Memorandum of Understanding

Department of Geography

College of Liberal Arts

December 2016

This Memorandum of Understanding outlines the consensus reached by the Department of Geography, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Division of Academic Affairs, based on the recently conducted program review. It describes the goals to be achieved, and the actions to be undertaken by all parties to this MOU to achieve these goals, during the next program review cycle. Progress toward goals is to be addressed in the biennial report.

The Department of Geography last completed periodic program review in 2008. Since the time of the last program review, the department has added a minor and a MS in Geographic Information Science and has proposed a new certificate in Geography and Security. In addition, the department has deepened its connection to the Peace Corps by being selected to participate in the Paul Coverdell Fellowship program as well as a cooperative MA program in which the student includes a Peace Corps assignment in the program of study.

The review identified numerous strengths. These include: an appropriately applied focus in both undergraduate and graduate programs; an active and well-published faculty with strong service to the university and the local and international communities; strong enrollments; an effective internship program; and excellent graduation rates for transfer students and the new MS; and students who are actively engaged with the department.

Several issues were identified for attention in the course of the review.

* Reviewers found the faculty to be stretched very thin with all their activities in teaching, research, and service.
* The department has engaged in assessment of student learning and has acted on its assessment findings; however, to be more useful to students and instructors, the learning outcomes should be expressed in active, measurable terms; in addition, the review concluded that systematic assessment should be put in place in the graduate degrees.
* For several reasons, graduation rates in the MA have been weak, including that students with high skill levels are often hired before completion; the department has taken several measures to address this issue, but sustained attention was called for in the review.

It is therefore agreed that:

1. The department will revise its undergraduate student learning outcomes at the program and course level to express them in active terms that will describe what students will be able to do as a result of their learning.
2. The department will develop and implement a plan to assess student learning in the master’s programs.
3. The department will continue to analyze graduation rates for the MA program and will continue to find ways to decrease attrition and failure to complete the thesis.
4. The department will work with the college to develop a plan for hiring tenure-track faculty.
5. The program will provide a biennial update on progress made towards the actions agreed to in this MOU, to be submitted in conjunction with its biennial assessment report.

This MOU has been read and approved by:

Department Chair: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

College Dean: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Vice Provost: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_