

School of Natural Resources Academic Program Review

Review Team

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Overarching Observations

- SNR is a thriving unit that is meeting the mission of a Land Grant institution
- Faculty, staff, and students passionate
 - Generally high morale within SNR
- Good relationships-
 - SNR Director to IANR leadership
 - Faculty and staff with SNR Director
 - Students with faculty and staff
- Mutual respect and engagement between SNR and external stakeholders
- Outstanding breadth of disciplines
- National and international visibility of programs

Undergraduate Education

- Experiential learning is a strength
 - UCARE, Cabelas, FYRE, REUs all working well
- Student Success team integral to student experience
- Total growth in majors in SNR
 - Fisheries and Wildlife is steady
 - Environmental Science on the rise
 - Regional and Community Forestry- excited to see growth
- SNR has become more diverse in gender and ethnicity
- Enthusiasm for new recruiter

Undergraduate Education

- Retention rates are a concern, lower than UNL and CASNR
- Applied Climate Science and Water Sciences have not grown
 - Will need immediate attention
- Limited dialog between curricular programs
 - Advertise courses across UNL
- Long-term strategy for stabilizing teaching and curriculum
 - Avoid reactionary plugging of holes
- Greater transparency on teaching expectations by appointment
- Provide time and space to emphasize experiential and active learning
 - May improve student experience and retention

Graduate Education

- Vibrant and diverse graduate student body
- Majority externally funded
- The students perceived the diversity of disciplines as a strength
- Graduate stipends are moderate with a plan to increase
- Graduate Student Success specialist engaged with student body
- Graduate student evaluation is new and useful

Graduate Education

- Insufficient connection between research faculty and graduate teaching (courses)
- Need for additional Teaching Assistantship (TA) resources
- Consider how TA resources are being allocated and discipline match
- Concern there are limited graduate student only courses
- Build a stronger community of graduate students across SNR
 - Consider- orientation, seminar, Hardin handbook, etc.
- Greater role for the GSA

Teaching General

- Who is responsible for leading SNR curricular changes and review?
 - Need for long-term curricular planning
 - Communication of yearly course offerings (UG?G)
- What is the process for cancelling low enrolled courses?
 - Timing is inadequate
 - Impacts student experience
- Prompts the need for a comprehensive curriculum review
- Faculty accountability for teaching
- Transparent process for course buy-outs

Research

- Incredible research productivity across SNR
 - Levels of external research funding are impressive
 - Publication numbers are strong
 - Decision support tools
- Centers make a substantial contribution to research productivity
- Research activities support critical needs across local, regional, national, and international contexts
- Research is supporting graduate and undergraduate education
 - High impact learning for undergraduates
- Emphasis on applied research but basic research is also occurring
 - Some areas have clear pathway from basic, to applied, to operational

Research

- Concern over IDC returns with new budget model
 - Lack of clarity on current and future IDC returns for PIs
- Challenges with data repository
 - Digital storage (e.g., images)
 - Physical specimens (e.g., core samples)

Extension

- Extension programming is present throughout SNR
 - Reaches beyond Nebraska
- SNR brings natural resource perspectives to Extension that are relevant to society
- External partnerships willing to invest in opportunities with Extension
 - Potential to expand
- SNR Extension leader positively engaged

Extension

- Consider consolidating small Extension appointments
 - Uncertainty in expectations for small appointments
- Need to clearly define Extension *impacts*
- SNR Extension should continue to cultivate relationships with IANR Extension
 - Consider emphasizing a working landscapes approach

Centers

- Success at getting large grants and continuity of funding
- Many graduate students are affiliated with centers
- Add breadth to the discipline
- Service component to the state
- Contributing to diverse SNR workplace

Centers

- Lack of multi-year guaranteed funding for graduate students
- ITS does not provide sufficient support for some of the large data needs
- Broaden interaction of centers within SNR

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Established and active committee in SNR
- Progress in Equity and Inclusion
 - Diversity needs investment
- Faculty, staff, and students have elements of cultural and gender diversity
- Continued room for improvement
 - Consider developing specific and strategic goals for DEI committee
 - Be aware of tokenism

Mosaic

- Misconception that SNR faculty and staff are not appreciated by IANR administration
 - IANR willing to invest in strategic visions in SNR
- We are at a “pinch point” with existing staff
 - Staff are overwhelmed
 - Student Success support is critical
 - IT support changes have resulted challenges for faculty and staff
- Continue to explore pathways for endowed professorships in SNR
- SNR has engaged with other natural resource programs
 - Platte Basin Time Lapse and Nebraska One Health
 - Expands teaching, research, and outreach in SNR
- SNR members are passionate and engaged