

UNIVERSITY *of* MISSOURI

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NATURAL RESOURCES

OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR AND DEAN

February 12, 2016

Ms. Rebecca Landewe, Chair
Missouri Forest Resources Advisory Council
1607 S. Oaks
Wardsville, MO 65101

Dear Rebecca:

Thank you for talking with us and sending letters about the importance of forestry education within the School of Natural Resources (SNR) at the University of Missouri (MU). We appreciate your interest in our programs and students. The additional background you provided about the Missouri Forest Resources Advisory Council (MoFRAC) was helpful and provided useful context for your concerns and suggestions. Below we discuss the current status of our Forestry program, including our thoughts about accreditation, and our future vision for Forestry education at MU.

As you noted, SNR and Forestry education at MU face substantial challenges, but these concerns are not unique to us. National trends in student enrollment in Forestry programs (i.e., B.S. in Forestry, BSF) have been in decline and are reflected in our student numbers. Within SNR, forestry students account for about 8% of undergraduate enrollment. Currently, 64 students are seeking a BSF with 21 of them enrolled in dual degree programs. MU has graduated an average of 16 students with a BSF per year over the past 5 years. Likewise, the number of MU forestry faculty with an undergraduate teaching appointment has contracted over the years. Currently, there are 7 tenure-track faculty in Forestry with 5 maintaining an undergraduate teaching appointment. Forestry faculty constitute 35% of tenure-track faculty within the SNR. We provide these numbers for context of our situation in SNR. Other programs within SNR (e.g., Parks, Recreation, and Tourism) have the opposite situation with many students and few tenure-track faculty. These factors and other considerations, including reduced budgets, competing needs in SNR and the College as a whole, are part of any decision about opening a new faculty position.

Much of your letter was about accreditation of the MU BSF degree and the importance of maintaining accreditation. Since 1950, the MU undergraduate forestry curriculum has been accredited by the Society of American Foresters (SAF). We are proud of that history. Currently, SAF offers three accreditation standards: (I) General Forestry Accreditation; (II)



Specialized Accreditation in Urban Forestry; and (III) Accreditation in Natural Resources and Ecosystem Management (NREM). Presently, only the Forest Resource Management curriculum at MU is accredited by SAF under its General Forestry Standard. The MU curriculum will be reviewed in 2016 for accreditation renewal in 2017. A key factor in accreditation is the number of full-time faculty engaged in Forestry undergraduate education. SAF requires a minimum of 8 full-time faculty members responsible for delivery of the curriculum. Given current faculty numbers, the MU Department of Forestry would no longer meet SAF requirements, which jeopardizes our ability to deliver an SAF-accredited curriculum. However, we understand the importance of accreditation to our forestry students and have been working diligently to address this issue.

Given a heightened research emphasis at MU, faculty departures and challenges with delivering undergraduate curricula, and long-term fiscal constraints, SNR has initiated a strategic planning process to strengthen the long-term viability, efficiency, and effectiveness of our research, teaching, and extension programs. SNR faculty overwhelmingly approved restructuring of the School to focus on three areas of strength, namely: Environment and Society, Terrestrial Ecosystems, and Water Resources. Within this context, we will streamline our undergraduate curricula by integrating common 'core' course requirements across the SNR, while maintaining discipline-specific courses to maintain the standards of our programs (e.g., Forestry). SNR restructuring will allow MU to immediately meet the faculty member standard set forth by SAF by including faculty contributing to the forestry curriculum from across the SNR. Further, it offers the potential for accreditation of the NREM track, which is similar to the popular dual degree in Forestry and Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences (i.e., 18 students are currently enrolled in this dual degree program).

Given restructuring of SNR programs that will occur soon, we have been considering three options for accreditation including: (1) maintain General Forestry Accreditation of the Forest Resource Management emphasis area; (2) seek NREM accreditation; and (3) both. Faculty and administrators within SNR leadership are proactively engaging students, alumni, administrators, employers, and other stakeholders in exploring the viability of all three options in preparation for the 2017 SAF program review and renewal. We understand your preference for the General Forestry Accreditation and we are working to better understand the feasibility of all options. We are optimistic we can maintain an accredited Forestry program at MU and will continue to work in this direction.

Last, you offered assistance in helping us fulfill teaching needs on an interim basis. Thank you for offering to help. As we move ahead with restructuring, we will stay in contact should the need arise. We are currently revisiting teaching appointments and course offerings in light of accreditation and intend to work on that in the upcoming months. Josh would welcome a chance to participate in a MoFRAC meeting, or host another meeting on campus, so please reach out to him.

Again, thank you for your letter and suggestions you made. We are appreciative of the strong interest and support our programs receive from groups like MoFRAC. Please feel free to contact either one of us with questions.

Best regards,



Joshua J. Millspaugh
Interim Director
School of Natural Resources



Thomas L. Payne
Vice Chancellor and Dean
College of Agriculture, Food and
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