August 15, 2007

Jacqueline Mok, Vice-Provost
512e1 Administratjon Bldg
Campus

Dear Jacqueline,

I am writing to clarify some issues that might arise in discussions surrounding our proposal to offer a BS degree in Geography alongside our current degrees, the BA degree in Geography and the BS in Regional Development.

To begin, we trust that our proposal clearly outlines the need for a BS degree in Geography. To summarize, we believe that this degree will be a cornerstone in the broader efforts to enhance the U of A's already acknowledged excellence in environmental science, particularly with respect to the human dimensions of environmental change. In addition to physical geography courses in GRD (nearly all of which have a human dimension component), our students will be able to take advantage of the U of A's other offerings in the allied environmental sciences, as well as our own expertise in geo-technologies, including courses in advanced spatial analysis, Geographical Information Systems, and remote sensing. As our proposal documents, all WICHE state institutions with geography programs offer the BS degree, and nearly all of the top-25 departments of geography in the US, including ASU, offer the BS degree. It is no exaggeration to say that the BS is the degree of choice among departments across the country, and is justified intellectually and academically in light of geography's position as an integrative environmental science that examines earth processes in their spatial context. Physical geography integrates knowledge of human dimensions with place-based study of the connections between soils, landforms, climate, vegetation, and water resources. Our undergraduates are demanding the degree concentration in physical geography because most of the employers in the environmental science arena, whether in private business or government, are looking for students with strong scientific backgrounds, as measured by the BS degree. Geographers with this degree will go on to take positions as forest managers, agricultural extension agents, weather forecasters, outdoor guides, GIS specialists, cartographers, remote sensing experts, environmental managers, park rangers, hazardous waste planners, and water resource specialists.

In offering this degree we reemphasize our commitment to the popular BA in geography (with 80 majors). This degree, which requires four semesters of language study, is the cornerstone of a broad-based liberal arts education. It best serves students interested in pursuing careers in international relations, the travel and tourism industry, social justice, landscape interpretation, environmental writing, elementary and secondary teaching, area specialties, and the like. The BA degree is appropriate for undergraduate students who wish to combine place-based studies with traditional humanities fields, including classics, English, history, the language arts, media
studies, cultural studies, area studies, gender studies, philosophy, and religious studies. These intersections are well developed in the field of "humanistic geography", and are backed by the joint initiative between the American Council of Learned Societies and the Association of American Geographers. Their "Geography and the Humanities" project puts it this way: "While the discipline of geography has traditionally embraced and contributed to the humanities, a remarkable resurgence of intellectual interplay between academic and public circles has recently emerged" (http://agw.org/humanities/index.cfm).

Finally, our BS in Regional Development is an applied, business-oriented undergraduate degree aimed at training the next generation of Arizona's land managers, regional economic specialists, population growth experts, transportation/logistics planners, retail location experts, real estate professionals, urban planners, and public and private development professionals. This extremely popular degree program (over 300 majors) is designed to give students not only substantive and technological knowledge in economic development and land management, but also to instill in them the responsibility to use their knowledge toward achieving environmentally safe and sustainable communities.

With over five faculty members claiming expertise in each of the degree areas described above, GRD is well positioned to offer this complete suite of undergraduate degrees. We appreciate your support as our proposal moves forward.

Sincerely,

John Paul Jones III
Professor and Head