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7 **RESOLUTION ON GEOGRAPHY MAJOR**
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10 **WHEREAS**, the Provost recently proposed discontinuing the B.S. degree in Geography, along
11 with other degrees, minors and certificates that are offered by the Geography Department; and
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13 **WHEREAS**, Faculty Senate’s Academic Planning Committee (APC) recently reviewed the proposal
14 (as attached) and, while concurring with most of the proposal, recommends retention of a B.S. in
15 Geography for the following reasons:
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- 18 • 40 students are currently enrolled in Geography’s B.S. program, which exceeds currently defined
19 UW standard for ‘low enrollment’;
 - 20 • APC finds that the Geography B.S. degree and the Environmental System Science (ESS) degree
21 are not duplicative and that, despite any overlap, the Geography degree serves an important
22 and distinct purpose;
 - 23 • Reliance on an Environmental System Science B.S. degree alone runs counter to UW’s Strategic
24 Plan to facilitate transfer from community colleges and to improve UW’s graduation rates;
 - 25 • Eliminating Geography’s B.S. degree is unlikely to result in any meaningful savings, given the
26 intention to retain current Geography faculty and a minor in Geography;
 - 27 • Geography faculty will be relocated to the Department of Geology and Geophysics, WYGISC, and
28 the School of Politics, Public Affairs & International Studies, resulting in substantial synergy
29 without a need for additional resources; therefore

30 **BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, Faculty Senate supports the conclusions reached by the APC and
31 requests Academic Affairs to retain the B.S. degree in Geography with the understanding that this
32 degree track will be revised and updated.
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AUTHENTICATION: *The foregoing Faculty Senate Resolution 353, duly adopted by the Faculty Senate of the University of Wyoming under date of February 11, 2019, is hereby transmitted to the President of the University of Wyoming for review in accordance with UW Regulations.*



Clifford J. Marks
Secretary of the Faculty Senate

The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate charged the Academic Planning Committee with reviewing the Provost's proposal to eliminate Geography programs and to make a recommendation about the proposal. The co-chairs of the APC have conducted interviews with potentially interested administrators and faculty to solicit feedback on the proposal. Based on the feedback we received, we suggest the following course of action.

We concur with certain recommendations contained in the Provost's proposal. We approve eliminating the Geography BA, the concurrent College of Education Social Studies Education degree, the current Geographic Information Science certificate, the Geographic Information Sciences minor, the planning minor, and the MST in Geography. At present, each of these programs has a sustained record of low student enrollment and currently there is insufficient faculty capacity to deliver them. The geographic information science certificate and/or minor may have potential as part of the proposal for a Geospatial Information Science and Technology Program, but they have not succeeded in their current form.

In contrast, we recommend retaining the BS in Geography. UW Regulation 2-13 stipulates a policy of continuing established academic programs. The Geography program has been in existence for over a half century. Accordingly, the Regulation only justifies program elimination if a specifically enumerated reason is met, including low student enrollment or low academic quality. At the time the B.S. program was suspended, there were 40 students enrolled, which far exceeds the standard for defining low enrollment (Types of Program Review, AA website). Neither is there any assertion of low academic quality.

A program may also be eliminated based on program duplication. The Provost's proposal suggests that overlap between the Environmental System Science (ESS) degree and the Geography BS justifies elimination. We do not agree. It is possible to complete the requirements for the ESS degree without taking a single geography course. Moreover, the ESS major requires rigorous math and science courses, such as calculus, for which many UW undergraduates are unprepared or disinclined to take. Additionally, the ESS degree requires substantially more credit hours than the Geography BS (68 versus 40). Relying solely on the ESS degree potentially poses a significant impediment for achieving the UW Strategic Plan goals of facilitating transfer from community colleges and improving graduation rates. We think that these considerations clearly indicate that these degree programs are neither comparable nor duplicative.

In our opinion, the only program elimination criterion even arguably met for eliminating the Geography BS is a change in priorities or direction by the University. However, given the totality of circumstances, it is difficult to conceive how the elimination of the Geography BS serves the interests of UW. As noted earlier, the Strategic Plan calls for facilitating successful student transfers and improving graduation rates, goals that are incommensurate with eliminating the Geography BS. Moreover, since the current Geography faculty and the Geography minor are being retained, it is difficult to envision any meaningful cost savings that could be achieved through elimination of the B.S. degree. While we understand that geospatial science may be a more promising growth area, retaining the Geography BS should not trade off with the proposed Geospatial Information Science and Technology Program.

The Provost's proposal calls for re-homing the Geography faculty to other departments. Having spoken with the Heads of the units involved, we have learned that faculty are likely to be located in Geology and Geophysics, WYGISC, and SPPAIS. We understand that there is a substantial synergy to be achieved

through a collaboration of these units in the development of a revised Geography B.S. major without requiring additional resources. Collectively, these units will have the faculty resources to cover required major and minor courses in human and physical geography. Moreover, Dr. Eggleston has indicated his willingness to house the program in Geology and Geophysics and that there are existing faculty in Geology who could serve as director of the Geography program. Dr. Anderson and Dr. Hamerlinck have likewise indicated that their faculty can contribute to delivering the revised B.S. program.

These recommendations were unanimously approved by the member of the Academic Planning Committee.