

A Next Step for Sustainability
Dean Steve Graham
May 21, 2020

Dear Stanford Earth community,

I am pleased to report exciting new developments in the sustainability initiative under discussion for the last year. In an email to faculty today, President Marc Tessier-Lavigne announced his decision to move forward with a plan that will center on a school organizational structure for sustainability that aligns expertise across academic units. This means we will be able to enhance the impact of our work and education on the issues that so matter to us. He will further share his thoughts at the Annual Meeting of the Academic Council this afternoon.

Over its 130-year history, our school and its predecessor departments have evolved and changed significantly at crucial moments – from mining at the university's founding to petroleum resource development approaching the 1920s, to the embrace of new technologies after World War II and into the 1960s to understand Earth's processes. The advent of remote sensing and satellite imaging along with the diversification of our faculty into climate science, land use, resource economics, and earth systems science in the 1990s and 2000s summed to another critical turning point. The Earth Systems Program for undergraduates and E-IPER for graduates were launched with great success. At each point, we were always ahead of the curve.

This is another such moment. With the challenge of climate change looming in front of us, we, in collaboration with other units across campus, have the go-ahead to bring together all of Stanford's assets to both focus our research priorities and reshape our academic offerings to create a 21st century education for students who will tackle 21st century challenges.

The president's announcement follows the work that has unfolded through a committee on structure led by Noah Diffenbaugh and Arun Majumdar, as well as the work of the sustainability design team led by Scott Fendorf and Lynn Hildemann. During the most recent committee work a structure based on a school and one based on a college concept were set forth as options. Vice Provost and Dean of Research Kam Moler and Provost Persis Drell have been at the center of all discussions leading to the president's decision for the school model. Let us be open and embrace this grand opportunity and the possibilities it will provide.

Kam Moler has asked me to join her as co-chair in leading the next steps to create a blueprint for how we will integrate Stanford's world-class assets across the university – a foundational School of Earth, Energy & Environmental Sciences, the Woods Institute for the Environment, the Precourt Institute for Energy, and the many other pockets of expertise in food security, environmental policy, business and more across campus. Not to mention our cutting edge laboratories and SLAC resources. I urge you to watch the president's presentation at the academic council today at 3:15 pm. You can find the [livestream here](#).

And please plan to join me and Kam in a special virtual Stanford Earth Town Hall next Tuesday, May 26 from 2-3 pm for further explanation and timeline. Watch for an invitation today. You will have many questions, no doubt. We won't have all the answers, but we will do our best to lay out our next steps. Please submit questions in advance on [this form](#) to help us shape the town hall most effectively.

We are embarking on a remarkable journey!

Steve

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