

MEMORANDUM

September 23, 1986

TO: Steve Trombulak

FROM: Bob Churchill *BC*

RE: Environmental Studies

Many thanks for sharing your ideas and the draft of the curriculum proposal. I am most willing to help in any way I can, including as an advisor for students interested in the geography focus. I offer the following reactions to and thoughts on your proposal for what they are worth.

In my estimation the major problems with the program historically have been: 1) lack of clear, progressive leadership; 2) lack of program identity, both among students and faculty; and 3) lack of substantive commitment from the College. These problems are so integrally related that it is impossible to ascribe relative levels of importance. The two problems you identify in your memo I believe to be more perceptual than real (which, of course, makes them real). In particular, there are undoubtedly students who major in the program because it appears easy, but the majority of people I have worked with can be typed more by their particular interests and passions than by lack of enthusiasm for hard work. Some of the very best students I have known, in fact, have been environmental studies majors, which is the primary reason I continue to be committed to the idea of a program. I believe that the academic focus and substance of the program and whether it is wedded to biology or Chinese, at this point, are less important considerations than convincing interested students that there is a quality program.

I think your proposal is generally excellent, and I have only a couple concerns -- or more accurately, concerns that I suspect may arise among members of the faculty. First, the existing curriculum has been in place less than two years, and in this environment of rampant conservatism, you will undoubtedly be forced to explain another new structure. Second, and while I agree completely with your reasoning, a 20-course major may require a compelling defense.

The only substantive element of the proposal that concerns me

is the lack of an inferential statistics course. I also might suggest a couple minor changes in the geography courses at some point, as the proposal progresses. Physical Earth Processes (GG250), which is listed under the Social Science and Humanities focus, is really a physical science course. Similarly, the distinction between 200- and 300-level courses in our department is one between substantive electives versus techniques and methods respectively.

In the event you find my comments and reactions here sketchy or incomplete, I would be happy to discuss them with you in greater detail; and please do not hesitate to be in touch any time that I can help in any way.