Faculty Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Spring 2024

Date/Time: April 18, 2024
Location: EarthLab Conference Room and online (Zoom)

Attendees:
- Terrie Klinger
- Peter Kahn
- Becky Alexander
- Bart Nijsen
- Ben Packard
- Jessica Nagtalon
- Amy Oakley
- Jeremy Hess
- Clarita Lefthand Begay
- Derek Fulwiler
- Martha Groom
- Emily Pahnke
- Dan Schwartz
- Maya Tolstoy
- Greg Bratman
- Josh Lawler
- Constance
- Vikram Iyer
- Ken Yocom
- Ann Bostrom

Meeting began: 9:05 a.m.

Welcome
Introductions and welcome led by Ben Packard, EarthLab executive director

Discussion: What is next for the EarthLab Innovation Grants Program?
The EarthLab Innovation Grants Program is welcoming its fifth cohort of grantees in Spring 2024. After multiple years of successful granting, we are embracing the opportunity to reflect on what has worked, what we could improve, and what's next for the program.

The faculty engaged in an in-depth discussion to determine the pros and cons of the current grants program, including whether or not the quality and quantity of applications have increased over the years. Many of the faculty have been part of the review process in the past and confirmed that applications are strong and it is difficult to select only five or six teams per year. A strength of the current program is the relatively easy/ lower effort and rapid decisions for applications compared to other similar volume funding sources. With regards to the project and team success following the grant, several project teams are in the process of applying for additional funding to deepen or spin out their project. Half of the 29 teams that EarthLab has funded to date are still in the research phase. Some ideas for updates to the program include 1) flexibility on how the funds...
are allocated in order to attract UW units that do not need funding for students (such as the business school); 2) supporting junior faculty to provide opportunities for starting new research projects; 3) increasing the award from $80k to account for increased cost of living for student and community partners, especially as the graduate students are expecting a wage increase this year. Some remaining questions include: 1) Should EarthLab move to awarding fewer, bigger grants? 2) How do you leverage the compelling stories? 3) Would you consider using some of the funding for matching grants? For example there is one through NASA that is broad; They provide 50% but require 50% match. Overall, the group encouraged EarthLab to remain proactive about the future of the program.

**Feedback Requested: What role can EarthLab play to convene across the UW and potentially apply for the Inflation Reduction Act Community Change Grants Program?**

The faculty committee were curious about the requirements for the EPA program and what kind of coordination is needed with the EPA funded Thriving Communities Technology Assistance Center that was launched at the UW in the past year. There was discussion as to whether or not tribes would want to partner with the UW and acknowledgement of the administrative capacity needed to apply for and administer an EPA grant. Consensus was reached regarding the need for increased internal community building at the UW to better prepare teams to apply to large opportunities. Some departments and units have the support to go after big grants but others do not. There needs to be more connection between the science schools (such as medicine and environment) and the professional schools (such as business and law). Is there an opportunity to connect with the newly formed AI Task Force?

The faculty also brought up a question regarding the new policy regarding faculty promotion and tenure as it relates to community engagement. As promotion and tenure guidelines are developed within each department, is there a role for EarthLab to play in developing some standard definitions of what is faculty community engagement with regards to climate or environmental research, scholarship and training? If so, it would be helpful to align with the units that already focus on community engagement in order to align messages. Some folks to reach out to include Nicole Erret, Wolfle Action Lab, Consulting and Business Development Center, Jen Davison, CELE, and Jake Vigor. This is a long process so in the meantime, EarthLab should continue to train graduate students and early career faculty in the best practices to promote community engagement.

**Announcements**
Ben Packard shared announcements regarding upcoming EarthLab events.

**Meeting adjourned:** 10:30 a.m.