**18 Month Status Report (based on the Implementation and Work Plans)**

**External Program Review- Step # 11**

**Department/Program: Dept. of Geography and Geology**

**Responsibility:** Department Chair

**Date Submitted: January 29, 2018**

Programs offered at Algoma University are reviewed cyclical basis as part of the IQAP process. It is a 14 step process beginning with the program self-study undertaken by the department and ends with the circulation and posting of this document on the Algoma University website. The 18 month status report is the ***public record*** of the department’s response to the steps undertaken to implement the recommendations of the Final Assessment Report; it is step # 11 in the 14 step process. Once the report is complete, the department submits it to the Dean, who in turn submits to AppCom for review. AppCom then forwards the report to Senate for consideration, discussion and approval of recommendations. AppCom then forwards the status report through the office of the VPAR to the Board of Governors for information. ***The office of the VPAR posts the report on AU website***.

*Responses should be clear and concise. Please limit responses to the space provided.*

*For additional information on the IQAP process, visit* [*http://www.algomau.ca/media/IQAP.pdf*](http://www.algomau.ca/media/IQAP.pdf)*.*

**Recommendation # 1**

Department member responsible for leading follow-up: Chair

Completion by department? Yes No **Ongoing**

Recommendation (cut and paste from FAR)

Undertake a geography-program-specific recruitment exercise, including on social media and including Southern Ontario, to market the unique opportunities Algoma has to offer to students interested in the study of geography and the environment.

**The Department of Geography and Geology (the Department) has ongoing plans for student recruitment and retention, albeit unofficially. Algoma University now has official student recruitment policy which is managed by a Director and a recruitment outfit. Student recruitment, for that matter, is centralized. In the past, the Department could initiate its own recruitment efforts, such as school visits, seeking and honouring invitation for class presentations, and informal meetings with high school geography instructors, and even guidance counsellors, several of who are AlgomaU graduates. In retrospect, our past efforts would run counter to plans of the central recruiting office of today. We do still have contacts and connections for informal outreach with teachers and high school students. We are seeking greater cooperation and assistance from the central recruitment office to enhance success.**

**Prior to 2013 for example, faculty representation from different departments, including Geography/Geology, formed part of Algoma’s delegation to the annual Ontario Universities Fair (OUF) in Toronto. The presence of programme-specific expertise helped to address questions and inquiries from prospective students and guardians, on the spot. Follow-up inquiries were directed to departments. This has not been the case in recent years. The OUF event is little publicized on campus now. The OUF provides the single most important opportunity for direct contact with prospective high school students in the densely populated Southern Ontario region. Past post-OUF bus rides to Algoma University by prospective students and guardians yielded fair return in student registration—this was noticeably important in the pre-Saudi student-bump years. Our location and relatively small student numbers make every initiative, such as attending the OUF, disproportionately expensive in budgetary terms. We need to work out flexible options to seek balance between cost and effective representation to reach potential students.**

**The Department will continue to meet with the Office of Enrolment Management and International recruitment to discuss relevant marketing strategies. The Department is working with various academic and administrative units of the university to enhance enrolment. The Department is actively engaged with the student recruitment unit for targeted recruitment tools for Geography. The Department is working on strategies for school visits. The Department is also exploring possible ways to engage High School students with activities of the Geography Awareness Week for example, and annual competition of Geographic literacy, with reward, such as certificates of merit, and token prizes in cash and educational materials. The Department has been part of Grade 11 Days in recent years as well as the National Aboriginal Science Camp. Currently, we are helping to plan an Anishinaabe focused 3-day Science Camp for grades 7-12 from Sault Ste. Marie and the North Shore Tribal Council area.**

**Further, the Department plans Geography/Geology offerings at Brampton. The Department has already designed a roster for Brampton to cover the first year of an initiative which also includes other departments in the Social Sciences and the Humanities of Algoma University. The course roster will be expanded with each additional year of operation. Most of the courses will be delivered simultaneously at the Sault Ste. Marie and Brampton campuses. Flexibility in the initiative would allow some selected geography courses, among the block of courses, to target the Brampton student-catchment region and consequently to recruit Geography majors. The preliminary roster is with the Office of the Academic Dean.**

**In the meantime, the Department is enhancing opportunities for increased accessibility to students, both current and prospective, and for the public. The Department is revamping its website to enhance general and specific Information on the programme. More information will be added: course-map, degree-level outcomes, in-programme resources and opportunities (e.g., equipment, scholarship, job opportunities), student experience, sample student projects, sample student portfolio and infographics, and general educational attractions in the Sault Ste. Marie region of Northern Ontario. Programme and course-specific Facebook, email bulletins, and student engagement, are among plans to improve programme visibility. The Department will further increase the visibility of the programme by attending events at a variety of levels (e.g., Open House, Science Carnival, GIS Day).**

Outstanding Items / Actions pertaining to Recommendation and Next Steps

**Recommendation # 2**

Department member responsible for leading follow-up: Chair and faculty

Completion by department? Yes No **Ongoing**

Recommendation (cut and paste from FAR)

Review the structure of the program and identify opportunities for simplification and streamlining to give students more flexibility in course selection and to ease delivery given the small number of faculty. In particular, reduce the requirements related to the three groups of courses.

Outstanding Items / Actions pertaining to Recommendation and Next Steps

**The two-pronged goals of the Department are to respond to the academic needs of current students and to attract new students. Our well-qualified and dedicated faculty is endlessly striving for academic and teaching excellence, student- responsiveness, community service, and advancing the discipline of geography. The Department has worked on this recommendation by PEQAB, and has accordingly revised the programme structure into the three main areas of Physical/Environmental, Human, and Techniques. Courses under the ‘old’ *Regional* and *Human-Environment*, have been realigned, as appropriately as possible, to fit under the Physical/Environmental, Human, and Techniques streams. The old structure was a carry-over from Laurentian University. They have had to do their own revisions to fit the provincial norm. This revision, hopefully, will afford students more flexibility in course selection and will ease delivery given the small number of faculty.**

**In the meantime, several curriculum changes will happen:**

* **The Department will add new courses to strength environmental contents. Accordingly, a couple of courses with historically low enrollment will be banked**
* **The Department will re-name GEOG 2016 Cartography to Digital Earth to make the course appeal to a more general audience.**
* **The Department will merge GEOG 2026 and GEOG 2027 into one mandatory statistics course.**
* **The Department will revise GEOG 3046 Methods in Geography (rename it as Approaches to Research and Applied Inquiries in Geography) and make it mandatory for all students. This course will guide students through general steps of conducting a research or applied project. In addition, students will work on a portfolio of their course work and an Infographic that will be designed to be posted on our website.**

**Our revisions will reach Senate through the appropriate committees and process steps this term.**

**These initiatives are already in progress.**

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**Recommendation # 3**

Department member responsible for leading follow-up: Chair and faculty

Completion by department? Yes No **Ongoing**

Recommendation (cut and paste from FAR)

Promote, nurture, and support greater communication and dialogue among faculty members and administration to move forward as a team with clear plans to achieve long-term aspirations.

**The department recognizes the importance of communication and dialogue among faculty on one hand, and with administration on the other. The Department plans to have regular monthly departmental meetings. The Department will meet to discuss division of responsibilities so that every member contributes the development of the programme.**

**The Department will arrange need-based meetings with the administration. For example, the Department met with recruiters on August 29, 2017 and provided them relevant information about the programme (uniqueness of the programme, student success stories, etc.).**

**The Department plans to work with the Administration to upgrade the Geography Lab. A preliminary meeting was held on October 11, 2017. The Department believes that the Lab should have space for computer workstations for geomatics analysis, space for equipment, display space for our valuable mineral collection, a specialized map table, and secure storage for equipment and materials.**

**It is hopeful that commitment to inform the Department of significant deliberations (that affect the department) would not be selective and, that, lines of communication that respect all sides (administration and faculty)) will be followed. Inclusion, recognition, and motivation are important variables for managing change and for evolving innovative ideas. Our faculty will always seek best ways to inform and deliberate in an atmosphere of respect, and free of harassment.**

Outstanding Items / Actions pertaining to Recommendation and Next Steps

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**Recommendation # 4**

Department member responsible for leading follow-up: Chair

Completion by department? Yes No **Ongoing**

Recommendation (cut and paste from FAR)

Increase departmental engagement with Aboriginal groups and initiatives, and include greater Aboriginal content in existing courses, in order to enhance the attractiveness of the program to a wider student audience and to contribute to the larger Algoma mission. Consider tailoring more courses towards the study of issues such as Aboriginal land management and traditional environmental knowledge.

Outstanding Items / Actions pertaining to Recommendation and Next Steps

**The discipline of geography has strong emphasis on relationships between places and peoples in both time and place. The discipline strongly recognizes uniqueness of place. We exploit advantages of our spaces and, at the same time, find ways to link with other places and peoples to share advantages and learn of ways to resolve challenges. Societies borrow and share new ways and ideas to manage disadvantages build for positive change, including sustainable economies and environments. Our partnership with the First Peoples (Anishinabek) ought to be based on mutual respect and cooperation—we sail on our respective boats on that sacred river but we must look out for a boat in trouble because we wish to reach our destination safely and together. We wish to learn the ways of our partners, and work these ways into our thought processes, course design, course content, course delivery, and all aspects of campus organization. Many courses in geography are developed to respect the ways of other peoples and places, especially in our own home region of Northern Ontario. We are committed to the needs of our First Peoples, and more importantly, our students of aboriginal heritage. Even as we follow our curricular, we will seek ways, to bridge aboriginal (Anishinabek) and non-aboriginal (non-Anishinabek) interests and aspirations.**

**In partnership with the Anishinabek Initiatives Division, we held the Go Akiiminaan Ganawendandaan (Taking Care of Our Land) Research Symposia in 2015 and 2017. The Symposia have attracted scholars, land management practitioners, and community members from across Canada. Following this year’s symposium, we have established linkages with the National Aboriginal Land Managers Association (NALMA). We have held a series of meetings with NALMA to discuss an educational partnership to assist in delivering their land management certification. On August 3, 2017, we hosted a successful full day site visit by a representative from NALMA, accompanied by a representative from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). Currently, we are beginning the process of developing a curriculum plan for a land management certificate and have assembled an external advisory circle to guide the process. Specifically, GIS and remote sensing will be a critical piece of the land management Certificate. We recently held a follow up meeting internally with our campus partners to consolidate our plans for Algoma University to be selected as a host campus to deliver Level I of the Land Management Certificate. We hope that NALMA will select or campus to represent the Ontario region to complement the original programme at the University of Saskatchewan.**

**A major interest in Aboriginal programming at Algoma University was demonstrated on Friday, January 28, 2018, during the event of the Aboriginal Research Symposium. The lineup for participation was endless. We hope to help harness the energy and enthusiasm of our aboriginal partners to create cross-cultural advantages to benefit Algoma university and our community partners. Our next Taking Care of Our Land Symposium is scheduled for May, 2019, and planning is already in progress.**

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**Recommendation # 5**

Department member responsible for leading follow-up:

Completion by department? Yes No Ongoing

Recommendation (cut and paste from FAR)

Expand the number of variety of college-to-university and other non-traditional pathways to the Geography program, including potential consideration of pathways with Michigan institutions.

Outstanding Items / Actions pertaining to Recommendation and Next Steps

**The Department has articulation agreements with Sault College, Fleming College and Lambton College in Ontario. We work closely with our Registrar’s office on articulation initiatives. Coordinated by the registrar’s office, we are working on other articulation agreements with selected community colleges.**

**Most of our majors have been college transfers (and university transfers). We still receive excellent students from the aviation programme, forest technician, fish and wildlife, and the recreation and tourism programmes at Sault College. Our geography graduates boosted the Geomatics programme at Sault College in its formative years. We envisaged a partnership for sharing resources and students. We helped with curriculum development, course content, and recruitment of instructors. We realized, with time, that the geomatics programme was not comprehensive and did not fit well with our 3-credit course format. Benchmarks and outcomes of their programme did not match those of a geography undergraduate degree. They were not inclined to share resources fairly. We stepped in and set up a geomatics programme at Algoma University. We are addressing past limitations by course design, upgrades in both hardware and software, and flexible delivery methods. Our goal is to make our Geomatics programme more competitive.**

**Geography is part of the proposed Brampton initiative. The Department was among the first to declare strong interests. We have our roster of courses with the interim coordinator. We are ready to participate as soon the initiative is officially sanctioned by the administration. We are amenable to flexible modes of delivery—classroom, online, video etc. We have past experience from the defunct St. Thomas project, regarding course delivery formats.**

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**Recommendation # 6**

Department member responsible for leading follow-up: Chair

Completion by department? Yes No Ongoing

Recommendation (cut and paste from FAR)

Build on the academic strengths of the department and the locational assets of the university by reorienting courses and the program more generally in terms of ‘environment’. In doing so, respond to student preference (seen throughout Ontario) for Environmental Studies over Geography. If the program shift is significant, consider renaming the department.

Outstanding Items / Actions pertaining to Recommendation and Next Steps

**The Department plans to increase the environmental component in the curriculum by adding relevant courses to boost existing ones. We are hopeful that an Environmental Studies stream of the programme will be developed to attract more students, especially, from the non-hard sciences. This is the practice across Ontario. The environment is an all-inclusive concept and not a disciplinary preserve.**

**Geography is a founding partner with Biology, for the new Environmental Science degree programme. Courses from Geography and Geology were part of the slate of course for the programme framework that was approved by PEQAB. As a new programme, we are still working on how best to deliver courses, course sequence and rotation, and programme administration. Our Department is hopeful that this new programme will boost enrolment for the respective departments, and for the university as a whole.**

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**Recommendation # 7**

Department member responsible for leading follow-up: chair

Completion by department? Yes No Ongoing

Recommendation (cut and paste from FAR)

Establish wider and more formalized collaborations between the Geography Department and other academic units, as well as with relevant organizations outside the university, such as First Nations organizations and government research institutes, in order to maintain a broad and engaging curriculum. Take advantage of NORDIK to assist in developing research opportunities for students.

Outstanding Items / Actions pertaining to Recommendation and Next Steps

**Geography is a founding member of the Community Economic and Social Development (CESD) programme, with Business and Social Welfare. We have integral courses for the CESD programme. We share students and have served as placement supervisors for several CESD students, and work together on the People’s Garden We continue to strengthen our partnership for academic excellence, and for enrolment growth. The Department is working to strengthen its association with CESD, and above all, cement its collaborative engagement with Biology for the new Environmental Science programme. A joint programme meeting was held on January 11, 2018 to collaboratively discuss Environmental Stewardship Certificate.**

**Our partnership with Biology in the Environmental Science programme will be a source for more students to grow both Biology and Geography. We have motivation to help this new programme succeed.**

**We share connections, in some ways, with the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. Computing and math skills are required for some of our geography courses. At the same time, we attract students from Mathematics and Computer into our programme, for electives, minor, and certificate options. We are working to strengthen these connections.**

**Our faculty members participate actively in programmes of the NORDIK; research applications, direct research initiatives, conferences, and campus experiential work. We wish to build our presence in the NORDIK to benefit our profile, help the Institute to grow, and open avenues for student recruitment.**

**The proposed Aboriginal Land Management initiative will be one of the strongest and direct areas of cooperation with the Anishinabek. The programme is designed with Anishinabek interests, and they are helping to guide the overall format of course design, philosophy, and course delivery methods. This new initiative boosts our mandate for aboriginal education, which is so central to our independent charter. It is a sure way to honour Chief Shingwauk’s dream for the land on which Algoma University currently sits.**

**The Department is revising the curriculum to make sure our students have strong critical thinking, communication and analytical skills so that they are ready for future jobs. One graduate was hired by NORDIK as an intern between 2013 and 2014. A few students were hired by Ontario Forestry Research Centre (OFRI), Great Lakes Forestry Centre (GLFC) and Ministry of Natural Resource as summer students in the past few years. The Department plans to further involve students in research projects in a variety of agencies in town (e.g., NORDIK, OFRI, GLFC) in the form of Senior Thesis and Geography Practicum.**

**Our faculty work closely with several organizations, governmental and non-governmental. This closeness has facilitated student research contacts, donation of academic resource, study tours, and source of recruitment for sessional instructors and expert speakers. Many community members serve on the Geography Advisory Committee. Members of our departments have served or still serve on several City of Sault Ste. Marie committees as volunteers—ranging from the environment to social services. We gain from such connections and we will continue to enhance our dynamic links with our city and surrounding communities.**

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