February 2012 Geology Advisory Board Recommendations

Recommendations:

1) Board would like to be involved in annual newsletter (positive department highlights from board’s perspective). Taylor will work with Evans and Liddell.

2) Faculty should encourage and praise Geology Club energy. Assist club in the sale of USU geology logo gear in newsletter and online.

3) Ensure that faculty champion for Geology Club has availability to be active in the Club meetings and extracurricular functions. Without consistent faculty support and guidance, club is in jeopardy of losing positive momentum.

4) Add undergrad rep (Geology Club President) to faculty meetings so they too have a voice.

5) More frequent website updates, allowing grad students to be listed with links to personal research pages.

6) Assign each faculty member to a specific industry or agency. Goals include:
   a. Serving as point contact for external inquiries
   b. Guiding department on curriculum necessary for career preparedness
   c. Advising students on career paths and opportunities
   d. Establish and foster strong relationships with external employers (similar to Jim Evans with O&G Industry)

7) Change career forum format for 2013 meeting.
   a. 3:30-4:00pm—Board introductions in Geology 105
   b. 4:00-5:30pm—Industry specific breakout sessions in several rooms. Allow students to switch rooms every 30 minutes.
   c. 6:00pm—Pizza and beverages at The Factory
   d. Faculty assigned to specific industry/agency can facilitate group discussions

8) Award for Geology Club activism at year end. Active faculty champion.

9) Plan annual alumni field trip—maybe rafting on Green River??

10) Continue board’s involvement in annual Benchmark effort—Evans, Taylor, and Tom Hale

11) Establish annual undergrad letter that solicits donations for select endowments—Evans, Taylor, and Tom Hale

General Board Concerns:

1) Tuition issue
   a. Department may be forced to reduce grad population in next several years, thereby reversing numerous positive actions recently implemented by board and department
2) Benchmark Fund was intended to keep the grad program viable despite state and university cuts during economic downturn
   a. Economy is rebounding, tuition increases annually, yet budgets/salaries remain flat and there are additional cuts being made at the graduate level.
   b. Alumni shouldn’t be counted on to continually bail-out the graduate program (especially for issues within the university).
   c. We love that our support helped out in a pinch, but we’d also like to see our donations do more than simply pay for stipends, health care, etc... (how about upgraded facilities, computers, & field trips)
3) Caution faculty as they post new geochem position. Serious board concern that not all faculty are thinking about student career paths when making new faculty hiring decisions. Very small percentage of alumni go into academia.
4) Concern on board that only few of faculty are interested in building and fostering strong relationships with petroleum industry. 40% of graduate students are going into this industry. In addition, a significant percentage of annual donations come from this industry. Department should be capitalizing on recent IBA win and renewed recruiting interest in department. If recruiters don’t see consistent strides toward preparing students for industry, they will look elsewhere.
5) Reduction in sed/strat focus (Dave as chair, Carol on ½ time, Burger teaching from Vernal, etc.). Board is concerned that there may be a long-term weakness developing in this fundamental pillar of geology.
6) Grad stipends are lowest in COS and may not be competitive with other institutions. Can department continue to attract the best students?

Documented Faculty Concerns:
1) Tony Lowry’s concerns if another theoretical geophysicist faculty member is not planned in the near future—difficulty building geophysics program as sole faculty
2) Other faculty mentioned the need for applied geophysicist (seismic stratigrapher and someone that can strengthen petroleum focus)
3) Faculty concerns surrounding strength of soft rock program due to Liddell as Chair, Dehler as ½ time, etc..
4) Math skill concerns with incoming students
5) Tuition issues if VP Research does not continue support at current levels:
   a. Nearly eliminates ability to bring in international PhD students
   b. Burden has been placed exclusively on faculty, resulting in funding shortfalls
   c. University should assume responsibility and keep existing students whole to original contracts. Begin new rules with new students.
d. Difficult to attract quality students now that stipends will not be able to increase, and offers have vague language regarding 2/3 year support (depending on degree).

**Documented Grad Student Concerns:**
1) Storage space for samples, equipment, etc...
2) More frequent website updates
3) Increase social events (BBQ, picnic, etc.)
4) Annual awards ceremony
5) Lithification of PhD program processes and procedures
6) Consistency in thesis proposal timeline, content, and detail among faculty/committees
7) 1 hour credit course that focuses on technical writing and writing grant proposals
   a. Include information on what annual grants are available, when they are due, and what is the process for applying
8) Informal meeting every semester with advisor and committee to discuss milestones, timelines, and requirements (more important for PhD students)
9) Upgraded geology specific computer lab to teach from and work on group projects
10) More feedback from non-committee faculty from student progress talks
11) Departmental focus on providing additional avenues for undergrad research partnerships
12) Solution for added costs when taking distance education courses (i.e. Burger in Vernal)
13) Add geology specific GIS projects to all courses offered to build skillset in all students

**Documented Undergrad Concerns:**
1) Functionality of A/V equip in classes
2) Required classes, timing, order, scheduling
3) General Education Class schedules (bottlenecks)
4) Graduation requirements and pre-graduation procedures (consistency in undergrad advisor)
5) Formal mentorship with graduate students
6) Orientation for geology undergrads (faculty introductions, processes/procedures, deadlines, etc...)