Memorandum

To: Pinky Wassenberg, Dean, College of Public Affairs and Administration

From: CPA&A Curriculum Committee

Subject: ENS Program Review

Date: September 9, 2012

On September 4, 2012, the College of Public Affairs and Administration Curriculum Committee met to assess, through suggestions, the program review of the Environmental Studies Department (ENS). The CPA&A Curriculum Committee acknowledges the on-going development and growth of the ENS Department and would like to acknowledge:

- The difficulty in writing this review based on significant structural changes in this program throughout the entire review period. Considerable modifications have taken place including the shifting of one concentration and several courses to another program; approval of new degrees and concentrations in program; and growth of faculty and lower-level undergraduate course offerings. In the face of such challenges, ENS should be commended for their high-quality program review.

- The ENS program's distinction of having the highest number of environmental studies majors than any other Illinois institutions during the review period, despite having only Master's programs and existing on the smallest public campus in the state.

- The ENS faculty's high achievements and leadership in teaching, service, and research in spite of historically low numbers of tenured/tenure-track program faculty and accompanying heavy workloads during this program review period. In addition to individual accomplishments and contributions, program faculty ensured that the ENS program met previous program review recommendations to hire additional faculty and to offer a fully online degree program (three programs and one certificate by Fall 2013). ENS also moved from only one non-400/500 level course in AY 2005-6 to nine non-400/500 level courses in AY 2011-2012.

- The creation of fully online ENS programs and concentrations since Fall 2006 through today, which has contributed to the expanded global reach of UIS with students and professionals across the world. Online offerings have also led to a growth in credit hours generated, as well as more undergraduate
general education/ECCE course offerings from this program. This is supportive of UIS’ online education initiatives.

- The significant increase in student degree completion with the implementation of the Capstone Closure option beginning in the Fall 2010 semester. Students completing the ENS program have earned positions in state agencies, non-profit organizations, academic, and private companies across the state, nation, and internationally. Alumni and current students are kept engaged with the program through separate listserv notices for online and on-campus students.

As far as recommendations for the future, the CPA&A Curriculum Committee would like to see:

- Continued work on the development and implementation of a new ENS assessment strategy to evaluate students’ learning regardless of the closure option chosen for their degree. The current challenges with assessment are understandable based on the tremendous overhaul of the department in faculty turnover/hires and curricular and program changes during the review period. Now that the program has stabilized in these areas, this committee recommends proceeding with this necessary deliberation of effective program assessment.

- Careful reflection and discussion on the viability of all of the curricular paths offered by the department, given current and future resources. The program review notes that the faculty is stretched thin. As a result, the department should consider reducing the number of concentrations to alleviate this problem and allow the department to focus on its curricular strengths.