

## Charge to Faculty Committee on Environment and Sustainability Programs *December 2015*

### Summary:

In the fall of 2015, we asked a small team of senior faculty in the fields of sustainability and the environment from other universities to visit the University of Michigan and assess our academic programs in these areas. They produced a report that identified a number of strengths and enormous potential in our various programs, but also stated very clearly that we are being seriously hampered by misalignment and lack of effective coordination among the programs. The report also makes recommendations about how to address this to achieve our full potential.

With the support of the deans of LSA and SNRE, as well as the Directors of the Graham and Erb Institutes, the provost is therefore convening a small group of respected faculty members to explore ways to make progress based on the report's findings and recommendations. The provost requests that this committee work quickly, in part because the SNRE dean search is currently on hold pending decisions about changes in these programs, but also do outreach to the relevant community, e.g., through some town halls.

### Central Recommendation from the Report:

In order to enhance the scale and impact of environment and sustainability programs at the University of Michigan, create a new School of the Environment and Sustainability, which encompasses all of SNRE, Graham, and PitE, with strong ties to faculty from across campus in the form of dry and/or joint appointments. Invest in new hires, develop a new broad vision, coordinate cross-campus sustainability efforts, link tightly to campus operational sustainability projects, making good on the vision of the university as a living laboratory. Enhance connections to the Erb Institute and revisit the specifics of the joint degree.

### Path Forward/Charge to the Committee:

- The report makes clear that at present we have a fractured and often fractious state of affairs among our academic programs in the environment and sustainability. But it also notes that we have enormous potential to be a leader in these critically important fields, and that now is the time to move forward aggressively, implementing structural changes and investing new resources to unlock that potential.
- With that in mind, we are asking a small group of faculty to explore the implementation of a new structure for our academic programs in the environment and sustainability. At minimum, that structure should include a significantly greater degree of integration than we currently have, and involve the following:
  - The creation of a new school, to be constituted such that it can serve as an interdisciplinary “front door” to Michigan environmental programs and scholarship, by developing strong relationships with all other schools and colleges in which faculty have

interests and expertise related to environment and sustainability. It will have its own tenure-track faculty and will include broad participation through both dry and joint appointments with other units. Necessarily, it will have tight and positive connections to PitE, to the Graham Institute, and to the Erb Institute.

- Taking it as given that the university should continue to have an environmental studies/science program within the liberal arts curriculum, the undergraduate program (PitE) should both continue to be offered as part of the broader menu of liberal arts and sciences programs in LSA and have the faculty from the new school as full and active participants in its governance, along with select relevant faculty from other schools (e.g., engineering and public policy). The curriculum in PitE will be reconsidered based on broader faculty involvement, to include developing greater distinction between BA and BS options.
- The activities of the Graham Institute should be much more tightly coordinated with, and complimentary to, the activities of the new school, while the Institute retains enough independence to ensure that it is seen and is able to function as a campus-wide resource. The Graham Institute will develop a stronger faculty governance model, including the representation of faculty from within and without the new school, and it will have three key responsibilities. First, it will serve to convene broadly cross-disciplinary research in sustainability, in increasingly effective ways. Much of the research that the Graham Institute convenes will involve faculty and students from the new school, but it will also maintain a level of independence to ensure that *all* units and faculty doing work on sustainability are brought into the work. Second, the Graham Institute will be responsible for working closely with the Office of Campus Sustainability, to facilitate the use of the campus as a living laboratory for sustainability research and education, both within the new school and as a component of cross-cutting research. Third, it will continue to administer interdisciplinary, co-curricular student fellowship programs that focus on sustainability and draw students from across campus.
- Finally, the structure will be one where the Erb Institute continues to be physically housed in the Ross School, and jointly administered by Ross and the new school.
- The committee does *not* need to consider issues of funds flow. The deans (or associate deans) of the relevant schools will work together to provide a proposal for funds flow to the provost, in parallel with the work of this committee. Nor does the committee need to be concerned with the physical location of the various units, unless there are particularly critical issues of co-location that they believe should be emphasized.

Process:

- The faculty committee will be charged with developing strategic vision, mission, and governance for the new structure, i.e., laying out governance for the new school, PitE, and the Graham Institute, as well as the degree of integration, consolidation, or connections among them. (The governance structure for the Erb Institute is largely specified in the gift agreement, and

implementation of the recommendations in the report regarding the Erb will be considered separately from this committee.)

- In addition to writing clear and compelling mission statement(s), the committee should specify the processes by which faculty will affiliate with entities within the structure: for example, should all current faculty from anywhere in the university be invited to affiliate with the new school? Should current faculty in SNRE be invited to affiliate with other units?
- The committee should make recommendations about the governance and policies of the entities within the structure, such that cross-campus reach, synergy, and potential impact is maximized, and suggest the areas in which new investments in faculty might most profitably be targeted, both within the structure and across campus.
  - Some specific questions to be addressed:
    - Should joint hires be made at the pre-tenure level, or, given challenges for junior faculty in such positions, should joint appointments be made only for tenured faculty? If the former, how might junior faculty hires best be pursued?
    - Who constitutes the governing faculty of the undergraduate program? Could it be configured as a joint department spanning two schools (LSA and the new school), similar to the model of the Biomedical Engineering Department? If not, should all faculty who have appointments in the new school be part of the governing faculty of the undergraduate program and/or should all faculty who are part of the governing faculty of the undergraduate program have appointments (even if dry) in the new school?
    - Similarly, who constitutes the governing faculty of the Graham Institute? And should the director of the Graham be the same person as the dean of the new school (as recommended in the report)? Should s/he report to a central administrative office, and if so, how should a tight connection between the new school, PiTE, and the Graham Institute be assured?
- The faculty committee should also seek input from a series of town halls for students and faculty.

#### Timeline:

The need to move quickly is imperative, especially because the SNRE dean search is on hold pending a resolution to this. The committee should therefore complete its work and present a set of recommendations to the provost by April 1, 2016.

#### Committee Membership:

The Committee will be co-chaired by Arun Agrawal (Professor, School of Natural Resources and the Environment) and Deborah Goldberg (Professor, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, College of LSA). Full committee membership is as follows:

## **Committee on Environment and Sustainability Programs**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Unit</b>
Arun Agrawal (Co-Chair)	SNRE
Deborah Goldberg (Co-Chair)	EEB
Brad Cardinale	SNRE
Greg Dick	EES/EEB/PitE
Joe Eisenberg	SPH
Nancy Love	CEE
Shelie Miller	SNRE/CEE
Michael Moore	SNRE
Richard Norton	TCAUP/PitE
Scotti Parrish	English, PitE
Stephanie Preston	Psych
Allison Steiner	CLaSP
David Uhlmann	Law
Ming Xu	SNRE