Formation of UA Environment Design Committee

To::
University Community
Names and titles:
Betsy Cantwell, Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation

Date::
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The UA Strategic Plan calls for an integrated vision for environmental research and an innovative cross-cutting administrative leadership approach that capitalizes on the existing UA expertise in environment, and increases and promotes our global reputation. To do this, we must collectively drive excellence in every program and research effort by drawing on the full complement of academic strengths, useful infrastructure, and other resources available across the entirety of the University.

To that end, effective immediately, the Institute of the Environment (IE), the Institute for Energy Solutions (IES), and the Water & Energy Sustainable Technology Center (WEST Center) will be combined into one entity, referred to as the "Arizona Institute for Resilient Environment and Societies" (AIRES) until we arrive at a new name for this merged entity. I am deeply grateful to Raina Maier, Kimberly Ogden, and Neal Armstrong for their leadership as interim directors of these institutes while we developed our plan to move forward.

I have asked Jim Buizer to lead the transition, working closely with my office. During this period, he will serve as interim director of the AIRES, and will chair a small design team charged with recommending: a) a vision and mission; b) a programmatic and functional design; c) how other existing environment research units fit into, or relate to the new entity; d) other emerging initiatives that should be included; e) UA and external advisory mechanisms; and f) a name for the new institute.

I have chosen Jim to lead this transitional effort because he has decades of demonstrated success in institution building and in transformational leadership. His experience restructuring environmental programs and leading the design and establishment of the sustainability institute at ASU, his two decades of innovative program management in Washington D.C., his leadership on boards of multiple national and international environmental NGOs, and his vast international experience make him precisely the right person to lead this effort at the UA. President Robbins and Provost Folks agree with me completely.

Jim has made it clear to me that, while he will serve as interim director, he is not interested in being the permanent director. The design committee will draft a position description for a permanent director and recommend a strategy to attract a globally-renowned person to lead the institute.
In addition to Jim, the design committee will be comprised of John O'Neil, Mark Miller, John Chorover, Diana Liverman, Dave Breshears, Kathy Jacobs, Tom Meixner and Derek Lemoine. This committee will use the various efforts and reports undertaken at the UA about environmental research over the past 18 months as a basis for beginning their discussions.

I anticipate that the committee will complete the design component of its charge by March 1, at which point I will begin the process of hiring a permanent director. As always, we will actively pursue candidates that continue to improve the balance of traditionally underrepresented communities in University leadership positions.

Please contact me or John O'Neil if you have any questions.

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[1] https://strategicplan.arizona.edu/
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