




Central Connecticut State University

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Frederic Latour, President
Central Connecticut State University Faculty Senate

FROM: Dr. Robert S. Wolff, Dean 
Carol A. Ammon College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences

DATE: April 29, 2023

SUBJECT: Merger of the Departments of Anthropology and Geography

During the fall semester, the Departments of Anthropology and Geography began to discuss the possibility of merging as a pragmatic response to enrollment declines in their core programs but also as an aspirational opportunity to explore innovative staffing and curricular possibilities. The Department Chairs, Dr. Evelyn Phillips and Dr. Brian Sommers, researched combined departments at other institutions including Kennesaw State University, Coastal Carolina University, and two campuses in the California State University system.

Collaboration last fall yielded two tenure-track faculty position requests designed to support a merged department. The first, a position in Community and Health Ecology with expertise in health disparities affecting African-descendant communities, was the highest priority for the Ammon College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. With support from Provost Kimberly Kostelis, this position was approved by President Zulma Toro. The departments have identified an individual who will hold this position as a special appointment in 2023-2024, while a national search is under way. The second, focusing on Human Dimensions of Environmental Change with an emphasis on minoritized communities and the Global South, was received favorably but not approved for hiring at this time.

To foster conversations across the disciplines (and indeed with others as well), I have agreed to sponsor a “brown bag” lunch series that will bring scholars to campus who can help foster interdisciplinary teaching and research. I will also identify funds to support cross-disciplinary conference attendance.

At this time, I am pleased to inform the Senate that, with the exception of one abstention, both departments have voted unanimously to approve this merger, which will take effect over the summer. I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Phillips, Dr. Sommers, and their colleagues, who worked to make this transformation possible, to the benefit of students, faculty, staff, and the University community.

Members of the Faculty Senate may also wish to know the following:

- The Anthropology and Geography departments already share the fourth floor of Bassett Hall.
- The Operating Expenses/Discretionary Personnel Services (OE/DPS) budgets for ANTH, GEOG, and Tourism & Hospitality Studies (THS), which is currently housed in the Department of Geography, will remain distinct to better track expenditures unique to each program.
- Dr. Phillips and Dr. Sommers will review bylaws as well as promotion & tenure guidelines to ensure a smooth transition. Steps will be taken to ensure that faculty members initially hired in one of these two departments may pursue promotion and tenure based upon the guidelines in place at that time.

I would be more than happy to respond to any questions or concerns from colleagues in the Faculty Senate.

c: Dr. Kimberly Kostelis, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dr. Zulma Toro, University President