January 7, 2010

**MEMO TO:** Eric Hellgren, Chair, Graduate Council

**FROM:** Christopher Lant, Professor, Geography and Env. Res.
Silvia Secchi, Assistant Professor, Agribusiness Economics
co-Directors, Environmental Resources and Policy Ph.D. program

**SUBJECT:** Proposal for a Ph.D. in Geosciences

Per your request, below are outlined our views of the main pros and cons of a Geosciences Ph.D., focusing on what we perceive to be the consequences for the Environmental Resources and Policy (ER&P) Ph.D. program were it to be approved or not approved.

Like Geography, Geology is a resurgent department with substantially greater research and Ph.D.-level educational capacities than it had a decade ago when the Geology Ph.D. program was cancelled in favor of participation in ER&P. As currently constituted, the ER&P program requires revision if it is to meet the very real and legitimate goal of fully serving students and Geology faculty in areas of earth science such as geophysics and geochemistry. The question is how this goal is best achieved.

The fate of the Geoscience proposal has significant consequences for ER&P. If the Geosciences Ph.D. is approved, ER&P will likely lose a fourth to a third of its student enrollment (currently 30) and faculty participation. Dynamic synergies crossing the boundaries between environmental science and policy, such as geospatial analysis and SIUC's first IGERT, may be more difficult to sustain. This will require new initiatives in ER&P in directions such as environmental law or atmospheric science if this successful interdisciplinary program, approved by IBHE a decade ago as the last new doctoral program at SIU supported by state funds, is to maintain its current vitality. It should be noted, however, that Drs. Esling and Means have stated that the Geosciences Ph.D. would make no claim on existing ER&P resources.

If the Geosciences Ph.D. is not approved, the ER&P co-directors look forward to making the needed revisions in name, concentrations, core courses, or other areas that would be required to make it a program that research-active faculty in Geology can embrace as fully as faculty in Geography and Environmental Resources and Agribusiness Economics do currently. Given this ongoing possibility, we feel that a separate Ph.D. program in Geoscience is a second-best solution to meeting the needs of Geology faculty and Ph.D. students in the earth sciences. However, we believe that it is not our role to make the determination of what is in the best interest of the University, and that this decision is a responsibility of the Graduate Council.