Educational Policies Committee Program Proposal, College of Science, July 17, 2019 - Geosciences

Utah State University

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Institution Submitting Request: Utah State University

Proposed Effective Date¹: July 1, 2019

Institutional Board of Trustees’ Approval Date:

Existing Unit Title: Department of Geology

Sponsoring School, College, or Division: College of Science

Sponsoring Academic Department(s) or Unit(s): Department of Geology

Proposal Type:

- ☒ Name Change of Existing Unit to Department of Geosciences
- ☐ Administrative Unit Transfer
- ☐ Administrative Unit Restructure (with or without Consolidation)
- ☐ Administrative Unit Suspension
- ☐ Administrative Unit Discontinuation
- ☐ Reinstatement of Previously Suspended Administrative Unit
- ☐ Reinstatement of Previously Discontinued Administrative Unit

Chief Academic Officer (or Designee) Signature:

I, the Chief Academic Officer or Designee, certify that all required institutional approvals have been obtained prior to submitting this request to the Office of the Commissioner.

________________________________________ Date:

☐ I understand that checking this box constitutes my legal signature.

¹“Proposed Effective Date” refers to date after Regent approval when change to unit is published.
Unit Description - Abbreviated Template

Section I: The Request

Utah State University requests approval to change name of Department of Geology to Department of Geosciences effective July 1, 2019. This action was approved by the institutional Board of Trustees on.

Section II: Program Proposal

Administrative Unit Description/Rationale

Present a brief description of the unit. Describe the institutional procedures used to arrive at the action being proposed. Briefly indicate why a change to the unit is justified. Are similar units offered elsewhere in the USHE or the State? State how the institution and the USHE benefit from the proposed unit change.

The USU Department of Geology is a moderate-sized academic unit with a long history of award-winning teaching and research. We sustain 60-70 undergraduate majors, a large and successful MS program, a relatively new PhD program, and we are known for our dedicated alumni.

Following our Regent's Review process in the 2017-2018 academic year, we developed a Strategic Plan. As recommended by our external reviewers, a central goal within our Strategic Plan is a name change for our department. Over fall of 2018, we conducted a process of information gathering and repeated debate and surveys, culminating in a vote on choices of names, which had 100% participation of faculty, Instructors and research staff. The definitive result was to change our name to Earth Sciences. Although that original proposal was approved by the Curriculum Subcommittee, it was declined by the main Educational Policies Committee.

This proposal follows upon our first one; and it is to change our name to our second choice -- Geosciences. We have two primary motivations for this name change:

A broader name is needed: What used to be called Geology has evolved into the application of other sciences to Earth, and its scope has broadened into a fundamentally interdisciplinary science over the past decades. This broadening of what we do now, and especially in the near future as our department grows, is the primary reason our name needs to be changed to Geosciences.

An up-to-date name is needed: Unlike most other classical sciences, the basic definitions of geology, geoscience, and earth science are poorly understood by students and the public, and the terms are variably used by professionals. Yet, it is agreed that "geology" is an antiquated and narrow term. A survey of nation-wide department names at peer and higher-level institutions confirms that Geology has become a rare moniker. Over the past decades, units that were formerly called Geology have changed, with Earth Sciences and Geosciences being the most common names of the strongest and most forward-looking programs.

For these reasons, both our Department and the greater USHE system will benefit from a broader, up-to-date, and forward-looking unit name, which will position us better with peers.
Consistency with Institutional Mission/Institutional Impact

Explain how the unit is consistent with the institution’s Regents-approved mission, roles, and goals. Describe how the existing administrative structures support the proposed unit and identify new organizational structures that may be needed. What changes in faculty and staff will be required?

This name change to Department of Geosciences -- being broader and up-to-date -- will enhance our contribution to the mission of USU in academics to cultivate diversity of learning and culture, discovery through research, and engagement via clear and up-to-date communication of our science. With the name change, no new or changed administrative or organizational structures are necessary.

Finances

What costs or savings are anticipated with the actions proposed? What new facilities or modifications to existing facilities or equipment are needed? Describe any budgetary impact on other programs or units within the institution. If new funds are required, describe expected sources of funds.

No budgetary impact is expected. No changes to facilities, other than routine updates to graphic-design elements. No new funds necessary.