

# **2022 Academic Program Review**

**School of Natural Resources  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **SNR TAKES STOCK OF THE PAST TWELVE YEARS (2010–2022)**

The November 2022 School of Natural Resources (SNR) Academic Program Review (APR) was delayed for two years by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the third such review since 2010. SNR has experienced more than a decade of progress and positive development since the 2010 APR. Even so, there have been major changes and a few setbacks. The present APR report describes the progress that SNR has made, constructively expresses concerns about the program's future, and includes recommendations to ensure our continued vitality. Altogether, these aspects of the report are expressed in the spirit of good institutional citizenship.

Since 2010, SNR has transitioned its APR report from a five-year summary to a forward-looking document that incorporates strategic planning. We now consider APR reports to be working documents that are to be consulted and reviewed regularly during the following five years and beyond. Thus, the Executive Summary in the 2015 review expressed aspirational goals for SNR that were intended to inspire the overall success of the unit. The present APR report updates the 2015 report, but it focuses more on practical outcomes. We believe that this transition reflects the natural evolution of the unit, which attained its present composition only nineteen years ago.

Much of the content in the 2022 SNR APR report was created independently by groups of faculty, staff, and students from all parts of SNR. Subsequently, it was compiled and edited by the administrative team. Our intent was to provide an honest, but collegial, "snapshot" of the state of SNR as it is perceived by those who are chiefly responsible for executing its mission.

There are common themes throughout the 2022 report. One theme is embodiment of SNR's mission statement by its faculty, staff, students, academic programs, and centers. That mission statement, which was formulated and vetted by a broad cross-section of faculty and staff in 2015, is:

"At the School of Natural Resources, our mission is to champion the natural world. We address complex environmental issues through scientific discovery, creativity, and perseverance; and teach future leaders to manage the delicate balance between people and the environment on which we depend."

Our expressed mission is unique within the University, yet it is fundamentally in accord with the great vision of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) to serve Nebraska by providing internationally recognized science and education that assure Nebraska's competitiveness in a changing world. SNR is unique because it has a holistic focus on the understanding of, the wise use and conservation of natural resources. Thus, our value to the University, to Nebraska, and to the world is manifest.

## **SNR LOOKS FORWARD TO THE NEXT FIVE YEARS (2022-2027)**

Despite any concerns that we have, we remain optimistic. SNR intendeds to succeed in the next five years and to share that success with IANR and the University overall.

SNR will focus on the following priorities over the next five years:

### 1. Management

- a. Continue to develop the Faculty Advisory Committee, which includes representation from all three of our Program Areas, as an integral management component of shared unit governance.
- b. Identify faculty with interests in administrative duties and encourage their participation in leadership training.
- c. Review the operations and staffing of Nebraska Maps and More. Although Maps and More is a successful operation, we need to reassess its longstanding primary roles as a support and archiving facility for the Conservation Survey Division (CSD), as a U. S. Geological Survey map repository, and as logistical support for conferences and publishing.
- d. Support and encourage Inclusive Excellence in all of our operations.

### 2. Teaching

- a. Enroll 500 students in our degree programs, including at least 150 graduate students.
- b. Retain 75% of students in SNR, 85% of its enrolled students in CASNR, and 90% of students at UNL from the first to second years.
- c. For students entering the SNR program as freshman, attain a four-year graduation rate of 56% with an SNR degree and 65% from UNL with any major and a 6-year graduation rate of 61% with an SNR degree and 75% from UNL with any major.
- d. Encourage a more even distribution of undergraduates among majors, including the maintenance of at least 50 students in each degree program.
- e. Merge the Water Science program (with respect to branding and administration) into our Environmental Science program.
- f. Critically evaluate a potential merger of the Applied Climate Science program with our Environmental Science program.
- g. Continue to advocate for fairer treatment and compensation of Graduate Assistants. Implement annual reviews for graduate student and mentors.
- h. Initiate a faculty tuition return modeled on the return of research F&A, in accordance with the University's IBB model (final details have not been put forward by UNL).
- i. Continue to encourage, incentivize, and prioritize resources for evidence-based instruction and mentoring among our faculty and staff, including inclusive instruction, active-learning and experiential learning.

### 3. Extension

- a. Align SNR Extension priorities with those of Nebraska Extension.

- b. Streamline the wildlife damage program in Extension, which experiences a sustained demand even though it is understaffed.
- c. Encourage more Nebraska Extension involvement with the Nebraska State Climate Office.
- d. Improve our collegial working relationship with Nebraska Extension.

#### 4. Research

- a. Continue to support SNR faculty research endeavors through incentives and support of creative and forward-looking programs.
- b. Support creative collaborations within SNR and among Program Areas.
- c. Support creative collaborations outside SNR.
- d. Reward grant writing with continued F&A returns to individual faculty.

#### 5. Personnel

- a. Prioritize the hiring of additional tenure-track faculty with teaching/research appointments to fill gaps in all our core Program Areas.
- b. Develop strategy for Applied Ecology to increase impact on the Grassland Systems degree program.
- c. Develop a more strategic approach to the hiring of Professors of Practice as an asset to teaching our core courses, rather than the ad hoc hires of the past.
- d. Establish clear policies for the hiring, duties, and status of state-funded staff that are in accordance with the IBB model

#### 6. Relations with IANR and across UNL

- a. Work to align SNR and IANR vision.
- b. Develop joint faculty positions with other IANR units to maximize impact and efficiency, and to address Grand Challenges and other critical initiatives identified by IANR and University administration.
- c. Coordinate productive, cross-campus collaborations between SNR Spatial Sciences and the Geography group in the School for Global Integrated Sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences.
- d. Pursue joint degree programs and accelerated M.S. degree program with engineering programs at UNL (Biological Systems Engineering and Civil Engineering).

#### 7. Development and External Relations

- a. Continue to pursue opportunities for endowed professorships; establish one by 2024.
- b. Actively engage with UNL fundraising campaign by establishing an SNR Campaign Leadership Group.
- c. Broaden development activities among Program Areas within SNR.
- d. Reinvigorate working relationships with key state agencies such as Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, to facilitate the solution of environmental and societal problems and to leverage external funding.