June 29, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Steering Committee of Academic Governance

FROM: Provost June Pierce Youatt

RE: Name Change, Department of Geography

I am requesting the advice of Academic Governance on the proposed name change of the Department of Geography to the “Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences.”

The proposed name change has been carefully considered by the Department and College, and is endorsed by Interim Dean Neal Schmitt. Background and rationale are provided on the attached materials from the Geography Chairperson, Alan Arbogast, along with a variety of letters of support.

Your advice is appreciated as I make my recommendation to President Simon, who in turn will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

Attachments

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer.
To: June Youatt, Provost

From: Neal Schmitt, Interim Dean

Subject: Request to Change the Name of an Academic Unit from the Department of Geography to the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences

Attached is a request from Alan Arbogast, Chair of the Department of Geography, to change the name of the department to the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences. This is a request I support. The requested change also has the support of the faculty members in the department. Dr. Arbogast’s proposal provides a strong academic rationale for the requested change. It also addresses the reactions of those who potentially would be affected by the name change. Dr. Arbogast has included a table of comparisons to similar highly-ranked geography departments in the United States with integrative names, which provides additional supporting data for the requested name change. In addition, he has provided representative statements of support for the requested name change from a formal survey of alumni of the department. Attached letters of support include letters from Dr. David Hyndman, Chair of Geological Sciences at MSU; Dr. Thomas Baerwald, Director of Geography and Spatial Sciences Program at NSF and Past President of the Association of American Geographers; and Dr. Emilio Moran, John A. Hannah Distinguished Professor, Department of Geography at MSU.

Thank you for considering this request. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact me.

C: A. Arbogast
   P. Gray
   S. Kautz
NAME CHANGE PROPOSAL: DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Introduction

The MSU Department of Geography (GEO) proposes to change its name to the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences. The support for this change is very strong within the various constituencies (faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, alumni) of the department. This request occurs within the growing trend to rebrand geography departments (e.g., Boston University, University of Iowa, University of Texas, University of Minnesota) to reflect new initiatives in the discipline, portray a more modern image, and attract more and stronger undergraduate and graduate students (Winkler, 2014). Rebranding is also viewed as a way to better portray the fundamental interdisciplinary nature of the discipline, which emphasizes human-environment interactions, environmental science, spatial analysis, and place-based/regional analysis (Baerwald, 2010).

Geography: The Bridge between the Social and Physical Sciences

Geography is an ancient discipline that has often been characterized as the “mother of all sciences” because natural human curiosity about people and other places ultimately led to the development of such fields as anthropology, biology, chemistry, geology, and mathematics, to name a few. In the context of contemporary academia, geography often serves as the bridge where social and physical scientists meet (Figure 1) to collaborate on a wide variety of issues, including those related to agriculture, biology, crime, economics, environmental monitoring, human health, land-use change, politics, transportation, and urban planning, to name a few. Although the linkages to the physical sciences are strong, academic units in the U.S. have traditionally been housed in the Social Sciences (or Liberal Arts & Sciences) in universities because the vast majority of geographers examine processes that connect spatial phenomenon on Earth to...
the human experience. This focus on human interactions is why most of the widely considered “top” programs (e.g., Cal-Berkeley, Colorado, Oregon, UCLA, UCSB) in the nation are found in the Social Sciences (or Liberal Arts/equivalent college) in their respective institutions.

The natural relationship between geography departments and the social sciences/liberal arts also exists in the Big 10 where nine of the ten programs in the conference are based in the social sciences or equivalent college. At MSU, GEO is based in the College of Social Science where it has long been played a central role because much of the teaching and research conducted in the College has a spatial dimension. As a result, GEO has strong linkages with Anthropology, Criminal Justice, Economics, History, and Political Science. GEO has also served as the foundation (if not launching pad) for several important initiatives within the College in the past 20 years, including the Center for Global Change and Earth Observation (CGCEO), the Environmental Science and Public Policy Program (ESPP), the Integrative Studies Program (ISS), and the Interdisciplinary Studies major.

Why a Name Change?

In spite of the foundational and collaborative role that geography has played in the scientific community through time, as well as its core position within the social sciences in major universities such as MSU, the discipline remains obscure and poorly understood by the American public. One common misconception is that the discipline only focuses on trivial aspects of people (e.g., where do people speak German) and places (e.g., what is the capital of Michigan) that need only to be learned only once. A second common assumption is that geographers work only with maps. One reason these stereotypes persist is because geography is rarely taught as a stand-alone course in secondary schools and is instead lumped into social-studies and history courses where simple concepts such as location and place are covered. Another problem may well be that the term “geography” does not well convey the true character of the discipline and its key role as the bridge between the social and physical sciences. It also does not portray an exciting field to uninitiated students that can lead to great jobs after graduation.

This lack of an informative name is a key reason behind the growing trend to rebrand geography departments around the country as they seek to portray a more modern image, one that truly reflects the integrative nature of the discipline (e.g., Winkler, 2014). This proposal not only reflects these trends, but also the evolution of MSU GEO in the past 20 years to a Department that is inherently interdisciplinary and that bridges the physical and social sciences within the four walls of the unit. In the mid-1990s, about 90% of the member faculty in GEO had PhDs in Geography. Since that time the number of FTEs has increased from 15 to 23 and over 40% of the regular and affiliated faculty have PhDs in fields other than Geography. As a result, we believe that the proposed name more accurately reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the department and the core themes that bind it together as member faculty study people, places and the environment from a spatial perspective (e.g., Baerwald, 2010). It also reflects recent changes in our undergraduate curriculum that include defined foci in human geography, environmental geography, and digital technology through Geographic Information Science (GIS). Our goal is to thus clarify our identity while at the same time creating a more inclusive brand. Our secondary goal is to demonstrate to prospective students the critical role that geography plays with respect to understanding and
solving complex human-environmental problems and alert them to the range of jobs that are available after graduation, especially in the rapidly growing area of (GIS).

Department History

The Department of Geography originated as a series of courses within the Geology Department in 1930. By 1955, Geography faculty and courses comprised approximately 50% of the Department and a separate Geography program was thus established as an administrative unit. This separation was driven largely because much of the course content and research conducted by geography faculty focused on people rather than the solid Earth. GEO was moved to the College of Social Sciences in 1961 in association with a major reorganization of colleges by the University. The next significant reorganizational event in GEO occurred in 1984 when the professional programs in Urban and Regional Planning (URP) and Landscape Architecture (LA) were administratively added, with the rationale being that all three programs were “spatial” in their core interests. Unfortunately, the units failed to mesh, in part because each program had its own budget, independent promotion and tenure criteria, and was housed in separate buildings far from each other. The URP and LA programs left GEO in 2004 to join the new School of Planning, Design, and Construction, which is jointly administered by the College of Social Science and College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

GEO began to evolve into its current size and multidisciplinary form in the mid-1990s with the establishment of the Basic Science and Remote Sensing Initiative (BSRSI), which brought several faculty lines to the Department with the goal of obtaining federal (NASA, NIH, NSF) research funding. Given the interdisciplinary nature and high profile of the initiative, it attracted social and physical scientists from disciplines outside of geography who nevertheless had research interests associated with human-environmental interactions of a spatial nature. Several such individuals were hired and generally meshed well with the Department due to common research and programmatic interests. This initiative was such a success that BSRSI became the independent Center for Global Change and Earth Observation (CGCEO) in 2002, with most associated faculty maintaining their tenure homes in GEO, but with reduced appointments.

The success of the initiative, coupled with the continued high research and teaching productivity within the core GEO faculty, led to a new surge of faculty lines within GEO since the mid-2000s. This expansion reflected similar growth in geography departments nationwide and again attracted individuals who did not have PhDs in Geography, but who were otherwise interested in research questions of a geographical nature. Several of these individuals were hired and easily assimilated into the Department. This integration was likely aided by GEO’s move from the Natural Science Building to the Geography Building in 2005, which promoted greater day-to-day interaction among faculty. As a result of this growth, the Department now comprises 23 tenure-stream faculty with full or partial appointments in the unit and 4 adjunct faculty. The interdisciplinary nature of this cadre is reflected by the fact that 11 (42%) have PhDs in fields other than Geography, including Agricultural Meteorology; Anthropology; Atmospheric Sciences; Biology; Climatology; Economic Development; Ecosystem Analysis; Earth and Ocean Sciences; Environmental Sciences; Natural Resource Science and Management; Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences; Soil, Water, and Environmental Sciences; and Urban Planning. In short, GEO is
now a microcosm of the bridge diagram illustrated in Figure 1, with numerous linkages to units such as CGCEO, Environmental Science and Public Policy (ESPP), Forestry, Geology, and the Global and Urban Studies Program (GUSP).

The diverse and interdisciplinary GEO faculty is a growing force in the nation’s academic community that is working on environmental and societal problems of a spatial nature in the U.S. and around the world. This wide range of research foci associated with GEO faculty is illustrated in Appendix A. Review of these foci indicates a wide range of interests that relate to the physical earth (e.g., atmospheric dynamics, sand-dune evolution), human geography (e.g., health issues, population migration, transportation), and spatial methods and models (e.g., cartography, spatial data uncertainty, spatial statistics). Each of these interest areas naturally overlaps with the others (Figure 2), with a core theme being the assessment of human-environment interactions (e.g., environment and development, land use and land-cover change, political ecology).

All such research is conducted within a spatial prism related to core geographical themes such as location, place, movement, and region. The relevance of these research foci to the resolution of societal and environmental issues is reflected by the tremendous success of GEO faculty with respect to external funding, with approximately $10 million in grants awarded in the past five years alone. Many of these proposals are based on collaborations within GEO that bridge the physical and social divide (e.g., Figure 1), as the representative titles in Table demonstrate (Table 1). Awarded grants have been acquired from a wide variety of sources, including the EPA, NASA, NIH, NSF, the State of Michigan, and USAID.

In a similar vein, GEO faculty have been extremely successful in the realm of scholarly publications, with over 250 peer-reviewed articles in the past five years (Academic Analytics, Department Data). The vast majority of these publications have been in Tier 1 journals that collectively represent an incredible range of topical areas, including (but not limited to) American Journal of Public Health, Ecological Applications, Forest Ecology and Management, Health and Place, International Journal of Geographic Science, Journal of Climate, Journal of Geophysical Research, Journal of Urban Design, Quaternary Research, Social Science and Medicine, and Urban Planning International, to name a very few.
Table 1. Representative Proposal Titles Submitted by GEO Faculty that Bridge the Social and Physical Divide in the Department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborating GEO Faculty</th>
<th>Proposal Title</th>
<th>Funding Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zulu, Moran, Qi</td>
<td>Tenure and Global Climate Change (TGCC) under Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights</td>
<td>AID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andresen, Moore</td>
<td>Vulnerability Assessment of Irrigated Agriculture to Climate Change Impacts - The Case of Irrigated Rice Cultivation in Morogoro.</td>
<td>USAID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbogast, Shortridge, Yansa</td>
<td>Reconstructing the Impact of the Middle Holocene Nipissing Transgression on the Southwest Coast of Lake Huron: An Analog to Future Sea Level Scenarios on a Warming Earth.</td>
<td>NSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhong, Luo</td>
<td>The impact of regional climate change on fire weather and fire behavior and the feedback of landuse change to regional climate system in regions of eastern United States.</td>
<td>USDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan, Moore, Messina</td>
<td>China’s urbanization and its sustainability under future climate change.</td>
<td>NASA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messina, Moore, Grady</td>
<td>Dynamic Ecological Simulation Model of Tesetse Transmitted Trypanosomiasis in Kenya.</td>
<td>NIH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winkler, Andresen, Zhong</td>
<td>Towards an Integrated Framework for Climate Change Impact Assessments for International Market Systems with Long-Term Investments.</td>
<td>NSF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the various faculty members within the Department, the population of GEO also includes about 50 graduate students in residence and approximately 75 undergraduate students. The graduate population is generally evenly split between PhD students and Masters students working toward a M.S. (with thesis) or a MS-GIS (non-thesis) degree. Our graduate students also reflect the interdisciplinary nature of Geography, with many coming to us after obtaining degrees in other disciplines such as Anthropology, Biology, Earth Science, Environmental Policy, Forestry, History, International Studies, and Natural Resources, to name a few. This cadre of students is collectively working in a variety of research areas, such as (but not limited to) eco-economic modeling, desertification in China, food security and geography, health disparities and geography, landform evolution, political economy and migration, spatial modeling and statistics, and sustainable development in Africa, to name a few. Available degrees at the undergraduate level reflect geography’s position as the bridge between the social and physical sciences and include a B.A. in Human Geography and a B.S. in Environmental Geography. GEO also offers a B.S. in Geographic Information Sciences for students interested in the technological side of the discipline. GEO faculty recently approved the development of a new B.S. in Economic Geography, which will hopefully be available in Fall, 2016.

Support for a Name Change

Given the increased interdisciplinary nature of GEO in recent years, casual discussions of a potential name change to better reflect the Department’s evolving identity have been common. In particular, there has been a growing consensus within the faculty to include the term environment in some way because so much of our collective work has distinct environmental applications (Figure 2), whether they are cultural, physical, or urban in scope. There has also been an increasing awareness that our name could better reflect the spatial dimensions of our work, especially with respect to the rapidly growing field of GIS because it is a large portal through which undergraduate students can obtain good jobs. In this
context, we felt a new and more inclusive name could better encapsulate the various degrees in our undergraduate program.

Interest in a potential name change intensified in Spring 2014 in conjunction with GEO’s ongoing promotional efforts across the MSU campus and national academic community. At about the same time, an examination of Geography departments in the U.S. by MSU’s Julie Winkler, in her role as President of the Association of American Geographers (AAG), revealed a growing trend to rebrand units with new names within the United States and abroad (Winkler, 2014). Of particular interest is that five Geography Departments at Big 10 institutions have recently changed their name to include either a reference to environmental applications and/or some aspect of spatial science (Table 2). Further examination of unit names reveals that 22 additional programs in the country have integrative names designed to better reflect the identity of the department, again largely through the addition of the term environment in some fashion or inclusion of terms that reflect the spatial aspects (e.g., geoinformation sciences, mapping sciences) of Geography.

Although many of these schools are small, it is important to note that the NAS-ranked top Geography program in the country (at Boston University) is now the Department of Earth and Environment. Similarly, other highly ranked departments at George Mason University, James Madison University, University of Missouri, University of Oklahoma, University of Texas, and University of Southern California have enhanced their names. In addition to these name adjustments that have recently occurred in academic departments, the name of the Geography and Regional Science Program at NSF was changed in 2007 to the Geography and Spatial Sciences Program. According to the head of that program, this change was made to “make clear that scientists working in closely aligned fields that also emphasized space, location, and other critical geographic dimensions were also welcome to submit proposals” (Thomas Baerwald, personal communication, 7/6/14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Department Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Big 10 Institutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>Department of Geography and GIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Iowa</td>
<td>Department of Geographical and Sustainability Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Maryland</td>
<td>Department of Geographical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
<td>Department of Geography, Environment, and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nebraska</td>
<td>Department of Geography and GIScience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Schools in U.S.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston University - #1 Program in U.S.</td>
<td>Department of Earth and Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Mason University</td>
<td>Department of Geography and GeoInformation Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Madison</td>
<td>Geographic Sciences Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villanova University</td>
<td>Department of Geography and the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New Mexico</td>
<td>Department of Geography and Environmental Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Oklahoma</td>
<td>Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Texas</td>
<td>Department of Geography and the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Southern California</td>
<td>Spatial Science Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Point</td>
<td>Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Federal Program</strong></td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Science Foundation</td>
<td>Geography and Spatial Sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The GEO faculty agreed in May, 2014 to further explore the possibility of a name change to reflect the reality of our department as shown in Figure 2, specifically to include the term environment in some way, as well as a term that would better reflect the spatial character of our work. Following this discussion, a faculty committee was created to shepherd the process that included myself, Joe Darden (Former Dean of Urban Affairs), Julie Winkler (now Past President of the Association of American Geographers), and Catherine Yansa (Former Member of the UCC Committee). An informal survey of alumni was then undertaken via email to gauge their interest. This initial query was considered important because most alumni have jobs in some geographical capacity and understand the challenges facing graduates entering the work force. In this context, the results of the informal survey were eye-opening, with 48 of 52 (92%) of respondents strongly supporting the idea of a name change. Representative comments of this initial survey are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Sample responses from alumni supporting a name change in the informal survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My vote is for Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Analysis. Environmental sciences spread into wildlife and forestry too much and technologies sound too computerized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Highly recommend including geospatial technologies. Having worked with imaging and geospatial standards for the past 15 years, and having recently retired from the National Geospatial-intelligence Agency (NGA) with 33 years in, geospatial is a well understood term at this point. The technological applications are vast, such as the popular adoption of &quot;google-earth&quot; type technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I'd vote for somehow incorporating spatial/geospatial into the department name too. From my biased point of view, I feel that GIS is a huge part of geography, and by far the best chance of landing a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>This seems like a good move. I'm a fan of &quot;Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences&quot;. It seems to best reflect the department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I appreciate that the department is now looking to reflect Environment in the name. As a 1st year grad student in 1994-1995, I received the message from department management that &quot;environment&quot; was not part of our focus (even though it was mine!) Glad to see that 20 years later it is now reflecting what many of us saw as a blended program even then.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I'm happy to read about the possibility of a change...it is long overdue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I like the idea of a name change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Here's one vote for Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Analysis. I think 'Spatial Analysis' says WHAT WE DO and easily can be understood to encompass both Science and Technology in the doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Adding the term &quot;spatial analysis&quot; or the redundant &quot;geospatial analysis&quot; helps convey the science idea along with the suggestion that geography is the primary home for the GISciences - probably a good tactical move.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I like the name &quot;Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences&quot; because it has &quot;sciences&quot; in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I love the idea of a name change! In fact, I thought the name wasn't reflective of the whole department even while I attended, so I am excited about the possibility! I would like to suggest: The Department of Environment, Geographic and Spatial Sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the high support for a name change from alumni reflected in the informal survey, a formal survey of potential name options was then conducted via Survey Monkey. This survey was subdivided into the following four constituencies: 1) Faculty, 2) Alumni, 3) Graduate Students, and 4) Undergraduate Students. Each group was asked to select their top three options from the following list:
A total of 183 people responded, with the following breakdown by category: 1) 100 alumni, 2) 29 faculty (including Emeritus faculty, fixed-term faculty, and adjunct faculty), 3) 28 graduate students, and 4) 26 undergraduates. Results indicated that support for a name change is very strong, with 82% of the overall population in favor. Faculty support is extremely high, with 27 of 29 (93%) respondents support some form of name change. Alumni support for a name change remained very strong in the formal survey (see representative comments in Appendix A). Of particular note is that all respondents in favor of a name change support the inclusion of the term environment in some fashion. In addition to this unanimity, 53% of all respondents (59% of faculty) favor inclusion of the word sciences in some way and 33% of all respondents (49% of faculty) support the addition of spatial sciences or geospatial sciences. Support for reflection of our spatial identity, reflected most strongly by our relationship with GIS, increases to 41% of all respondents and 55% of faculty if the inclusion of geospatial technologies in the name is considered along with spatial sciences and geospatial sciences.

Following the formal survey, the committee met again to discuss the results and create a short list for a formal faculty vote. The names Geography and Environment and Geography, Environment, and Spatial Analysis were culled due to lack of support. Although many (25) alums supported Geography and Environmental Sciences, the committee eliminated this name due to potential confusion with the ongoing effort by Geology to change its name to Earth and Environmental Sciences. Although support for inclusion of geospatial and technologies was fairly high, the committee believed that the former term was redundant with spatial and geography while the latter did not accurately reflect Department expertise. When all factors were considered, the committee recommended that a formal vote be made by faculty on the following three options:

1) Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences – this name had the most first-place votes by faculty in the survey.

2) Department of Geography and the Environment – this name had the second most faculty votes in the survey.

3) No change – this option was provided in case individuals had changed opinion since the survey occurred.

The faculty met on June 17, 2014 to discuss the issue and vote. Those who could not attend were informed via email and encouraged to submit a vote in that venue. A total of 21 of the 23 eligible faculty voted and a strong consensus emerged, with 17 in favor of Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences. The name Department of Geography and the Environment received the remaining four votes.
Supporting Letters and Campus Reaction

Once the process of name review and selection was complete, we then sought reaction to the proposed new name from relevant individuals within the broader academic community and from environmentally-oriented units at MSU, including the College of Natural Resources (CANR), the Department of Environmental Engineering, and the Department of Geological Sciences. From these diverse constituencies we obtained letters of support from 1) the Chair of the Department of Geological Sciences at MSU, 2) a Director of the Geography and Spatial Sciences program at NSF and Past President of the Association of American Geographers (Dr. Thomas Baerwald), 3) a former member of the GEO faculty, NSF Geography and Spatial Sciences Program Director, and now Director of the Environmental Studies program at Johns Hopkins University (Dr. Antoinette WinklerPrins), 4) a member of the National Academy of Sciences and National Research Council (Dr. Emilio Moran), and Chair of our Alumni Advisory Board (Eric Bauman) Their supporting letters, as well as letters from various alumni and some non-voting members of the GEO faculty, are also included in this proposal. We also have support in the form of personal communication from the current Executive Director (Douglas Richardson) of the Association of American Geographers.

In addition to these statements of support, we also obtained feedback from CANR and the Department of Environmental Engineering. Some of those consulted in these programs expressed concerns around our use of the term environment, including that: 1) environment is a "vague term"; 2) the growing use of the term at MSU will "dilute" the strong environmental brand on campus; and 3) our use of the term will promote confusion within the student population due to "conflicting degree programs" and because we will be using it in a "non-traditional way" that does not include elements of "water, air, and land". Although we appreciate these concerns, we believe our use of the term will strengthen the environmental brand at MSU because it will demonstrate that geographers are not just map makers or spatial experts as generally believed. Instead the new brand will reflect the range of our interdisciplinary faculty who not only study human/environment interactions, but also elements of the physical earth such as atmospheric dynamics, dunes, glacial processes, rivers, and soils (Appendix A).

Such interdisciplinary work is a growing trend across the nation and is highly valued in the area of external funding. It falls directly within the strategic plan of the NSF Geography and Spatial Science Program, for example, which states that "the Geography and Spatial Sciences Program sponsors research on the geographic distributions and interactions of human, physical, and biotic systems on Earth." (http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505034). This kind of work is also highly valued at other federal programs such as NIH, NOAA, and USAID, which is one of the reasons we have been able to obtain over $10 million in combined funding from these agencies the past five years alone. It is also an increasingly important component of international funding initiatives, such as the Belmont Forum that is co-sponsored by NSF and the Natural Environmental Research Council in the United Kingdom. The goal of this partnership is to "provide international collaborative research opportunities that deliver knowledge needed for action to mitigate and adapt to detrimental environmental change and extreme hazardous events". (http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2012/nsf12072/nsf12072.jsp). One of these prestigious awards was won by a multidisciplinary team led by Dr. Emilio Moran from the MSU Department of Geography. Dr. Moran, who wrote a letter of support for the proposed name change, is one of the leading social scientists in the country, if not the world. All of these
factors considered, we believe our proposed new name will strengthen the environmental brand at MSU by more directly acknowledging a reality that already exists in the Department of Geography.

With respect to the issue of “confusing degree programs”, we believe that using the term environment in our new name will help improve clarity at this scale rather than diminish it. As stated previously, GEO already offers a degree in Environmental Geography and our new name will thus enable students to better see our connections with the physical earth such as biogeography, climatology, geomorphology, meteorology, and soils, to name a few. We teach such courses already and the new brand will reflect this reality. Such improved clarity would thus address the kind of confusion expressed by an individual in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering who argued that climatology would “appear to be an earth science.” Given that our proposal has the support of the Chair of the Department of Geological Sciences (who is proposing to include “earth science,” in their new name), it seems clear that our proposed new name would improve program clarity by providing a brand that would logically be an umbrella for a sub-discipline such as climatology.

Conclusion

A thorough survey of faculty, alumni, graduate students, and undergraduates reveals very strong (82%) support to change the name of the Department of Geography at MSU to one that better reflects our excellent work on environmental questions and our unique expertise in the area of spatial science, particularly in the area of GIS, in addition to traditional place-based geographical analysis. In this context, the faculty overwhelmingly (81%) supports the proposed new name Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences. This new name also has support from important individuals within the discipline and from the Chair of the Department of Geological Sciences at MSU. This new name personifies the position of geography as a bridge between the physical and social sciences in the United States and at MSU. It also reflects the evolution of GEO in the past 20 years to a full-fledged interdisciplinary unit bound by core geographical principles. Our goal is to clarify our identity while at the same time creating a more inclusive brand. We also feel that that the new name (1) increases our linkages with the STEMM disciplines, while concurrently strengthening our current relations with other units in the College of Social Science, and (2) will significantly increase our visibility to prospective undergraduate and graduate students by encapsulating the degrees we currently offer in human geography, environmental geography, and GIS. Once these students graduate, they will be more competitive for good jobs as the words “environment” and “spatial sciences” will help potential employers better understand the broader dimensions of these students’ geography-based degrees.
References


Appendix A - Research areas of core GEO faculty and affiliated faculty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Member</th>
<th>Research Area – See Figure 2</th>
<th>Research Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Andresen</td>
<td>Physical Geography, Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Agricultural meteorology and climatology. State climatologist and Director, ENVIRO-Weather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Arbogast</td>
<td>Physical Geography</td>
<td>Quaternary landscape evolution, particularly sand dune evolution near Lake Michigan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raechel Bianchetti</td>
<td>Spatial Methods and Models</td>
<td>Human cognition, interpretation of aerial photos and satellite images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guo Chen</td>
<td>Human Geography</td>
<td>Social, economic, and environmental dynamics of urban transformations, primarily in China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiquan Chen</td>
<td>Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Ecosystem Analysis, Global Change Ecology, Coupled Human/Natural Systems, Land Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Darden</td>
<td>Human Geography</td>
<td>Residential segregation and social inequalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle Evered</td>
<td>Human Geography</td>
<td>Cultural, historical, and political geography, in Turkey, Middle East, and former Soviet states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Grady</td>
<td>Human Geography; Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Health geography. Maternal and infant health and the impact of local environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peilei Fan</td>
<td>Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Economic development, Asia’s urbanization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Finley</td>
<td>Spatial Methods and Models</td>
<td>Measuring environmental processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Groop</td>
<td>Spatial Methods and Models</td>
<td>Cartography/GIS applications. US migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifeng Luo</td>
<td>Physical Geography</td>
<td>Climatology and water resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arika Ligmann-Zielinska</td>
<td>Spatial Methods and Models</td>
<td>Spatial analysis and human-environment modeling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Messina</td>
<td>Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Medical geography and land use/land cover change, in Africa and Asia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan Moore</td>
<td>Physical Geography; Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Atmospheric science and Climatology. Regional climate modeling; land use/land cover change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilio Moran</td>
<td>Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Latin America, Brazil, Ecological Anthropology; Tropical Ecology and Resource Management, Land Use and Land Cover Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Nicholls</td>
<td>Human Geography; Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Recreation and tourism geography. Tourism development and environmental impacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber Pearson</td>
<td>Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Health geography and inequalities, access to drinking water and poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Pigozzi</td>
<td>Spatial Methods and Models</td>
<td>Urban transportation. Quantitative methods applied to economic geography.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiaguo Qi</td>
<td>Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Land use/land cover change. Quantifying interactions between human and natural systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall Schaetzl</td>
<td>Physical Geography</td>
<td>Soils geomorphology and glacial landforms in the Great Lakes region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashton Shortridge</td>
<td>Spatial Methods and Models</td>
<td>GIS, spatial analysis, and health geography. Spatial data uncertainty and error in GIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igor Vojnovic</td>
<td>Human Geography</td>
<td>Urban development, infrastructure investment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Winkler</td>
<td>Physical Geography; Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Synoptic/applied Climatology; regional climate change, primarily in the Great Lakes region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Yansa</td>
<td>Physical Geography</td>
<td>Paleo-environments in the Midwest and Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo Zulu</td>
<td>Human Geography; Human-Environment Interactions</td>
<td>Political ecology, environment and development, and resource management in rural Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Zhong</td>
<td>Physical Geography</td>
<td>Atmospheric science\ climatology. Regional climate change, boundary layer processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B – Representative Statements of Support for a Name Change in the Formal Survey of Alumni.

Personally, incorporating the 'spatial analysis' piece makes more sense than the 'environment' piece since that reflects the work that actually happens in the department, the type of training offered to students, and the apparent future trajectory for the department's growth. However, I don't know that 'Geography and Spatial Analysis' is any more appealing than just 'Geography'; at the same time some people might be intrigued by what exactly 'Spatial Analysis' entails.

Glad to incorporate environment into the department, but also would like the emphasis on geospatial technologies.

I am VERY proud to be a graduate from MSU Geography Dept. because of the placement and the importance on Science! I am also very excited about GIS and all of the data that is visual and it's uses. I might keep it shorter, but with a committee it may be hard. Dept. of Geographic Information Systems. Good Luck!

I like the use of the word environment because it encompasses a wider array of disciplines involving directly with what's around us. It will let people know that geography is more than knowing where places are and state capitals, but understanding the world around us.

I like the idea of a name change to one that better represents what this department is doing.

A name 'enhancement' is due. Just Environment plays it safe. Although not proposed; removing the Geography name altogether would be extreme, but favorable as well, such as Dept of Environmental and Geospatial Sciences

Please incorporate Geospatial or Spatial Analysis into title if name is changed.

I understand the wanting to add the word "Environment" to the department name for marketability; however, in my opinion, this term suggests environmental management, which doesn't seem like a focus of the department (at least from my time in the department). If "Environment" is added, then I feel that adding the "Geospatial" Technologies or Sciences is important to add the technological component related to GIS.

I think 'environment' and 'geospatial sciences' are both words that can help recruit people to the department. We are in the process of considering a similar type of name change in my current department (Northern Illinois University) to help recruit more students who are interested in environmental science and meteorology but who do not know that geography houses those units.

I like the idea of adding spatial analysis or spatial sciences to include GIS studies as well. And maybe making the department more inclusive will help people understand we do more than memorize maps!

I think including the words "Environment and Spatial Analysis" does more justice to the very concept of what the study of "Geography" is all about and will help to attract students curiosity and may be the catalyst to taking a course in your Department.

I would stress that having sciences is paramount given the push people and politicians are placing on the sciences (STEM). I am hesitant to recommend using environment in the title given that other programs and departments may object.

I love that you are thinking about adding Environment to the name of the dept.

Department of Geography and Environment - I feel that this name will do an effective job capturing the attention of undergraduates searching for a major. Plus, it is close enough to the original name where the Department still maintains its identity. Department of Geography, Environment, and Geospatial Sciences - This name, like my first choice, would do an effective job capturing the attention of undergraduates. Including "Geospatial Sciences" in the Department's name adds a rapidly growing sub-discipline of Geography to the Department's title.
To: Dean Marietta Baba, College of Social Sciences  
From: Emilio F. Moran, John A. Hannah Distinguished Professor  
Re: Name change for the Department of Geography

I take this opportunity to strongly endorse the proposed name change of the Geography Department to Department of Geography, Environment and Spatial Sciences.

There are many and very good reasons why this change is both timely and appropriate. It is very timely because the field of geography has changed. From a discipline largely associated with making maps, it has become the leader among the sciences in spatial analysis, something that is far more diverse than map-making. This change has already taken place in funding agencies (NSF changed its name from the Geography Program to the Geography and Spatial Sciences Program), and in the National Research Council where the previous Committee on Geography became the Committee on Geography and Spatial Sciences. No less important is the growing significance of environmental research in geography. Geography brings a unique perspective to environmental research, and it has become an obligatory partner to have in any environmental team. Yet, it takes students a long time to find this out because the name Geography alone does not adequately communicate this changing engagement. The proposed change has gone through a very thorough discussion in the department, and as I noted earlier in distinguished scientific quarters where this change has already taken place. I should note as well that the Section that I belong to in the National Academy of Sciences, Human Environmental Sciences, is the home of geographers elected to the Academy. By making our department’s name reflect this changing academic landscape we ensure that what we do is better understood by students, society, and our fellow academics.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you need further details on this matter.

Emilio F. Moran
Hi Alan!

Although I am a strong supporter of the concept of free-standing geography departments with the name "Geography" standing proudly and boldly on its own, I can appreciate the value of making clear through a unit's name that geography is broad and wide-ranging in its interests and perspectives, with appropriate additional terms added to emphasize key topical domains as well as focal approaches that are readily associated with geography.

When what previously had been the Geography and Regional Science Program undertook strategic planning in 2007, we recognized the need to make clear that scientists working in closely aligned fields that also emphasized space, location, and other critical geographic dimensions that their proposals were welcome and that a newly renamed Geography and Spatial Sciences Program was eager to support theory- and method-enhancing research they might undertake. Because we considered regional science to be one of a set of closely related spatial sciences that also included geographic information science, spatial cognition and behavior, and spatial statistics, we sought to keep our ties with all who we had supported in the past as well as those who would have been welcome but who perhaps did not consider themselves geographers because their education, training, and/or formal affiliation were associated with other disciplines. The new program name was not only designed to affirm the theoretical and methodological interests of the program but also to reaffirm the broadly interdisciplinary character of the geography and related fields. I have attached both of our strategic plans for your reference.

In addition to having interest in the possible change of your department's name from the perspective of an NSF Geography and Spatial Sciences program director, I also have interests from the perspective of one who has had the honor of having been elected President of the Association of American Geographers and who made interdisciplinarity the foremost theme of my three years of service on the AAG Council in the top leadership positions of Vice President, President, and Past President. During my Past President's Address, presented in 2009 and published in the *Annals of the AAG* the following year, I tried to trace the interdisciplinary roots of our field, and I concluded that geographer long has been and remains to be a field with three major strands -- spatial analysis, human–environment interaction, and place-based and regional analyses. Your proposed new name, "Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences," places high emphasis on the first two of those strands, with the third also implicit in both broader geographic and environmental contexts.

Your proposed new name is consistent with comparable changes that have been made elsewhere, including the renaming of the University of Texas-Austin department to be "Geography and the Environment," the University of Iowa to be "Geographical and Sustainability Sciences," and my own graduate alma mater, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, to be "Geography, Environment, and Society."

I wish you well in your efforts to make clearer the breadth and depth of geographic perspectives to others through the proposed name change.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance.

Best wishes, Tom

Thomas J. Baerwald
Past President, Association of American Geographers (July 2008-June 2009)
Phones: 703-292-7301 (NSF), 703-765-3128 (Home)
E-Mail: tbaerwald@nsf.gov; tombaerwald@gmail.com

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Dear Dean Baba,

I am a 2007 PhD graduate of the Department of Geography at MSU. Since graduating, I was a NSF Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and am currently an Assistant Professor of Natural Resources and the Environment at the University of Michigan. I am strongly supportive of department chair Prof. Alan Arbogast and the rest of the faculty, staff and students in their efforts to change the name of the department to the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences.

Prof. Arbogast has solicited a wide range of views concerning the proposed name change and has actively engaged the perspective of alumni such as myself. I am wholly supportive of this change for three main reasons.

1. The proposed name change is likely to enhance enrollment for graduate and undergraduate scholars interested in the intersections between space, place, the environment and the analytical lens provided by the spatial sciences.
2. Adding Environment and Spatial Sciences to the department name makes our alums more competitive for jobs where these two fields are seen as related and are the forefront of environmental problem solving.
3. The proposed name change more accurately reflects the existing and future strengths of the department. Since I left MSU the department has grown in terms of breadth, but the core skills sets offered by the faculty remain deeply rooted in a tradition of critical social and natural engagement with the environment, broadly defined.

I have no hesitation in saying that MSU’s geography department equipped me with the necessary tools, skills, theories and perspectives in order to speak critically about environmental and social change under regimes of increasing climatic variability in East Africa, where I conduct my research.

Sincerely,

Bilal Butt
Marietta Baba, Dean
College of Social Science
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824

Re: Letter of support for Department of Geography name change

Dear Dean Baba:

I write this letter to enthusiastically support the proposed name change for the Department of Geography to the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences. I endorse this name change because it will greatly assist in representing a more 21st century image of what the department is about. I was an active member of the department from 2000 until 2010, and was a strong proponent of possibly adding the term 'environment' to the name several years ago; an opportunity that unfortunately was passed over by the then chair. Since leaving the department I served as a Program Officer in the Geography and Spatial Sciences Program at the National Science Foundation for three years, and worked extensively within the Science, Engineering and Education for Sustainability initiative, essentially NSF’s attempt to fund more environmental research. It is clear from my work there that the term ‘geography’ alone does not automatically link to environmental issues or geospatial analysis even though these are embedded within the term. The program I helped direct at NSF, in fact, added 'Spatial Sciences' to its name to more explicitly represent the type of research it funds. I currently serve as the Director for Environmental Programs at Johns Hopkins University and have become even more deeply aware of the attractiveness of the term ‘environment’ for a range of lines of inquiry, including much of what geographers naturally do, but which the general public does not understand it does.

During my time in the department I was well aware of the ‘image’ issue that the department faced in recruitment, especially of undergraduates. Although I was Director for Graduate Studies in the department for 5 years, I also taught undergraduate courses and interacted frequently with prospective majors, who were not always convinced that a geography major would land them a job. We know from Department of Labor statistics that employment opportunities for geospatial analysts and environmental consultants are a growth fields, and I strongly believe that the new name will help link prospective majors (and their parents) with those fields. Overall this name change will greatly assist with clarifying the department’s mission as the term geography alone, regrettably, tends to conjure up the study of capital cities and state shapes, a rather simplistic and misinformed view of the discipline, but one popular with the general public. The department’s name needs to become one that more explicitly states what it does in order to be perceived correctly. I believe this will greatly assist in its efforts to increase its majors, and to more effectively represent the range of research that is conducted therein.

Thank you for your consideration and feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Antoinette WinklerPrins, Ph.D.
Director for Environmental Programs
Dear Dean Baba:

I write to indicate my support for the proposed name change of the Department of Geography to the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences. As an alumnus of the department (MA in 2004, PhD in 2009), and a tenure-track Assistant Professor at Indiana State University, I understand the value of a departmental name that clearly describes the subject matter of the courses offered and research areas of the faculty who call the department home. I feel the proposed change would help the department continue to attract positive attention.

During my time as a Spartan Geographer there were a few times when I had to take pains to describe what it was a Geographer studied and taught. One example that stands out was in the mid-2000s when I was at a gathering hosted by a faculty member from another department (in another college) and was asked “hasn’t every place on earth already been mapped? I mean, what is it you do?” — the proposed named change certainly indicates more completely what the discipline of Geography considers its prime focus area, and perhaps will help clarify what Geography is to non-Geographers.

To put this support in context, I currently work in a department that recently experienced a name change (from “Geography, Geology, and Anthropology” to “Earth & Environmental Systems”) and can say that this change clearly helped our department in its image with the community, the rest of our University, and with undergraduate students (in particular). Before the name change our undergraduate majors were attracted to individual programs rather than the synthesis that the courses offered could really offer them, allowing them to become better professionals with a broader set of skills and supporting knowledge — the same goes for our graduate students. Though the Geography Department at Michigan State University does a fantastic job of encouraging its graduate students and undergraduates to become broadly trained academics, I believe the change in department name would allow the department to better communicate to others what it has to offer Spartans and the greater community.

Sincerely,

Stephen Aldrich, PhD ('09)
Assistant Professor of Geography, Department of Earth & Environmental Systems, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809 | steve.aldrich@indstate.edu
Office: 812-237-2258/Mobile: 517-881-9118
21 July 2014  
Dr. Marietta Baba  
Dean, College of Social Science  
Michigan State University  

Dear Dean Baba,

Dr. Alan Arbogast has informed the alumni of the Geography Department of a potential change in the name for the department. As an alumna, most recently in 2012, with BS degrees in Geography (GIS/Climate) and BS in Earth Science, I feel the suggested name change to Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences better describes the education I received from the Geography Department. When looking for a job after graduation, employers did not understand what my BS in Geography really meant. They had just assumed I could draw maps and name capitals. When I explained that I had GIS, spatial analysis, meteorology, environmental sciences, climate sciences, statistics, an introduction to economics, human geography, and hydrology classes they said they were surprised at the diversity. I also experienced surprise by fellow students that felt Geography was boring and limited to maps, but they were excited by the classes and labs that I was taking.

The addition of Environmental and Spatial Sciences to the current name will help attract more students and will help employers get a better understanding of the classes and labs graduates will have completed for their Geography degree. While I decided to go to graduate school for a PhD in Environmental Engineering instead of embarking upon a career, I believe it would have helped my job search and graduate school search if the proposed name had been in place. I am now in my second year of my program and have used all the core skills learned whilst at MSU and my professors are surprised that a Geography graduate would have had core classes in hydrology, GIS, numeric modeling, and statistical analysis. The Geography Department has grown and is still growing while keeping up with the technology that government, industry, and academia is using to find solutions to the challenges that face our global society. It is time for the name to be updated to better reflect all that is offered by the department.

Geography is so much more than just maps. The name Department of Geography, Environmental and Spatial Sciences gives a better sense of just what MSU grads can do.

Regards,

Shelley Jeltema  
PhD Student  
Environmental/Civil Engineering  
Michigan Technological University  
Email: sjeltema@mtu.edu  
Phone: 704-497-2671
February 25, 2014

Dean Marietta L. Baba  
College of Social Science  
Michigan State University  
203 Berkey Hall  
East Lansing, MI 48824

Dear Dean Baba,

As Chair of the Department of Geological Sciences, I am writing to support the proposed name change of the Department of Geography to the **Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences** in conjunction with our proposed name change from the Department of Geological Sciences to **Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences**. I believe that both proposed names better represent what our departments do and I look forward to continuing the strong collaborative ties that we have between our departments. Please contact me if you need any additional information.

Regards,

*signature*

Dr. David W. Hyndman  
Professor and Chair
February 26, 2015

R. James Kirkpatrick  
College of Natural Science  
Michigan State University  
104 Natural Science Building  
East Lansing, MI  48824

Dear Dean Kirkpatrick,

In my role as Chairperson of the Department of Geography, I am writing to support the proposed name change of the Department of Geological Sciences to the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences. This support occurs in the context of our own proposed name change to the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences. I feel strongly that each of the proposed names more accurately reflects the true nature of our departments and the diversity within them. Our departments have a strong collaborative relationship that spans the realms of teaching and research and I look forward to strengthening those ties in the future. If you require additional information please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Alan F. Arbogast  
Chairperson  
Department of Geography  
673 Auditorium Road  
Room 116  
East Lansing, MI  48824  
517-355-4649  
Fax: 517-432-1671  
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