




Executive Memorandum 24-004

January 24, 2024

From: Steve Perez, President _____

Subject: Approval to Change the Name of the Department of Geography and Planning

Upon the recommendation of the Academic Senate and with the concurrence of the Provost, I approve changing the name of the Department of Geography and Planning to the **Department of Geography and Environmental Studies** with a new abbreviation of GEOG.

Policy Title:	EM 24-004 Approval to Change the Name the Department of Geography and Planning
Contact:	Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
Supersedes:	
Revision:	
Enabling Legislation or Executive Order:	

College, Department, or Unit Name Change

Current Name: Department of Geography & Planning

Proposed Name: Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

Complete only if applicable:

Propose Abbreviation to: GEOG

Propose Course Subject Abbreviation to:

Rationale for Change (attach additional pages as needed):

Required Signatures

The Department of Geography & Planning
has reviewed and approved this program change

Ann L. Hankins

Chair, Department Curriculum Committee

LaDonna Knigge

Department Chair (or unit coordinator, Director, etc.)

The College of Behavioral and Social Sciences
has reviewed and approved this program change

William Nitzky

William Nitzky (Apr 24, 2023 08:58 PDT)

Chair, College Curriculum Committee

Ryan Patten

College Dean (or chief administrator for unit)

Send signature page with proposal attached to [Curriculum Services](#) or zip 128

Note: The department will be notified of EPPC review date.

Rationale for department name change

The department is revising its curriculum and is proposing the new name of “Geography and Environmental Studies” to reflect the changes. “Geography and Environmental Studies” encompasses the degree, minors and certificates offered by our department, including a B.A. geography, environmental studies minor, geography minor, geospatial literacy minor, certificate in geospatial technology, and certificate in land-use planning and environmental management. Replacing “Planning” with “Environmental Studies”, indicates to our students the department’s central mission - to train them to use an interdisciplinary approach to solve complex problems posed by the interactions of natural and human-made environments. The name change is inclusive of the two revised options of our proposed degree program: landscape studies and environmental studies. It also better conveys the department's mission and appeals to students in several ways:

First, geography offers unique insights into the complex relationships between humans and the natural environment. Geography encompasses a broad range of topics, including physical geography, human geography, environmental geography, and geospatial technology. The geographical sciences provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to synthesize information across disciplines, and be successful in pursuing careers in fields such as environmental management, geospatial technology, and urban/local/regional planning.

Second, the term "Environmental Studies" is more inclusive and reflective of the department's interdisciplinary approach to address a broad range of topics such as climate change, natural resource management, sustainability, and sustainable landscape planning.

Third, the demand for professionals with expertise in geography and environmental studies continues to grow. We have focused on interdisciplinary approaches to address complex problems since the onset of our environmental studies minor in 2000. In tandem, environmental studies as presented through the lens of sustainability has become increasingly popular. Changing the department name would increase its visibility and relevance in the student and academic community. Many students today are increasingly concerned about environmental issues. Our courses provide context and critical skills to address environmental issues inclusive of societal challenges by drawing on geographic themes, land-use planning, geospatial technology, and the importance of sustainability and environmental stewardship. Our revised name would attract and signal to students the department is committed to addressing these critical issues.

The name change is a strategic move to attract a diverse and interdisciplinary-minded group of students and faculty oriented to finding solutions to the challenges of our time. This change positions our department as a leader that integrates knowledge from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities to analyze the complex interactions between humans and the environment, with the aim of providing students with the academic background and practical skills needed to address pressing social and environmental challenges within a solid geographical sciences base.