

Recommendation from the Research, Scholarship, and Creative Arts Committee

November 16, 2023

Dear Faculty Senate Executive Council,

The Research Scholarship and Creative Arts (RSCA) committee voted on 9 November 2023 to strongly recommend that the Water Resources Institute be recognized by UVM and approved by the Faculty Senate. This decision was based on our reading of the proposal, public comments from the UVM community, and discussion with the Institute's proposed Director, Beverley Wemple (Department of Geography and Geosciences). The proposed Water Resources Institute builds on substantial research infrastructure focused on water issues at UVM and nearly two decades of funding from the National Science Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the US Geological Survey-supported Vermont Resources and Lake Studies Center, among others. UVM was also selected as a member of the Cooperative Institute for Research to Operations in Hydrology (CIROH) in 2022. The immediate impetus for the Institute came as a result of a direct call from the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) for proposals in AY 21. The OVPR review process led to an invitation to form the proposed Water Resources Institute, which followed a year long consultation process in 2022-2023 with faculty and other stakeholders around the University. The OVPR has agreed to utilize the F&A returns from the CIROH grants as part of the initial funds to develop the Institute, making it a good time to establish a Water Resources Institute at UVM.

The RSCA heard a preliminary discussion of the Water Institute in May 2023, and a formal presentation of the current proposal in October 2023. On both occasions, the Committee saw significant strength in the proposal, both in terms of its need and in terms of its stated goals. The committee had a few questions about the proposal for the proposed Institute that we felt were sufficiently addressed by Dr. Wemple.

1. We wondered if the Water Resources Institute would duplicate work by the Gund Institute. Dr. Wemple noted that the Gund Institute's programs are not focused on water specifically. While the two institutes would share resources and collaborate, they would not significantly duplicate programs.
2. The Committee asked about overlap with public health and water systems. Dr. Wemple acknowledged that she had not had the opportunity yet to substantially collaborate with faculty members from LCOM or CNHS, but agree with the importance of doing so. She also noted that the proposal calls for greater outreach in its first year to clarify the programs that it should pursue, and that she would ensure clear outreach to faculty focused on the Health Sciences.

The Committee strongly recommends that the Faculty Senate approve the establishment of the Water Resources Institute.

If there are other questions I am happy to share that information with the Executive Council.

Thomas Borchert
President, Faculty Senate
Acting Chair, Research Scholarship and Creative Arts Committee