Advisory Board of Deans Meeting
Spring 2024

MINUTES

Date/Time: May 14, 2024 | 9:00-10:30 a.m.
Location: EarthLab Conference Room (909 NE Boat Street) or ZOOM

Purpose
- Connect the Board of Deans to EarthLab work and impact
- Discuss idea for faculty support for community-engaged research
- Brainstorm opportunities for EarthLab’s role as a climate convener and creating new centers at UW

Attendees
- Maya Tolstoy
- Hilary Godwin
- Renee Cheng (Zoom)
- Joel Baker (Zoom)
- Michael Spencer (Zoom)
- Brinda Sarathy (Zoom)
- Ben Packard
- Constance McBarron
- Jessica P. Nagtalon
- Anastasia Ramey
- Maria Anguiano

Meeting began: 9:02 a.m.

Welcome
Dean Maya Tolstoy (chair of the EarthLab advisory board of deans) welcomed the group and invited introductions. She acknowledged that this is an especially busy time of year as well as provided an update on a meeting she and the EarthLab executive director had with the UW provost, VP of communications and marketing, and EarthLab chair of the advisory council Sally Jewell to discuss an emerging university initiative on climate change. The hope is that EarthLab will play a substantial role in connecting the campus on this initiative.

Q&A with EarthLab Team
EarthLab shared a high level update on recent EarthLab activities and impact. Topics included a recap of the successful fundraising event on April 4, an update on the Innovation Grants Program Cohort 5 and the Student Internship Program Cohort 3, an update on the student-focused event that was suggested by the board of deans during the fall, and feedback EarthLab received from an NSF grant submission that highlighted EarthLab as a point of strength for the application.
We also shared updates on our member organizations. EarthLab supported convenings for CHanGE (Climate Change and Clinical Practice) and Nature and Health (NW Nature and Health Symposium) as well as the creation of a new strategic plan for Climate Impacts Group. Three member organizations have started their last year at EarthLab due to sunsetting funding (Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program and Future Rivers) or due to the director of the program leaving the University of Washington for another university (Ocean Nexus Center).

The final update was a reminder to attend our annual Spring Social which will be held this year on Tuesday, May 28 from 5-7 at the Denny Room in Oak Hall.

The conversation with the deans centered on wanting to learn more about how the students were selected for the competitive internship program and the breakdown of the applicants by campus and major. As the program scales, it’s important to understand how smaller or larger programs differ in how to service the participants, for example we may want to consider breaking up a group of 24 students into two groups of 12. There was a comment that it’s a huge benefit for EarthLab to create this program and have other units buy into it, which is easier than creating their own program.

**Announcement: National Sustainability Society Conference**

EarthLab shared an update on what will be the first annual National Sustainability Society Conference, which will be held September 9-12, 2024 at the University of Washington. The purpose of this conference is to facilitate collaboration across disciplines and sectors and create shared integrated and flourishing professional practice and scholarship in sustainability. The society received 350 applications for talks and they are hoping for 500 attendees. EarthLab is exploring side events to host that will connect UW faculty with the community and each other. This first meeting will be a learning experience for all.

**Discussion: Support for faculty for community-engaged research**

At EarthLab’s Faculty Steering Committee meeting in April, there was a robust discussion concerning how to improve engagement/participation across all colleges and schools in the Innovation Grants Program. Within the valuable feedback, faculty shared enthusiasm for developing consistent definitions and policies regarding community-engaged research for the purposes of faculty promotion and tenure. While promotion and tenure guidelines are developed at a department level, university-wide consistency would incentivize interdisciplinary research and engagement such as in the Innovation Grants Program. In addition to contributing through the Community Engagement University Initiative:

- **Is there value in the EarthLab Faculty Steering Committee developing a statement for units to work from?**
- **How else can EarthLab support faculty engaging in community-engaged research, through EarthLab funding or otherwise, in the promotion and tenure process?**

The conversation from the deans included a reiteration that the voting faculty members in each unit are responsible for creating promotion and tenure guidelines. Some schools such as the School of Nursing, School of Public Health and School of Social Work are developing
guidelines at the school level because they do not have a lot of different departments. Suggestions included to connect with the University Initiative on Community Engagement subcommittee and explore how EarthLab may provide examples of interdisciplinary community engagement scholarship to the faculty senate. There's an opportunity to educate faculty members about what kinds of activities do fall under scholarship and service and formulate ideas that are viable and meet criteria.

There was also a discussion about exploring cluster/cohort hires on topics like environmental justice or Native epistemology.

EarthLab invites all deans to provide feedback on the Innovation Grants Program and keep an ear open to why faculty in your units are or are not applying for the grant.

EarthLab was invited by the Center for Environmental Health Equity to co host an exploratory conversation to create a network of faculty and research scientists who are doing community engaged environmental justice research. This meeting will be held on Thursday, May 30 from 9-10 a.m. at EarthLab. Please share with your faculty.

**Brainstorming: Convening UW community on climate scholarship and providing support for applying for funding/new centers**

This past year, EarthLab has gained traction in connecting with more units, faculty, and students to hold climate-centered convenings. Additionally, feedback from two NSF applications pointed to EarthLab as a value-add for groups applying for new center funding. Looking ahead to the next academic year:

- *What kinds of convenings would your students, faculty, and staff be interested to attend or collaborate on?*
- *What role should EarthLab consider to strengthen applications for new center funding at UW?*

The deans were curious about what the follow up has been like since the “Sparking Climate Connections,” which so far has been three moderately successful “Fostering Climate Connections” events co hosted with the Population Health Initiative and subsequent small planning grants.

There was consensus that targeted email communication with the support of the deans may help convene faculty in person across all three campuses. Ideas for convenings included hosting events at the Port of Tacoma or Seattle and planning in-person lightning talks at each campus that invited community partners to come together and to “get the university into the community. There was enthusiasm for planning side events that coincide with the upcoming NSS Conference in Seattle, though the timing of the conference two weeks before the fall quarter starts may be a hindrance to faculty.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:12 a.m.**