Dr. Fred Hartmeister, Dean  
The Graduate School  
Texas Tech University

Dear Dean Hartmeister:

On May 7, the administrative assessment of the 2010 Graduate Program review was held in the Provost’s Conference Room. At that meeting, the review committee summarized their activities and written report, and a number of administrators contributed comments and insights into the graduate program in Geosciences.

What follows is the Geosciences response to the report and the outcome of the assessment meeting, along with action items, both short and long term.

To begin with, there are a few addenda and corrections that I believe should be made to the written report of the committee.

1. On page 1, the report indicates that Geosciences has nineteen tenured faculty members. This should be corrected to indicate nineteen tenured and tenure-track faculty members.

2. On page 2, Geosciences is referred to as being ‘conveniently split’ between geology (s.l.) and atmospheric sciences. I suggest that the physical separation of the two groups is highly inconvenient, for reasons of scientific advancement, enhanced collegiality, and ease of administration.

3. In at least two places, there was an indication that faculty are required to teach 2 + 2 courses in the long semesters, and in an appendix it is incorrectly stated that I informed the committee otherwise. Although the 2 + 2 teaching load is a formal State mandate to reach the nominal 9-hour load, there are lots of exceptions in Geosciences. For example, faculty members receive credit for advising, new course development, significant research funding, and significant administrative duties, among others. It is my goal to find ways to bring the teaching loads of research-active faculty to 2 + 1. However, our loads are determined by student demand, and our increased enrollments provide less flexibility of assigning teaching loads than is desirable.

4. In Appendix 4, pages 14–15, one of the strongest research and teaching components of the solid-earth geology program is omitted, that is petrology/structure/tectonics. This discipline is among the most productive in the Department in publications and grantsmanship over many years, and enhances/interacts significantly with the geochemistry specialization.
5. For some reason, a significant part of the report dealt with the undergraduate program (geology and geophysics specializations). In particular, two of the recommendations were to (1) eliminate the undergraduate research requirement, and (2) ‘more effectively prepare’ undergraduate students for graduate work. With all due respect to the author of this section, these two recommendations are at odds with each other. I can think of no better preparation for graduate school than undergraduate research. When polled, the Geosciences faculty were in total agreement with this statement. We will continue to require undergraduate research as part of the program.

Action items for the short term (one year).

1. Address the number and sequence of course requirements for the MS degree in ATMO.
2. Develop a formal process for coordination of the Geosciences Ph.D. among ATMO, Geology/Geophysics, and Geography (to join the Department in September, 2010).
3. Continue to provide desktop computers in grad student offices. Explore the feasibility of wired internet access. Request TTU to provide adequate wireless access.
4. Formalize the graduate advising process in ATMO.
5. Continue strenuous efforts at graduate recruitment, including at designated minority schools.

Action items for the long term (one to five years).

6. Revise the Strategic Plan for all Geosciences components to conform to the new TTU Strategic Plan, with specific focus on strategic hiring, graduate student recruitment and retention.
7. Continue to work toward acquisition of analytical equipment and laboratory improvements.
8. Explore the implications and needs for earth science education in light of new Texas education requirements (e.g., education at the graduate level for Earth Science teachers).

Respectfully submitted,

Calvin G. Barnes
Professor and Chair