




UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
MĀNOA

December 1, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Brian Taylor
Dean, SOEST

FROM: Reed Dasenbrock 
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: One-Year Progress Report on the SOEST External Review

Thank you for the October 13 memo from Assistant Dean Ostrander reporting the progress that has been made over the past year on the recommendations from the 2013 external program review. By and large, the departments and units in SOEST have worked hard over the past year to implement these recommendations, and I commend everyone for a good deal of hard work. However, given the nature of the report, mostly built up from documents coming from the department, there are some issues—mostly SOEST-wide—that perhaps need a little more attention.

The major issue is that SOEST was urged by this office to develop a comprehensive approach to encourage undergraduates to take SOEST courses, both in terms of general education and in terms of attracting more majors. I see a number of useful steps in this direction reported on, but I don't yet see the comprehensive plan I would like to see. SOEST is a tremendous resource that I believe could play a larger role in undergraduate education, and I hope progress in this direction can be accelerated in the near and medium term.

It was unfortunate that Jane Schoonmaker retired right in the middle of the discussions about expanding/enhancing the GES program, and it isn't clear to me how the 'informal discussions' reported here will fit into/complement/contradict the ongoing discussions about a sustainability curriculum, which is now being led by CTAHR. I see the potential for extremely fruitful synergy among these discussions, as well as some possibility of turf wars and more balkanization. This may need leadership from your office as well as faculty-led discussions.

One specific issue at the departmental level that was not adequately addressed in your response is the reports of poor teaching and ineffective classroom communication in Meteorology. While the name change to Atmospheric Sciences, the 3 & 2 agreement

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with NUIST and other reported changes all sound very positive, this major issue in the external review was simply not responded to in this report. I am confident that your office will take proactive steps to make sure that these issues have been or will be addressed in the near future.

I look forward to seeing your School's continued progress toward addressing these and other recommendations from the external review team in your midterm progress report due by December 5, 2016.

Attachment

c: Associate Dean Fletcher
Assistant Dean Ostrander
Program Officer Goodwin