MEMORANDUM

TO: Brian Taylor  
Dean, SOEST

FROM: Michael Bruno  
Provost

Laura E. Lyons  
Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Response to SOEST Program Review Progress Report

Thank you for submitting the one-year progress report for your 2019 program review. This has indeed been a period of unprecedented challenges for our University. However, despite this, the departments have made a good deal of progress on many of the recommendations put forth by the review team, and the School has made advances in several key areas, notably regarding the treatment of postdocs, mentoring for junior scientists, and addressing workplace climate issues. As is evidenced in your report, the School has pivoted to try to meet the research and pedagogical challenges imposed by the coronavirus pandemic. You are to be commended for those efforts, and your ongoing commitment to our students, researchers, and community.

The plan for addressing the review team’s recommendation regarding the mentoring of junior scientists seems to have proceeded on multiple fronts. The school-wide utilization of individualized annual graduate student meetings with faculty is an excellent practice, and we hope the success of Earth Sciences will be replicated across the other academic units. The career development activities designed by the SOEST Research Council sound very promising, though it is not clear exactly how many have already taken place, and we look forward to hearing more about your successes in the next report. Progress has also been made in relation to the employment status of post-docs, as well as the School’s efforts to develop a new website resource, and work with the academic units to develop more effective onboarding procedures. In the next report, we would like to learn more about the development of handbooks, resource guides, orientation, and other areas of engagement designed to foster a more holistic integration of post docs, graduate students, and junior faculty into the SOEST community.

Workplace climate, particularly in relation to gender equity, was a key area of concern noted in the review team’s report. It is excellent news that women comprise almost half of your 12 new tenure-track hires. It is also encouraging that the Dean’s Office has engaged in the various training programs recommended by the team. We would like to see an increased level of engagement with these very important educational opportunities across the academic and research units within SOEST, as well. We are pleased to learn that the SOEST Diversity, Equity
and Inclusion Council has made significant strides over the last year, notably through their collaborative work on the development of a shared code of conduct for each of the units to integrate into their work and management cultures, and the ongoing development of a climate survey, among other areas. We look forward to a more detailed description of how this work evolves in your next progress report.

In closing, it should be noted that as the University addresses the budget crisis stemming from the global COVID-19 pandemic, we are engaging each of our academic units about the strength and sustainability of their majors, more effective use of faculty and staff resources, and responsiveness to our educational and research missions.

Your three-year progress report is due to OVCAA by October 28, 2022.

c:  Krystyna Aune, Dean, Graduate Division  
    April Goodwin, Director of Program Development and Review