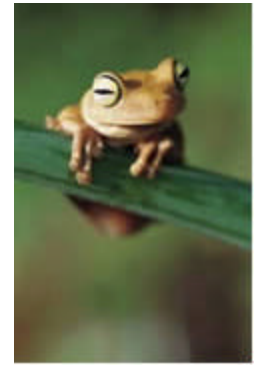


Progress Report:

Creating a School of Natural Resources & Environment at Washington State University

School of NRE Faculty Implementation Committee

February 24, 2003



Dear WSU Colleagues,

This progress report was prepared for James Zuiches, Dean – College of Agriculture & Home Economics to describe the initial results of his charge to develop a draft proposal for the creation of a School of Natural Resources & Environment at WSU. We are concurrently distributing this report to: CAHE Deans & Directors, CAHE Faculty & Staff, and all our WSU Colleagues.

We have now received quite a bit of feedback on the proposed School of Natural Resources & Environment after: a) posting the draft proposal on the CAHE web site (see: [Draft School of NRE Proposal](#)), b) issuing a CAHEALL and WSU General Announcement, and c) distributing the document widely to administrators, faculty, and staff across WSU campuses. This progress report briefly summarizes the gist of that feedback from the WSU academic community, implications for developing the School, and describes a number of activities and actions that are already underway to help form the School.

The vast majority of the feedback received by email, telephone calls, and direct conversations with faculty, staff, and administrators was highly positive and supportive. Most people commended the draft proposal for being forward-thinking about the future CAHE and WSU land grant mission. In broad terms, proposal elements that often received positive comments were the interdisciplinary nature of the School; the emphasis on the ecological, environmental, and natural resource sciences and sustainability issues; the attempts to define progressive, joint academic program revisions to increase student enrollments in new areas; and proposed new marketing and research initiatives, such as the *Biotechnology in the Environment Initiative*.

Negative comments were relatively few and tended to fall into the categories of: a) failure to mention or adequately emphasize a particular endeavor or organization valued by an individual, or b) not adequately emphasizing the need for reorganizing and promoting the ecological and environmental sciences for WSU as a whole. However, even these superficially “negative” comments are essentially an endorsement of the proposal, because they emphasize the widely-held feelings about the importance of the stated goal of dramatically advancing our land grant mission in the biological, ecological, environmental, and natural resource sciences.

Other comments that were occasionally raised were concerns over tenure and annual review procedures, how voluntary reallocations of FTEs would be accomplished, and increasing administrative complexity or cost. We have replied directly to individuals to address these concerns as best we can.

COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENTS:

A number of initial working agreements have been graciously offered by faculty, chairs, and centers or programs expressing an interest in collaborating to create the faculty and programming for the proposed School of NRE. Our discussions with collaborators include the following results:

Collaborating Departments & Programs:

- ✓ Agricultural & Resource Economics
 - ✓ Biological Systems Engineering
 - ✓ Cooperative Extension
 - ✓ Crops & Soils
 - ✓ Environmental Science & Regional Planning¹
 - ✓ Landscape Architecture
 - ✓ Natural Resource Sciences
 - ✓ Rural Sociology
- = Total of approximately 50+ faculty as either core or associate faculty from 8 collaborating departments and programs across 2 colleges

New Academic Joint Ventures:

The School of NRE can co-host and help develop and market the following four key interdisciplinary degrees on behalf of collaborating departments:

- 1) Environmental & Resource Economics & Management (see [web site](#))
- 2) Natural Resource Science (*with new options in Conservation Biology and Landscape & Restoration Ecology to be offered jointly with other cross-campus collaborators*)
- 3) Soil & Water Science (*new joint degree being proposed & developed by Crops & Soils and Biological Systems Engineering*)
- 4) Landscape Architecture (*LA is also exploring the potential offering of the M.S. in Regional Planning with ESRP*)

¹ The Department of Natural Resource Sciences and the Program in Environmental Science & Regional Planning share a joint Ph.D. program and many CAHE faculty are part of the ESRP faculty.

Other Major School of NRE Development Activities:

- ✓ Natural Resources & Environment Online: We are exploring modification of the existing tri-state distance degree program (TADDA) with Dr. Michael Swan to see if we can add courses in the ecological, environmental, and natural resource sciences and leverage that existing online degree for our needs. It seems likely that we can develop and offer an online degree relatively quickly through this established tri-state program without having to create an entirely new mechanism to do so. With Dr. Swan's expression of support, this approach has become our preferred method of developing the online course/degree programs of the School.
- ✓ WSU International Programs: Several faculty have expressed a strong interest in creating a significant international program effort to promote international exchange of faculty and students at the graduate level to work on natural resource and environmental conservation issues. WSU's International Programs wants an affiliation and partnership with the School of NRE. Jan Noel has asked for the School to help with environmental and natural resource development efforts at the new University of Botswana.
- ✓ Center for Sustaining Agricultural & Natural Resources: Director, Chris Feise, and the CSANR Leadership Team have considered the proposal and offered a strong endorsement of the School concept as well as collaboration with CSANR. We are now jointly considering how to strongly link the programmatic efforts of the CSANR and the School of NRE for mutual benefit, particularly in the areas of agroecology and sustainable agriculture.
- ✓ WSU Spokane - Geographic Information Systems & Simulation Laboratory: We are currently determining how the School of NRE can develop new and collaborative efforts in such areas as Ecological Design, Landscape Ecology, or Regional Planning in conjunction with Landscape Architecture faculty at WSU Spokane and Pullman. Dr. Kerry Brooks, Director of the GIS & Simulation Laboratory, has expressed support for working with the School of NRE faculty on this effort.

The Spokane GIS & Simulation Laboratory, combined with other now dispersed labs at Pullman, is important for defining and supporting the future GIS, design, and analytical capabilities of the School's faculty and students in the geographic, landscape, and ecological sciences. We also will be exploring collaborative efforts with WSU's Department of Capital Planning & Development, which will be creating a GIS planning and administrative support effort at WSU as well.

- ✓ WSU Arboretum & Botanical Garden: We are discussing several possible joint development and educational projects with the WSU Arboretum Committee, including: a) developing a GIS/GPS map of trees and plantings on the Pullman campus, b) establishing a native plant botanical display garden through a departmental/faculty endowment received from The Mariposa Foundation, c) restoring a WSU Campus Forest on the edge of campus, and d) co-hosting or co-developing a WSU Arboretum & Botanical Garden web site.

- ✓ WSU Campus & Community Ecology Project: Through faculty initiative, WSU is now an official member of the National Wildlife Federation, [Campus Ecology Program](#). If the future School faculty approve, the Campus & Community Ecology Project, may be hosted by the School of NRE. This new WSU project is designed to build collaborative efforts among the WSU Administration, Business Affairs, Facilities Operations, Capital Planning & Development, academic departments, and students across all WSU campuses to address building and campus design, composting, dining services, energy use and efficiency, environmental education, landscaping, campus management, purchasing policies, research, transportation issues, waste reduction, and water use.

A practical example of the type of project to be developed is the recent [WSU Zero-Waste All-Campus Picnic](#) – a project developed by WSU Materials Resource Management and Judi Dunn, WSU Recycling Education Coordinator. This project resulted in only 34 lbs of waste being generated from the 2002 All-Campus Picnic. In the future, the WSU Campus & Community Ecology Project will help encourage departments, faculty, and students to work more closely with the WSU Administration to improve the efficiency and reduce the “ecological footprint” of all WSU operations in a significant manner.

- ✓ School of NRE Web Site: An initial draft web site is nearing completion for the proposed School for use in disseminating information to the broader WSU community and to begin to form the “corporate image” and program information for the School. When fully developed as planned, the School of NRE web site will be a content and feature-rich web site, and an important communication and marketing tool for WSU, by supporting several newsletters and modern e-communication efforts (*see following e-Science item*).

School of NRE faculty and staff will be able to use a new commercial software tool (see Macromedia [Contribute](#)) to have access to their own faculty, staff, and course and information pages for updating as frequently as desired through an easy to use, word processor-type interface – without fear of accidentally altering the unifying visual elements, programming, or layout of the web site. This approach will help off-campus faculty and administrative staff (*actually everyone*) have better access to rapid information dissemination through and with the School and help maintain a dynamic, current, but visually-consistent WSU web site.

All School of NRE faculty will be provided with a public profile page, web sites for descriptions of courses, special projects, publications, research labs, and news pages as well as links to personal home pages that can be easily customized to suit their needs without knowledge of html programming by using the new software.

WSU e-Science:

Several major new communications efforts will be proposed as part of the School operation, among which is ***WSU e-Science*** – an **inclusive, University-wide**, e-publication highlighting research and education projects by faculty and students in the agroecology, biological, ecological, environmental, natural resource, and social sciences from across all WSU campuses. A draft, trial issue will be widely distributed for peer review within WSU before implementation. As for the draft School proposal, we will welcome everyone’s suggestions for improvement.

If this University-wide, e-publication is endorsed by the WSU Administration and WSU Faculty as a whole, we will ask for a link for **WSU e-Science** on the main WSU home page where it can become a primary communications, marketing, and recruitment tool for WSU for the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the review and feedback on the draft proposal from across WSU campuses, and based on further consideration of the School concept, we have the following five important recommendations:

- 1) ***Complete the CSREES external review; submit the School proposal to the Faculty Senate for consideration in 2003-04; and create the School of Natural Resources & Environment.***

Many chairs and faculty will assist in these efforts and we are already laying important additional groundwork needed to help make this happen as soon as possible.

- 2) ***Encourage new mechanisms to increase collaboration across departments, colleges, and WSU campuses in the broadly defined ecological, environmental, and natural resource sciences.***

Though we have already achieved a critical core of voluntary working agreements to form the School of NRE (for which we thank the department chairs and faculty), we hope you will encourage departments and faculty everywhere to continue efforts to form the School and its programming - because the hard work now truly begins for everyone.

As noted by numbers of people commenting on the draft proposal, this voluntary interdisciplinary collaboration is something WSU should have been more actively doing anyway, even without the School of NRE formation. We concur and will be offering specific proposals for increasing the necessary interdisciplinary collaboration to the whole WSU community.

Also, in our planning, we note there is no 100% “perfect” and logical *a priori* division of faculty among whatever schools, departments, or academic units that could be formed within CAHE or even across WSU. There will always be faculty with interests and skills that apply across multiple academic units no matter where they might be placed as part of some master plan. Even if there is considerable value in a higher-level organization of faculty, such as a School, there is also a critical need to maintain disciplinary specialties, identities, and functions among various faculty groupings - especially for program accreditation, professional recognition, and tenure review. Consequently, faculty on this committee endorse the concept of essentially being part of a “CAHE-level Faculty” who have the freedom and flexibility to move and allocate their various teaching, research, and extension efforts to different units over time as needed and desired by faculty – while also independently selecting their tenure unit(s). This concept could be profitably applied across WSU to foster better interdisciplinary collaboration.

We also note there is no need to specifically dissolve or merge departments simply just to form the School of NRE. It is a valid and formally-approved option at WSU to form a School from voluntary collaborators who come together to work on shared and joint academic programs. Our collaborating departments are physically isolated anyway. We already have the active expressions of cooperation and collaboration we need from a core group of chairs and faculty to make the School function effectively, which is the most important goal in this process. Furthermore, if the chairs continue to manage our existing dispersed departments and programs (including tenure and annual review), this approach:

- a) addresses the expressed concerns about tenure and annual review processes, and
- b) reduces the administrative burden on the team of individuals who will help lead the School, instead letting them focus primarily on program development and growth, to everyone's benefit.

3) ***Implement the new Team Model for leadership and faculty performance.***

The new Team Model outlined in the draft School proposal is a progressive way to encourage continuing academic change, teamwork, and collaboration. Administrators at all levels need to consider how our bottom line accounting methods for FTEs, student credit hours, grants, etc., contributes to academic isolation and stagnation among units and determine what we can do to combat that. We believe the Team Model should also be applied across WSU.

4) ***Add a major capital request for a facility to College priorities.***

Build us a home. In the future, the School of NRE and all associated faculty will benefit greatly by being able to have a larger number of its faculty and students grouped under one roof. The sense of professional identity associated with the ecological, environmental, and natural resource sciences is a critical missing element that many other Schools and Colleges elsewhere have to inspire students and form a living, graphic identity for their professional programs and educational missions. We believe the School is worthy of justifying and being explicitly included in the priority renovation and building projects currently being pursued by WSU.

5) ***Support University-wide efforts for a major WSU initiative in Natural Resources & Environment.***

Support the efforts of the CAHE faculty to go beyond just the School of NRE formation to also attempt to bridge barriers across WSU through progressive academic efforts that will span at least three schools in two colleges at WSU. A friendly challenge will be issued to our WSU colleagues elsewhere to jointly consider how to best accomplish this task. We will host discussions with people responsible for older proposals for the proposed Center for Conservation Biology and the proposed Graduate School of the Environment. Now is the time for big changes and big thinking at WSU and we need to deal with the obvious, widespread concern over the promotion of the biological, ecological, environmental, and natural resource sciences from across WSU as a whole. Combined with progressive efforts in biotechnology and sustainable agriculture, it is the core of our future land grant mission.

FUTURE PLANS:

We will continue working on the following action items to begin preparing for the formation of the School of NRE:

- 1) Consolidate and further develop the preliminary agreements reached among departments, programs, and faculty working to form the School.
- 2) Break into working groups and teams to begin the difficult tasks of collaborative academic program revisions (i.e., degree modifications, core curricula, course development, etc.)
- 3) Support your information needs as we undertake formal review of the School proposal, both through the external CSREES review and the internal WSU Faculty Senate process.
- 4) Develop the preliminary communications and marketing approaches needed to promote and develop the School.
- 5) Solicit preliminary faculty applications to join the School.
- 6) Begin critical initial development work for grants and funding to support the School, including planning for the *Biotechnology in the Environment Initiative* and an endowment and corporate contribution campaign to be conducted in cooperation with the WSU Foundation and other collaborating programs at WSU.

The School Implementation Committee appreciates the support and commitment of the CAHE Administration to both the CAHE Strategic Plan and the WSU Strategic Plan and also the willingness to “turn the faculty loose” to work on designing and implementing the School of Natural Resources & Environment. We believe that it has already been a good lesson in interdisciplinary teamwork and collaboration needed to implement the CAHE and WSU Strategic Plan.

Consequently, though there are still many challenges ahead in such a large endeavor of this kind, we look forward with great enthusiasm for continuing to work with you and all of our CAHE and WSU colleagues to make the School of Natural Resources & Environment a reality.

R.D. Saylor

School of NRE Faculty Implementation Committee²

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