



UAW Local 4121

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Dear College of the Environment Dean Search Committee and Dean's Office,

As members of the College of the Environment community we, the undersigned, would like to voice our input on top-priority and urgent action items for the new Dean. This summer brought about an increased energy and attention across the College to address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), harassment, and discrimination. Individual units within the College have begun to address these dynamics but have run into structural and institutional barriers (i.e. lack of funding to address issues, transparency about guidelines, etc.). The Dean's office is well placed to enact a strategic plan to unite and streamline unit efforts, provide guidelines to remove institutional barriers, and enact change. The leadership of the new Dean will be crucial to ensuring movement on these fronts.

In this letter, we lean on previously published reports to outline key issues that College leadership and the new Dean need to prioritize to foster a thriving community. In 2018, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) found academia to be second only to the U.S. military in rates of harassment, due to hierarchical structures, power dynamics, gender bias and discrimination, and bullying, among other factors. In 2020, Clancy et al. discussed problems with current campaigns and programs established after the 2018 NASEM report and laid out additional structural and institutional changes needed at the departmental, Dean's office, and institutional levels to further address harassment and discrimination concerns across academia. Below we define how these issues can be addressed in the College of the Environment through leadership from the top.

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The historical lack of coordinated effort towards DEI initiatives in the College result directly from the lack of a strategic plan. The dire need for this strategic plan was recognized by Dean Lisa Graumlich in June 2015, with a promise to "dedicate College resources to building a stronger strategic plan for diversity that reflects who we are as a college" within the year. It is apparent that adequate College resources were not devoted to this effort as we approach nearly six years later with the College still in initial phases of developing this plan. While we recognize the work of the many dedicated staff and students serving on the College DEI committee, progress will lag as long as we rely on volunteer efforts of already stressed, overworked, and undercompensated staff, students, and faculty, many of whom also devote their time to unit-level DEI committees. In combination with structural and leadership challenges from within the Dean's office, this has led to a culture within the Committee that numerous former members have found toxic.

Additionally, the College Diversity Specialist position has been vacant for 3 months with no communication from the Dean's office as to when that position will be filled. Furthermore, despite coming forth with solid, evidence-based recommendations for college level actions that would improve culture, much of the work of this committee has been sidelined in the past. We would like to see the Dean make a real commitment to acting on the recommendations of this

committee, drawing as it does from representation across all units in the college. To begin to address some of these issues, the College needs to expand the DEI office so that it is a robust, well-funded, well-staffed, and empowered group that adequately supports and actively engages with the units, in addition to leading college-level work.

2. Protection of Community Members against Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying

Power dynamics are an inescapable part of hierarchical systems like academia, and can easily serve as the breeding ground for harassment, discrimination and bullying. In the College, power imbalances are exacerbated by opaque hierarchical structures that make navigating the system difficult, particularly by those at the bottom of the structure. This lack of clarity fosters an environment in which bad actors behave with impunity while those being harmed cannot find resolution. The Dean's office needs to invest time and resources into learning how power dynamics play out in the units of the College, in order to change the culture so that this behavior is no longer accepted. Further, existing avenues for reporting have proven to be ineffective and repeat offenders appear to face no consequences. A high priority of the Dean's office must be to respond to instances of harm with serious action and to act preemptively to prevent such situations in the first place.

3. Transparency and Communication

Instituting the above two points only works if there is transparency in how the College and units operate and clear communication between the College and its community members. The listening sessions held over the summer were demonstrative of the vast disconnect between the College community and the Dean's office. As things stand, it is extremely difficult for most members of our community to learn how important decisions, such as allocating funds, are made and how we can collectively express our priorities for such decisions. The lack of communication particularly impacts new members of our community, and presents a significant barrier to diversifying the College. It is critical that the Dean's office open channels for feedback and concerns, especially for students, trainees, and early career faculty, and that they provide tangible evidence for fielding and responding to that input.

We, the undersigned, ask that:

1. This letter be distributed to all of the finalist candidates for Dean; and
2. An open meeting on these topics is held by the new Dean's office within the first three months of its formation as a first step towards enacting substantive change.

Thank you for your consideration.

Resources included in this letter

NASEM 2018 Report: <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/sexual-harassment-in-academia>

PNAS 2020 article (Clancy et al. 2020): <https://www.pnas.org/content/117/37/22614>

Sincerely,

UAW 4121 College of Environment Anti-Discrimination Working Group, on behalf of undergraduates, graduates, postdocs, staff, and faculty in the College of the Environment
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- Atmospheric Sciences Grad Students, Atmospheric Sciences
- Graduate & Professional Student Senate, School of Environment and Forestry Science and Program on Climate Change
- Diversity Forum, School of Marine and Environmental Affairs
- ALNA S.A, School of Aquatic Fisheries Science
- UW College of the Environment Student Advisory Council, Atmospheric Sciences, School of Aquatic and Fisheries Science, Earth and Space Science, School of Environment and Forestry Science, Marine Biology, School of Marine and Environmental Affairs, School of Oceanography, Program on the Environment and Quantitative Ecology & Resource Management
- The Student Advisory Council to the Dean's Office, Program on the Environment