

Dear Faculty Senate:

In these challenging Covid-19 times with shrinking college age populations, academia must adapt to survive. This was the sentiment that came through during the November 10, 2020 CLASS Department Chairs meeting with President Zulma Toro and then again during the September 17, 2021 CLASS Leadership Council meeting hosted by CLASS Dean Robert Wolff.

It is in the spirit of adapting, that the CCSU Geography Department is requesting the approval of the Faculty Senate to change the name of our department from the 'Geography Department' to the **'Geography, Sustainability, and Tourism Department'** (GST). This request has been endorsed by all faculty members in the Geography Department and has also received the approval of CLASS Dean Robert Wolff.

This request is the result of more than four years of exploration, discussion, and research into identifying a departmental name that better identifies what our faculty and students teach and research. We feel our request to change our department name to **'Geography, Sustainability, and Tourism'** is justified for numerous reasons.

First and foremost, the academic disciplines of **'sustainability'** and **'tourism'** are already major programs within our department that are the bedrock of the CCSU Geography Department's academic footprint.

The Geography Department's leadership in the academic discipline dates back to 2007 when Dr. Charles Button spearheaded the founding of the 'Global Environmental Sustainability Action Coalition' (GESAC) at CCSU, and in 2008 Dr. Button co-hosted the inaugural Global Sustainability and Climate Change Symposium in support of the national teach-in called Focus the Nation. At this three day event, more than 1,000 people, including college faculty & students, K-12 school students and teachers, community members, non-governmental organizations, and federal and state governmental officials attended. It was the largest Focus the Nation event in the United States. Since then GESAC has hosted an annual Global Environmental Sustainability Symposium. In April 2022, we will be hosting our 15th Annual Sustainability Symposium. For details about GESAC, go here: <https://www.ccsu.edu/gesac/about.html>

In 2010, the CCSU Geography Department, with the creation of its **'Sustainability Program'**, became the first public state institution of higher education in Connecticut to offer a graduate degree in the academic field of 'Sustainability' with the creation of the **'MS degree in Geography with a specialization in Global Sustainability'** (<https://www.ccsu.edu/geography/graduate/sustainability.html>).

At the same time, the CCSU Geography Department also received approval to create the 'SUST' (Sustainability) course designator. Since then, the CCSU Geography Department has created 17 new 'SUST' courses (<https://ccsu.smartcatalogiq.com/current/Undergraduate-Graduate-Catalog/All-Courses/SUST-Sustainability>) that are managed by the 'Sustainability Program' Director (i.e., Charles Button in the Geography Department). Within two years (i.e., 2012), the Geography Department had its first student graduate with a **'MS degree in Geography with a specialization in Global Sustainability'**. Also by 2012, the Geography Department saw the number of graduate student majors double because of the new graduate degree in sustainability. During the past five

years, we have been graduating 3-8 students annually with the MS degree in Geography with a Specialization in Global Sustainability.

In 2019, the CCSU Geography Department began offering a BA degree and a minor in Geography with a Specialization in **‘Environmental Geography and Sustainability’** (<https://www.ccsu.edu/geography/undergraduate/environmental.html>). With only self-promotion by members of the Geography Department, we are seeing numerous students choosing ‘Environmental Geography and Sustainability’ as their academic major and/or minor. In fact, it is already the second most demanded specialization degree in the CCSU Geography Department. The only academic program in the Geography Department with more majors is **‘Tourism and Hospitality Studies’**.

The **Tourism and Hospitality Studies (THS)** Program in the CCSU Geography Department (<https://www.ccsu.edu/geography/undergraduate/th.html>) is a growth major that, despite the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, is still attracting students -- this year THS has higher enrollment numbers than last year! A substantial percentage of students under the Geography umbrella are THS majors; therefore, it is a good marketing tool to have the department name indicate this major availability as part of the department name. Additionally, since most Generation Z students desire to travel, the 'Tourism' label will appeal to **all** students and make the overall department name have a greater draw for students whose majors are undecided.

Historically, the University added an interdisciplinary degree in Tourism and Hospitality in 1997. It combined the expertise and competencies of hospitality programs at Connecticut’s community colleges with CCSU’s geography tourism program as well as in the School of Business. This Bachelor of Science degree in Tourism and Hospitality (referred to hereafter as the THS major or merely THS) was formed to provide a middle-level manager with skills needed to succeed in their respective positions.

Recently, other universities have incorporated ‘sustainability’ and ‘tourism’ into their geography department names. ‘Sustainability’ has been integrated into the names of numerous ‘Geography’ departments throughout the United States. For example:

- Salem State University ‘Geography and Sustainability’
<https://www.salemstate.edu/academics/college-arts-and-sciences/geography-and-sustainability>
- University of Iowa ‘Geographical and Sustainability Science’
<https://clas.uiowa.edu/geography/>
- University of Oklahoma ‘Geography and Environmental Sustainability’
<http://ou-public.courseleaf.com/atmospheric-geographic-sciences/geography-environmental-sustainability/>

Similarly, ‘tourism’ has been integrated into the names of numerous ‘Geography’ departments throughout the world. For example:

- Brock University, Canada ‘Geography and Tourism’
<https://brocku.ca/social-sciences/geography/programs/undergraduate-programs/>
- University of the Western Cape, Africa ‘Department of Geography, Environmental Studies & Tourism’
<https://www.uwc.ac.za/Faculties/ART/Geography/Pages/default.aspx>

What makes our request to change our department name to **‘Geography, Sustainability, and Tourism’** novel and exciting is the combining of the academic foci of ‘Geography’, ‘Sustainability,’ and ‘Tourism.’ These three academic disciplines have overlapping and compatible academic foci that are attractive to the current generation of college students and employers. Additionally, to the best of my knowledge, we would be the only academic department at any institution of higher education in the United States with this name, which combines these three disciplines into one department name

We believe changing our department name to **‘Geography, Sustainability, and Tourism’** will result in:

- an increase in our number of majors because students graduating from high school often seek universities with degrees in **‘Sustainability’** and **‘Tourism’**,
- an increase in the number of students enrolled in our department’s courses,
- a degree that will attract students not only from Connecticut, but also throughout the United States and the World.

Not only would changing our department name to **‘Geography, Sustainability, and Tourism’** be beneficial to the CCSU Geography Department, but it would also enhance the efforts of CCSU and the CSCU system to increase student enrollments and to offer academic programs attractive to today’s students who are looking for degrees needed for the careers of today and the future.

The addition of ‘sustainability’ and ‘tourism’ within our department’s name is meant to recognize the importance of the faculty members in our department who teach about and research sustainability and tourism, and does not imply that future academic endeavors in the areas of sustainability and/or tourism must all be housed in the department of ‘Geography, Sustainability, and Tourism’.

We hope the Faculty Senate and University administration will honor our request to change our department name to **‘Geography, Sustainability, and Tourism’** so that our department can do our part to help CCSU adapt and increase student admissions and course enrollments.

We look forward to your directions as to what we need to do next to change our department name to **‘Geography, Sustainability, and Tourism’**.

Submitted on behalf of the faculty of the Geography Department,

Charles E. Button, Ph.D.

Chairperson & Professor – Geography Department
Central Connecticut State University

Director – CCSU Sustainability Academic Programs

Faculty Chair – President's Advisory Council for Environmental Sustainability

Founder & Chair – Global Environmental Sustainability Action Coalition

Fellow – Campuses for Environmental Stewardship Program

Governor's Climate Change Leadership Award Recipient