

Cover Sheet: Request 16181

Name Change Request: UF/IFAS Soil and Water Sciences Department

Info

Process	Unit New/Modify/Close Dept
Status	Pending at PV - University Curriculum Committee (UCC)
Submitter	Casey Griffith cgriffith@aa.ufl.edu
Created	5/3/2021 2:51:18 PM
Updated	5/3/2021 3:31:40 PM
Description of request	Requesting to change the name of the UF/IFAS Soil and Water Sciences Department to the Department of Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences.

Actions

Step	Status	Group	User	Comment	Updated
Department	Approved	CALS - Soil and Water Science 60210000	Matthew Whiles		5/3/2021
SWSD_NameChangeProposal_4-16-21.pdf					5/3/2021
College	Approved	CALS - College of Agricultural and Life Sciences	Joel H Brendemuhl	This has been approved by the IFAS Faculty Assembly and the VP of IFAS as well as Dean Turner.	5/3/2021
No document changes					
University Curriculum Committee	Pending	PV - University Curriculum Committee (UCC)			5/3/2021
No document changes					
Graduate Council					
No document changes					
Faculty Senate Steering Committee					
No document changes					
Faculty Senate					
No document changes					
Academic Affairs					
No document changes					
Board of Trustees					
No document changes					
Office of the Registrar					
No document changes					
OIPR Notified					
No document changes					

Proposed departmental name change

To: *Department of Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences*

From: *Soil and Water Sciences Department*

The UF/IFAS Soil and Water Sciences Department (SWSD) is proposing a departmental name change to the “Department of Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences.” The rationale for this change is that the proposed new name better reflects the breadth of research, teaching, and Extension activities across the department and programs. Faculty members and students in the SWSD are engaged in a wide array of research and educational activities including agroecosystem and ecosystem services management, landscape and watershed ecology and management, coastal ecosystem ecology and restoration, biogeochemistry, management of urban ecosystems, and the restoration and preservation of natural ecosystems. The majority of the research, teaching, and Extension activities in the department focus at the ecosystem scale. Including “ecosystem” in the departmental name also integrates soil and water, which are the foundations of ecosystems.

All indications suggest this proposed name change will enhance student recruitment, particularly at the undergraduate level, as “soil and water sciences” does not resonate with many of today’s students. Alternatively, “ecosystem” and related terms like “ecosystem services” are more appealing and more closely linked to the many career and higher education options available for students graduating from SWSD programs. Most faculty members and students in the SWSD do not currently identify as soil scientists or water scientists per se; most have broader views of their research, teaching, and Extension activities, and the proposed name change will convey this. For those that do identify as soil or water scientists, keeping both “soil” and “water” in the new name reflects their programs and expertise.

Many SWSD faculty members and students, particularly those located at UF/IFAS Research and Extension Centers around the state, work on agroecosystems, with programs focused on topics such as soil health, crop productivity, water quality and quantity, and nutrient management, to name a few, all of which are considered ecosystem services. As such, even many of those in the department with the most applied, agroecosystem focused programs favor the change to include “ecosystem” in the departmental name.

SWSD faculty members discussed the potential name change during a monthly faculty meeting in October 2019. Following discussion, faculty members subsequently voted 40 in favor and 4 not in favor for the name change (91% positive vote).

The SWSD chair met with the three UF/IFAS deans (Turner, Place, Gilbert) in October 2019 to discuss the name change; all three were highly supportive and provided guidance on how to proceed. The SWSD chair subsequently met with the UF/IFAS SVP (Payne) to discuss the change, and he was strongly supportive of the proposed change. The new UF/IFAS VP, Dr. Scott Angle, is also supportive of the change and has provided a letter.

The SWSD chair met independently with the Chairs of UF/IFAS units that were most likely to have an interest, positive or negative, in the name change. These included the departments of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Agronomy, and Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, the School of Natural Resources and Environment, and the School of Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences (SFFGS). All were supportive of the change. The chair of SFFGS subsequently asked that the SWSD chair attend their next faculty meeting in November 2019 to discuss the change with the SFFGS faculty. The proposed name change was presented and discussed; there were some concerns among SFFGS faculty members on how to better delineate SWSD and SFFGS degree programs and employment options (some not related to the proposed name change), with an overall generally supportive response to the proposed name change.

The SWSD chair presented the name change proposal to the UF/IFAS Faculty Assembly in January 2020. There was no discussion or questions following the chair's presentation, and the Assembly voted unanimously in favor of the name change (21 in favor, 0 opposed) during the following meeting (February 2020).

The SWSD chair initiated a conversation with the chair of the UF Department of Biology in November 2020. The Biology chair was generally supportive and both chairs agreed that it would be a good idea to discuss the SWSD proposed name change with the Biology faculty at their November faculty meeting. Discussion during the meeting was generally positive, with 3-4 Biology faculty members expressing some concerns because the department also has faculty members who work on ecosystems. The SWSD chair noted that ecosystem studies in the SWSD are focused on agroecosystems, ecosystem properties, and ecosystem management and restoration, not ecosystem ecology, which is the focus of the Biology faculty members working on ecosystems.

Discussion with the Biology faculty led to a proposed alternative of "Soil and Water Ecosystem Sciences" which was then proposed to the SWSD faculty. Some SWSD faculty members were initially enthusiastic about the proposed alternative, but as discussions among SWSD faculty members progressed, concerns that this alternative implied that everyone in the SWSD works on soil or water ecosystems emerged. The SWSD has faculty members working in areas such as groundwater hydrology and soil physics, which are not ecosystem-scale areas. After discussions, the SWSD faculty strongly preferred the original proposed name of "Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences" because it better reflects that ecosystem studies are a significant focus of our programs, but we still maintain programs focused on soil and water sciences that do not include ecosystem approaches.

Subsequent discussions between the Biology and SWSD chairs centered on the SWSD not wanting to take ownership of the term "ecosystems" but rather to acknowledge the importance of ecosystem studies in our programs. The SWSD chair also reiterated differences between SWSD applied ecosystem studies and basic ecosystem ecology, and that students looking for programs in each would have different interests and career goals. The chairs

acknowledged lingering concerns among some Biology faculty members but agreed to move forward and hope for the best.

Students in the SWSD have shown enthusiastic support for the proposed name change. Since fall of 2019, the SWSD chair has asked graduating SWSD graduate students about the proposed name change. There has been a 100% positive response from graduate students thus far. The SWSD chair met with the undergraduates in both departmental majors (Environmental Management in Agriculture and Natural Resources and Soil and Water Sciences) separately during spring 2019. Undergraduate responses to the proposed name change were positive and enthusiastic, and many expressed that they felt the change would improve recruiting efforts.

Included with this proposal are support letters from UF/IFAS Vice President Scott Angle, and UF Provost Joe Glover.

UF/IFAS
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March 22, 2021

Dr. Chris Hass
Associate Provost
235 Tigert Hall
University of Florida

Dear Dr. Hass:

On behalf of the UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) I support the request for the proposed name change of the Soil and Water Sciences Department to the *Department of Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences*. The current name does not accurately reflect the breadth of activities faculty and students are engaged in, most of which focus on applied ecosystem studies and ecosystem services.

Dr. Whiles has met with other leaders of UF/IFAS units that have some similar programs including the Department of Agronomy, Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, School of Forest, Fisheries and Geomatics Sciences and School of Natural Resources and Environment, and all are supportive of this change. Accordingly, the IFAS/CALS faculty assembly voted unanimously in favor of the change in the January 2020 meeting.

Dr. Whiles has also reached out to the Department of Biology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to assure the department that there is no intention of taking ownership of the word "ecosystem," but rather to acknowledge that ecosystem sciences is part of the department's research, extension and teaching programs.

The UF/IFAS deans and I agree that the proposed new name will much better reflect the research, teaching, and extension activities of the department, and will also better resonate with a broader audience of students.

Please contact us if you would like to further discuss this proposed change.

Sincerely,



Dr. J. Scott Angle



Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President

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April 8, 2021

Dr. Chris Hass
Associate Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs
Office of the Provost
PO Box 113175
CAMPUS

Dear Dr. Hass:

I support the proposal to change the name of the UF/IFAS Soil and Water Sciences Department to *Department of Soil, Water and Ecosystem Sciences*. The proposed name more accurately reflects the academic programs housed in the department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph Glover".

Joseph Glover
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs