

י"ח אב תשע"ג
25 יולי 2013

החלטת מל"ג מיום 23.07.13 בנושא דוחות הוועדה להערכת איכות בגיאוגרפיה ומדעי הסביבה:

המועצה להשכלה גבוהה מאמצת את המלצות ועדת המשנה להבטחת איכות מיום 14.07.13 בעניין דוחות הוועדה להערכת איכות בגיאוגרפיה ומדעי הסביבה, ומחליטה כלהלן:

1. להודות לוועדה להערכת איכות בגיאוגרפיה ולימודי הסביבה בראשות פרופ' פטרישה גובר על עבודתה הרבה והמקצועית.
2. לאמץ עקרונית את דוחות ההערכה של הוועדה.
3. לפרסם את דוחות ההערכה ותגובות המוסדות באתר האינטרנט של המל"ג.
4. לבקש מכל מוסד להגיש עד **חודש ינואר 2014** תכנית פעולה ליישום המלצות הוועדה הנוגעות אליו (כולל לו"ז), כמפורט בדוח הוועדה ובנספח המצ"ב.
5. לבקש מכל מוסד להגיש עד **חודש ינואר 2015** דוח ביניים אודות יישום תכניות הפעולה הנזכרות בסעיף 4 לעיל.
6. לקיים מפגש עם כל ראשי המחלקות לגיאוגרפיה ולימודי הסביבה בארץ לשם דיון בסוגיות העולות מהדו"ח הכללי של הוועדה, כגון: הצורך בחשיבה אסטרטגית לאומית שתבטיח ייצוג מקיף של התחומים המגוונים בלימודי הגיאוגרפיה בישראל; הגברת השימוש בשפה האנגלית בתחום; השקעה בתשתיות (מעבדות ומחשוב) על מנת לחזק את תחומי לימוד והמחקר בנושאים: גיאוגרפיה פיזית, מערכות מידע גאוגרפיות וחישה מרחוק (Remote Sensing).

נספח להצעת החלטה

הערה: אנא תשומת ליבכם כי עיקר ההמלצות להלן מופיעות בסוף כל אחד מהדו"חות הפרטניים. יצוין כי בנוסף להמלצות אלו נדרשת תשומת ליבכם גם להתייחסויות השונות ולפירוט ההמלצות וההרחבות המופיעים לאורך הדו"חות.

אוניברסיטת בן גוריון

University-level Recommendations:

- In conjunction with other geography programs in Israel, begin a dialogue about how to best utilize the nation's scarce educational resources. The current system of repeating a broad range of specialties across five major universities is inefficient and hinders any single department from achieving international excellence in research.
- Rethink the current strategy of hiring academic stars that may or may not fit with departmental aspirations and needs. Instead, emphasize programmatic hires that build on strengths or bridge previously interconnected fields.
- Provide incentives for interdisciplinary, collaborative work. In the form of salary increases or funding for research students. New research directions are at the edges of traditional disciplines and considerable top-down effort is often needed to break down disciplinary obstacles to interdisciplinary research.
- Reinstatement of a budget for field trips and extra-classroom experiences for BA students in geography. Field skills are critical to student learning in many subfields of geography.
- Refocus PhD programs at the University level to ensure that some PhD students could use high-level research training in government and private sectors.

Department-level Recommendations:

- Restructure the current curriculum and reduce the proliferation of two-credit courses in favor of a more traditional curriculum consisting of three- and four-credit courses. The current system does not allow enough depth for students to process what they learn, to relate it to other coursework or personal experiences, and to integrate it into larger knowledge systems.
- Focus the urban planning program on a niche area, such as desert cities, sustainability, environmental planning, or tourism and regional development. It would be very difficult for the department to mount an internationally recognized comprehensive urban planning program with fewer than 10 or 12 faculty members.
- Move the required GIS class to the first or second semester and increase the number of course hours to at least three. GIS is a vital tool for a modern geographer, and instruction in this field must come early so it can be integrated into other aspects of the BA program. The current system of one two-hour course in the fourth semester is untenable in a technical, science-based discipline where visualization and analysis are important for inquiry and learning.
- Develop and implement immediately a systematic tracking system for students and graduates. Student graduation rates and later career success are key metrics for the quality of the instructional program.
- Add more rigorous spatial analytic training at the graduate level. Either develop a

freestanding course in spatial analysis or include this material as a major component of the existing statistics course.

- Reduce the number of undergraduate students in coursework designed for graduate students. MA courses should be appropriately advanced.
- Revise procedures and priorities for hiring teaching assistants, giving priority to doctoral, over MA, students. Hiring the MA students because they earn lower stipends saves money, but deprives undergraduate students of the most capable teaching assistants and limits teaching experience for PhD students.
- Add a professional dimension to the traditional Ph.D. program to recognize that few PhD graduates will take up faculty positions in Israeli universities. Research training should be balanced between a government and private-sector orientation along with the traditional basic research that the academy values.

אוניברסיטת בר אילן

University-Level Recommendations:

- In conjunction with other geography programs in Israel, begin a dialogue about how to best use the nation's scarce educational resources. The current system of repeating a broad range of specialties across five major universities is inefficient and impedes any single department from achieving international excellence in research.
- Upgrade physical facilities in the Department. Current facilities in GIS and geomorphology and soils are inadequate for a major geography department in Israel and abroad.

Department-Level Recommendations:

- Establish a strategic mission and plan with goals for the next decade and implementation strategy. This plan should be geared to several problem-oriented areas that link physical and human geographers with geographic technologies. Examples of possible ideas include: climate adaptation, water management, coastal planning, environmental risk and uncertainty, and rural/agricultural development.
- Seek outside help in preparation of this plan. Differences of opinion, although aired in a collegial way, appear to have stifled progress toward an integrated vision of the Department's future. The planning process should be facilitated or mediated by individuals who can offer advice and an outside perspective on future directions.
- Implement a comprehensive study of recent enrollment trends and develop a plan for future enrollment management to achieve a stable output of geography graduates at the BA, MA, and PhD levels. Past enrollment declines seem to have been staunch, but careful attention needs to be paid to the demand for geography courses and to the number of students who will constitute the next generation of geographers.
- Undertake a thorough review of the current curriculum. Pay particular attention to the development of a cumulative and rigorous curriculum, elimination of redundancies in content, and differentiation between graduate and undergraduate coursework. We had the impression that

Bar-Ilan students across the board were prepared and indeed eager to handle more difficult material.

- Reduce the proliferation of two-credit courses in favor of a more traditional curriculum consisting of three-and four-credit courses. The current system does not allow enough depth for students to process what they learn, to relate it to other coursework or personal experiences, and to integrate it into larger knowledge systems.
- Reorganize the PhD program to emphasize more interaction among PhD students. This can occur by providing a gathering space for graduate students, coursework organized around problem solving rather than knowledge acquisition, support for published articles and grant submission, workshops that require a high level of interaction among participants, Department-wide poster sessions, participation in Departmental search committees, facilitation of visits by outside experts and speakers, reverse post-doctoral fellowships bringing excellent scholars and their students to campus for a month, and group participation in international conferences.
- Increase competitive research funding and facilitate a less individualistic and more collaborative research culture, especially between physical and human geographers.
- Implement a credible system for tracking student progress, dropout rates, graduation rates, and alumni. The data derived from such a system augments the Department's capacity to monitor changes in student numbers and needs and enable it to more effectively argue for additional resources

אוניברסיטת חיפה

University-Level recommendations:

- Make a timely decision about the future of the School of Environment. There are obvious advantages and disadvantages for the Geography Department in this potential reorganization. The issue should be studied and a judicious decision should be made as soon as possible. Haifa Geography needs to know for strategic planning purposes whether it is a freestanding unit or part of a larger School of Environment. Moreover, this decision needs to be coordinated generally with environmental education and research which is being explored by other Israeli Geography departments
- Make an explicit effort to broaden PhD programs to recognize the fact that a majority of PhD graduates will not work in the academic world but in private- and public-sector jobs. A knowledge economy like Israel's has substantial demand for individuals who can do research and communicate results. PhD programs need to prepare students for work in scientific practice, think tanks, tourism, public health, product development, and the arts in addition to traditional academic research.

- Provide the funding to upgrade equipment and facilities in Departmental laboratories. Software and hardware in the GIS lab do not allow students adequate access to this critical geographic tool. Lack of equipment in the Geomorphology Lab forces staff to send samples to commercial labs for processing, draining scarce outside funding. An immediate investment in the latter would reap benefits in efficiency and cost savings for the Department and University.

Department- Level recommendations:

- Develop plans for the future that are appropriate for Geography and Environmental Studies as either a freestanding instructional or as part of the School of Environment. Pursue robust short-term strategies that would work well irrespective of the Department's organizational future. These include buttressing enrolments, building on existing linkages between human and physical geography, strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration, and upgrading GIS capacities.
- Seek a better balance between the thesis and non-thesis option in the MA program. While we applaud the training of teaching in environmental studies, the MA is moving too quickly and completely to the non-thesis option. Too few thesis students at the MA level will weaken the PhD program unless the Department recruits PhD students from other Universities.
- Recruit more students from other universities and encourage Haifa students to explore outside options. Admission to Haifa, particularly in the MA and PhD levels, should be restricted to areas of faculty expertise. Students who do not fit these areas should be steered to other programs that can better meet their intellectual and employment needs.
- Separate, to the extent possible, thesis from non-thesis students in the methods courses. The non-thesis students (primarily the environmental studies teachers) have little interest in or use for quantitative methods. Provide them with meaningful alternatives that would be useful for their work as teachers and allow course instructors to focus on the needs of the research students.
- Build an infrastructure for its PhD program that facilitates greater interaction among the PhD students themselves. This infrastructure may include office or other gathering space for graduate students, coursework organized around problem solving rather than knowledge acquisition, support for published articles and grant submission, workshops that require a high level of interaction among participants, department-wide poster sessions, facilitation of visits by outside experts and speakers, reverse post-doctoral fellowships bringing excellent scholars and their students to campus for a month, and group participation in international conferences.
- Acknowledge that many PhD graduates will not matriculate to faculty positions at Haifa or other Israeli universities and broaden the PhD program to train graduates for opportunities in corporations, non-profit

organizations, government agencies, and for contributing to the wider mission of geography internationally

- Increase the amount of outside funding and bring a larger share of the existing faculty into the funding base. Although the Department does an adequate job in securing outside funding, some faculty members are not engaged in this process. Consistent outside support is necessary to maintain momentum and enhance facilities and support available to research students.
- Continue to move away from a culture of faculty research based on the individual scholar and encourage collaborative teams with members coming from inside and outside the department. Big societal challenges are complex; they require complementary expertise.

האוניברסיטה העברית ירושלים

University-level recommendations:

- Reconsider the current approach to new faculty hiring. The current model—developed in response to severe budget cutbacks—leads to opportunistic rather than strategic hiring at the departmental level. This can be especially problematic for a small department such as geography because it encourages the department to seek candidates in subfields that it believes are most competitive in the University pool of candidates rather than candidates that fit its strategic plan.
- Given the paucity of academic jobs in Israeli universities, the University should consider the possibility that PhD graduates will use their research skills outside the academy in government and the private sector. PhD programs should include the practice of disciplines as well as the production of new knowledge for them. At the very least, the current cohort of PhD students should not be led to believe that most of them will obtain faculty positions in Israeli universities. This is an option reserved for the top 10% of PhD students.
- Augment the Department's GIS and library facilities. There are needs for additional audio-visual classroom capabilities, air conditioning in laboratories, and a upgrading in library reference books and journals.
- With regard to the proposed Advanced School for Environmental Studies, make details of the School's structure and operation more concrete and transparent, and delay opening the School to students until the fall of 2013 rather than 2012. Thoroughly examine such interdisciplinary programs internationally, to learn about which strategies and structures have worked well and which have not

Department-level recommendations:

- Make immediate efforts to improve the gender diversity of the Department. Female students represent roughly half of the student population at all levels, and yet there are only two junior women staff members. Underrepresentation of women is unusual in Israel, and it is unusual in major geography departments worldwide. Suggestions include recruiting in subfields where women are numerous, rethinking academic programs to include a gender studies component, fostering a gender-neutral social atmosphere, supporting women and men during maternity leave,

hiring a prominent woman from abroad to spend a month in Israel to offer a short course, and offering postdoctoral fellowships to outstanding women scholars.

- Develop and implement a structured curriculum at the BA level. The existing program appears to be “one big introduction to everything,” with too little progression in depth from the 1st through 3rd years. Ensure that redundancies are eliminated, progression is clear, and student learning outcomes map onto required and elective courses.
- Recruit majors from the pool of students who transfer among fields at HUJI. Given the unfortunate state of geographic education in Israeli state schools, the Department needs to exploit the idea of transfer students as a mechanism to stabilize and maintain enrolments. It can be built upon the favorable trends already in place in the Department.
- Establish a systematic process to track progress of students and graduates. Such data are important metrics of successes and areas for improvement and provide the opportunity to make mid-course corrections when necessary.
- Ensure that there are substantive research experiences in the non-thesis MA program. The non-thesis option now constitutes 85% of MA degrees, and considerable attention must be directed to ensure that students gain genuine research experiences in either basic research or practice in the case of the Urban and Regional Planning Program.
- Upgrade the PhD program to achieve the scientific synthesis described in its mission statement and self-evaluation document. This infrastructure may include office or other gathering space for graduate students, coursework organized around problem solving rather than knowledge acquisition, support for published articles and grant submission, workshops that require a high level of interaction among participants, department-wide poster sessions, participation in departmental search committees, facilitation of visits by outside experts and speakers, reverse post-doctoral fellowships bringing excellent scholars and their students to campus for a month, and group participation in international conferences.

אוניברסיטת תל אביב

University-Level Recommendations:

- Make an immediate decision about the organizational status of Tel Aviv Geography, preferably moving it as a freestanding faculty into the Porter School of Environment, as a department in the Faculty of Social Sciences, or combined with cognate fields in a new unit. Continued uncertainty about its position in the University’s organization impedes planning for the future, undermines faculty morale, and causes confusion for graduate students.
- Develop a Graduate School or another form of managing graduate degree programs that better reflects the evolution of interdisciplinary studies, synthetic research, and the current state of geography.

- In conjunction with other geography programs in Israel, begin a dialogue about how to best use the nation's scarce educational resources. The current system of repeating a broad range of specialties across five major universities is inefficient and impedes any single department from achieving international excellence in research.

Department-Level Recommendations:

- Establish a regular process of strategic planning designed to produce a focused mission statement, goals for the next decade, and implementation strategy.
- Reduce or reconfigure current research and graduate education around three to four targeted areas. Use these areas as the basis for faculty hiring, graduate student recruitment, and research investment.
- Reconsider the current structure of laboratories with an eye toward reducing the number and taking advantage of strategic overlapping research interests.
- Trim the number of undergraduate courses to fit the size of the current faculty and student needs.
- Develop a set of student learning outcomes (what students need to know and be able to do) for the undergraduate degree and map these onto the core curriculum.
- Implement a credible system for tracking student progress, dropout rates, graduation rates, and alumni. The data derived from such a system augments the Department's capacity to monitor changes in student numbers and needs and enable it to more effectively argue for additional resources.
- Reduce faculty teaching loads to what is more typical of those in internationally recognized Geography departments. In such universities operating on the semester system, teaching loads are often two courses in one semester and one course in the other, but with the courses having greater loads so that students typically take four in a semester.
- Develop an oversight system for graduate students and occasional lecturers who teach core courses.

**המלצות למועצה להשכלה גבוהה – מתוך הדו"ח הכללי של
הוועדה**

Recommendations for the CHE:

Research recommendations, summary

1. Begin a national dialogue leading to a reduction in research and teaching duplication among institutions and clearly defined specialties at the inter-institution level. This should engage all five geography departments in collective discussion.
2. Develop a strategy for interdisciplinary and collaborative research between and within institutions.
3. Create greater opportunities for early career researchers to develop research profiles and programs: they are the future of Israeli geography and the excellence that exists should be nurtured.
4. Invest in laboratories and computer infrastructure for physical geography, geographical information science, and Remote Sensing.
5. These measures could create the platform for a stronger international profile, greater external funding success, and a stronger national research base in geography.

Teaching recommendations, summary

1. It is universally recognized that excellence in research leads to excellence in teaching stimulating courses. Thus implementation of the research recommendations would have significant benefits for geography teaching programs in Israel.
2. The development of clear learning outcomes for all stages of all programs is essential for improved delivery and an improved reputation for geography programs.
3. Adopt contemporary models of PhD education: students demand, and deserve this, and it is essential for the development of the next generation of geography faculty.

Student recommendations, summary

1. Develop and implement immediately robust and systematic tracking systems for students and graduates. Student graduation rates and later career success are key metrics for the quality of the instructional program.
2. Consider a process for developing teaching in English, urgently at the graduate level, and potentially over time in undergraduate programs too.

Faculty recommendations, summary

1. Capitalize on excellent young appointments to sustain Israeli geography. Create environments where early career faculty can develop at the same rate as overseas geographers.
2. There are excellent, international standard, faculty in all departments. They need the appropriate environment in which to flourish and sustain the discipline.