Across the U.S. and abroad, examples of jointly-administered Geography and Geology departments are common. The [American Association of Geographers Guide to Programs](#) provides examples of Departments of Geography and Geology, Departments of Geosciences, and departments with other names highlighting expertise in earth systems science and geoinformatics, all leveraging faculty expertise in their disciplines and responding to student demand and rising global needs for students trained to understand both the scientific and societal dimensions of the earth system and global change. Thus, this renaming proposal aims to situate UVM's Department of Geography within a growing demand for integrated education in complex societal-earth systems dynamics and take advantage of the synergistic expertise of UVM's existing faculty.

The December 2020 memo issued by the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences proposing to close the Department of Geology and terminate its undergraduate B.A., B.S. and minor in Geology sparked a set of discussions among faculty in both departments in spring 2021. Collectively, faculty are committed to sustaining academic offerings in the geosciences, recognizing the strengths they have in solid earth and earth surface processes supported primarily by Geology faculty, and leveraging additional strength of the physical geography faculty in climate science and water resources. They also cited strengths in social dimensions of earth systems among the geography faculty, including particular strengths in landscape studies, political ecology, natural disasters and disaster- or conflict-induced displacement and migration, and urban planning. The renaming proposal for the existing Geography department accomplishes three things: (1) it provides a home for UVM Geology where they can see their interests and expertise identified, (2) it leverages strengths across two relatively small departments, offering the potential for more capacity to staff course offerings, and (3) it

provides opportunities, by synergizing across faculty interest areas (nature-society relations, natural hazards, geoinformatics, political ecology, planning) to respond to CAS student interest in Geography, Geology and allied interdisciplinary programs

At a faculty retreat on August 26, faculty in both departments deliberated over a name and agreed unanimously to the naming.

1. The renamed department will use the prefix GEO to replace the existing departmental prefixes of GEOG and GEOL.
2. The renamed department will use the existing GEOG and GEOL course prefixes, with control of both residing with the current Geography Department chair. No course changes are necessary at this time.
3. The M.S. in Geology needs to be moved under the jurisdiction of the renamed department. No changes to the name of the degree or the degree requirements are necessary at this time.
4. A proposal for uncontested deactivation of the B.A., B.S., and minor in Geology is also moving through the curricular process at this time. In the event that this proposal does not take effect for the 2022-23 catalog, the B.A., B.S., and minor in Geology need to be moved under the jurisdiction of the renamed department. No changes to the name of the degree or the degree requirements are necessary at this time.
5. The names and requirements of the B.A and minor in Geography and the minor in Geospatial Technologies remain unchanged and stay under the jurisdiction of the current Geography Department chair.
6. Departmental affiliations for all currently active (as of AY21-22) Geology faculty appointed in CAS should be listed in the catalog in the renamed department. This includes Drs. A. Lini, K. Klepeis, J. Perdrial, N. Perdrial, A. Schroth, and L. Webb.

On September 1, 2021, this proposal was approved through a unanimous vote by the CAS Curriculum Committee and was supported by the CAS Dean. Faculty in CAS also voted on September 14, 2021, to approve the request with 3 abstentions and no votes against. There were 2 public comments received while the proposal was out for 30-day circulation that related to the relationship between the Department name change and the proposed curricular changes to the Environmental Studies Major. The CAC committee voted to approve the proposal with no votes against and 1 abstention.

If approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees, the department name change, and new prefix would go into effect during the 2022-23 catalog year.

