TO:  Dr. Lynn Pardie, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
      Dr. Sharron LaFollette, Chair, Graduate Council

FROM:  Pinky S. Wassenberg, Dean  
        College of Public Affairs and Administration

DATE:  21 February 2011

RE:  ENS Proposal for Campus-Level Graduate Certificate in GIS

As Dean of the College of Public Affairs and Administration, I support the request of the Environmental Studies Department to create a 12-hour Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems. Five years ago, the College of Public Affairs and Administration launched the UIS GIS lab and hired a new faculty member in ENS to provide GIS courses as well as non-credit GIS workshops for the larger community. The creation of the lab was a significant financial investment by the college but it has provided good returns. The GIS courses we have are becoming increasingly popular among students from a range of disciplines.

In a time of economic transition, students with baccalaureate degrees in a wide range of disciplines will be more marketable with a graduate certificate attesting to their mastery of the use of this mode of analysis. As the department states, the Environmental Studies Department has the instructional resources to support the new certificate. From a dean’s perspective, this is an excellent use of existing resources by a department interested in finding additional ways to meet the needs of our students and to attract new students. The department has a well-developed online degree program and teaches many online courses so they will have no difficulty offering high quality online courses for the certificate.