

Undergraduate Program Review: **Natural Resources Action Plan**

The Curriculum Council has reviewed and discussed the draft Action Plan that resulted from the programmatic review of the Natural Resources undergraduate major. Overall, the Council welcomes the response to the review and notes the speed at which some of recommendations have been acted on. The Council has identified three areas of the draft action plan it would like to see given additional thought and a more substantive response.

- 1) The Curriculum Council remains unclear about program differences among options within the major, as well as how the major substantively differs from the Environmental Sciences. The external review suggested there was a need to: "Maintain and heighten difference between Environmental Sciences, Fish and Wildlife, and BSNR in options & curriculum - minimize overlap and maximize difference." It is understood that the NR and ENSC degrees are perceived by students to be different and that the student bodies are differentiated. However, the Council would appreciate an explanation of how the program requirements are fundamentally different and whether this difference in required courses is sufficient to truly differentiate the programs academically. The explanation of differences at <http://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/online-degrees/undergraduate/es/faqs.htm> and at <http://fw.oregonstate.edu/system/files/u1473/DifferencesamongFWNRandESdegrees.pdf> seems to imply that the main difference is that ENSC requires a BI 200 series of classes, while NR requires a 100 level series; and that ENSC requires a calculus course while NR does not. The reviewers commented on this ambiguity [JDB1] and its implications on marketing the program to students as well as overlap within the university that could place programs at odds for student recruitment, faculty and facility support and funding, and future course offerings. The Council is concerned that the perception of a difference needs to be better supported by a clear differentiation in core requirements.
- 2) The external review made a recommendation to: "Appoint a dedicated 1.0 FTE Faculty Director, who holds tenure in the College of Forestry." The recent increased FTE support for a professional staff coordinator is welcomed. However, the Council remains concerned about the absence of a tenured faculty member as Director for two related reasons. First, the FES Department Chair, as NR Director, is unable to advocate for the program within the department since the Chair must adjudicate between competing priorities and this creates a conflict of interest for the FES Chair. Second, a professional staff coordinator may not feel able to advocate for the program's needs, when their reappointment is dependent on FES Department Chairs good will. A tenured faculty member is under no such constraint. Our sense is that this is a major issue for the major and its students given the potential for growth in the program. Moreover, a tenured director could teach one or more of the NR backbone courses. The Council recognizes that budget constraints are a challenge, but encourages the Department to clearly state an enrollment target that would justify a tenured director appointment from within FES.
- 3) The Council is unclear about workforce and funding plans for OSU-Cascades and Eastern Oregon University and how the response in the NR Action Plan will strengthen the NR Major. For example, the external review recommended that "new 1.0 FTE faculty position to provide needed capacity for teaching, outreach, and professional mentorship" at the Cascades Campus. Yet the response has been a 1.0 (9 month) FTE instructor hire split between NR and ENSC whose position is almost entirely teaching. This does little to meet the external reviewers concerns about resourcing of the NR program at the Cascades campus and further highlights the Council's concerns around the differentiation between the ES and NR majors. Since the instructor reports to the Dean of the Cascades campus, it is not apparent to the Council that FES has substantive influence on how the NR program is run at the Cascades Campus. This leads us to ask whether the external review was right to consider these programs in an integrated manner or whether a standalone review of the Cascade, and potentially EOU, NR degree, is warranted.