

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

SUBJECT: Department of Geological Sciences

ACTION REQUESTED: Rename as the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 1, 2011

The dean and the executive committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) requests approval to rename the Department of Geological Sciences as the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, effective September 1, 2011.

The Department of Geological Sciences has seen pronounced shifts, coinciding with national and international trends in earth science, toward a heightened emphasis on the societal impact of the field. Faculty expertise is now grouped within five broad subdivisions: environmental earth science, global climate change, tectonics and geophysics, geochemistry of solid earth, and paleontology. Increasingly, faculty research has become highly integrative between the planet's interior, surface topography, hydrosphere, atmosphere, and biosphere.

However, earth science does not adequately capture the range of research and teaching activities in the department. As faculty research becomes more interdisciplinary, areas of expertise are increasingly being directed at questions clearly within the realm of environmental science (e.g., tracking toxic metals through the environment, remediation of acid mining waste, nuclear waste containment, global warming, protection of drinking water resources, studies of soil fertility). This growing embrace of environmental science has greatly diversified and increased the external funding agencies from which faculty have received grants and graduate student fellowships. The department's engagement with environmental sciences also extends to their undergraduate teaching and they offer a wide range of courses. Many of these courses are cross-listed with the Program in the Environment, a jointly held program between LSA and the School of Natural Resources and Environment.

The change to Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences will help develop new connections and strengthen existing collaborative ties to other units at Michigan by more effectively communicating the range and versatility of the faculty's research and teaching. The name change will also help graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, research scientists, and faculty colleagues to perceive potential opportunities for interdisciplinary research, collaboration on proposals, and access to laboratories and areas of expertise. Most importantly, it will add to the visibility of the University as one of the premier institutions engaged in the study of environmental issues from a wide variety of perspectives.

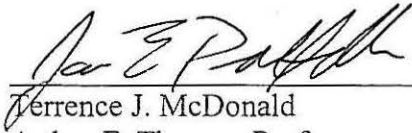
The name change more effectively communicates to undergraduates the rich experiential learning opportunities in the department, preparing them for highly adaptable and versatile careers in industry, government, and academia. Graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty with backgrounds outside of geology are increasingly being recruited to this department.

The proposed name makes the department a more logical home for scientists with this type of diverse training.

We recommend approval of the recommendation of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts Executive Committee that the Department of Geological Sciences be renamed as the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, effective September 1, 2011.

Recommended by:

Recommendation endorsed by:



Terrence J. McDonald
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor
Professor of History and Dean
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts



Philip J. Hanlon, Provost and
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

July 2011