

Dear President Clancy,

My name is Lauren Haygood, I am a senior in my third year at TU, I am enrolled in the Accelerated Master's Program (the 4+1) in Geosciences, and am the current Geo Club President. As the Geo Club President, I am writing this letter on behalf of the Geoscience student body.

We are very disappointed in the way this announcement was handled by TU's administration. Both professors and students were blindsided by both the announcement and the timing of the announcement. TU administration knew this plan was developing at least 10 months ago, yet waited until the decision deadlines had passed to make the announcement. This has resulted in students declining other universities in favor of TU for both undergraduate and graduate programs, and those students and their families feel TU purposely withheld information from them during their decision-making time-frame. In addition, it may not have been intentional, but both existing and incoming students were notified via email before geoscience faculty were notified in their meeting. This resulted in students having questions and wanting answers before professors had their questions answered. No geoscience students or professors were involved at any stage in this decision-making process. In looking at the list of professors on the PPRC, it appears the degree pathways in the departments without representation were cut the most.

The Geoscience Department has been working very hard over the past year recruiting students for this upcoming school year. Prospective students were able to meet with current students in various geoscience majors. Many of the students we met with were interested in degree paths that have now been cut, such as geophysics and biogeoscience. From following social media posts, there are incoming geoscience students who committed to TU but are now looking at trying to transfer because they feel they were misled and have valid concerns that as they move through their degree program, the faculty and class content may not be of the caliber and quality it is today, especially due to the new minimum student enrollment required in classes.

The Geoscience Department has partnered with schools and various STEM organizers to demonstrate geosciences in action and illustrate the variety of career options as a geoscientist or geophysicist. Our demonstrations are always a big hit with students, especially because it allows us to illustrate the diversity of our department.

To be honest, we find the elimination of the biogeoscience and geophysics majors confusing. Biogeoscience is a hybrid major of biology and geoscience combined into one degree. This proposed plan keeps both the separate biology and geoscience degree paths, then why is biogeoscience, a program offered in approximately 30 universities in the U.S. and TU is the only university to offer this degree path in Oklahoma, being eliminated? Biogeoscience leads to many opportunities at NASA, and one of our biogeoscience students has had the opportunity to intern at NASA. The geophysics degree path is a combination of math, physics, geoscience, and electrical engineering. All these majors are being offered separately, so again, why is a degree path that allows students to be equipped with skill sets from all those majors being eliminated? Geophysics is important for mineral and petroleum exploration, earthquake detection, and so much more. I have attached the bubble sheets for your reference.

The change to the Geoscience M.S. program from 2 years to 12-months is also confusing and has no data to support its success. Is this program a version of the 4+1 (Accelerated Master's Program)? As far as I know, I am the first geoscience student to be enrolled in this degree path. Since starting the 4+1, I have discovered very few people at TU know how the Accelerated Program works. I have received mixed answers from Graduate School about how my program works; I have received mixed answers from Financial Aid about how financial aid works; and I have received mixed answers about what I can and can't do during my overlap year. We respectfully request you provide us with a detailed explanation of how the 12-month M.S. will work and the data used to make this decision.

Graduate students play a big role in our department. They not only TA, where they help teach labs to undergraduate geoscience students, they are also role models. Some undergraduates, and even high school students, have had the opportunity to work with graduate students during TURC (Tulsa Undergraduate Research Challenge). Undergraduates have been able to help graduate students with fieldwork and/or laboratory analysis. This equips undergraduates and high school students with the ability to do their own research. This also builds student confidence in their research abilities, has aided them in finding their passions, and even inspires students to pursue graduate studies for themselves. Currently, there are several graduate students in the department who also completed their undergraduate education at TU. They specifically chose to pursue their graduate studies at TU because they were encouraged both by graduate students and faculty, as well as being highly interested in and motivated by the research being done at this university. With the geosciences PhD option being removed and the Masters option redesigned to a 12 month program, we believe this leaves little room for research opportunities and therefore potential graduate student and faculty interest or enthusiasm.

Our understanding is that our major specific orientation class- Intro to Geosciences- will be replaced with a generic orientation class. Currently, all geoscience majors are required to take Intro to Geosciences. During this orientation class, we are exposed to all the different research opportunities available as a TU student and we are introduced to all the professors in the Geoscience Department. We learn of fascinating career opportunities for our respective majors, and even get to meet professionals in the industry. This new plan takes away that priceless opportunity for all incoming students. If incoming students are no longer able to take an intro class specific to their major, how will they discover the many opportunities that were once available? How will they learn what career paths are available to them? How will they get to know each professor in their department and their specific research interests?

I would like to address each of your bolded statements in your email to students called "TU Commitment":

1. **"First and foremost, any student enrolled in a program slated for closure will have the support and opportunity to graduate with that degree."**

· You are asking us to trust you with this statement. However, you have lost the trust of many students with the way this was handled and announced. Can you guarantee that all required classes will continue to be offered at the same schedule they are today? Can you guarantee that the professors and faculty we have today will still be here teaching the same classes 4-5 years from now? Can you guarantee that the research opportunities we have today will still be available 4-5 years from now once all the graduate programs have ended?

Of course you can't, and that is our concern.

- What happens as class sizes diminish?
- Will classes be offered less frequently?
- Will classes still be offered if there are only 1-2 students?
- What happens if a student has to retake a class that is only offered in alternating years due to diminishing class sizes?
- What if the classes necessary for students to complete their degree are not taught because they do not meet the class size requirement?

These are valid questions as TU already has class size requirements. The beginning Portuguese I class was cancelled last Fall due to not having enough students enrolled.

· What happens if a professor retires/leaves due to this new plan whose specialty is part of the core curriculum? How will those classes be taught to the same depth and knowledge as they are today?

All students deserve to have their core classes taught by knowledgeable and experienced faculty who are passionate about their subject matter.

2. **"Second, the recommendations came from faculty."**

· Which faculty? Your statement implies ALL faculty or at least the majority of faculty were involved in these recommendations. However, no one from our department was involved. Faculty in our department and in other affected departments were completely blindsided by this announcement. They were not given the opportunity or time to prepare to respond to students' questions and concerns. The geoscience faculty were

willing to evaluate the effectiveness of the different degree pathways because “the geosciences are a vital part of our scientific enterprise” (Science Policy from the American Geophysical Union, which is a primary science organization in the United States). This is an excerpt from the policy: “Geoscience research covers many aspects of our daily lives, from the discovery of critical minerals vital to modern technology, to accurate daily weather forecasting, to the discovery of new energy sources, to understanding how space weather will impact telecommunications. As such, continued investment and innovation in the geosciences enables the U.S. to safely build sustainable infrastructure, improve resilience to natural hazards, and harness energy sources more efficiently to fuel continued industrial and economic growth.”

3. “Third, the changes reflect TU’s identity.”

- TU initially started as a Presbyterian school for Indian girls. However, the announced changes include cutting religion and Indian Law degree pathways. Many students liked and were proud that TU appeared to care about its foundational roots.

- You also mentioned “40% of students are enrolled in ENS and more than 40% of students reside in the business, health and law colleges.” Therefore the plan to reduce the natural sciences (geosciences, chemistry, math, and physics) into primarily bachelor’s programs only would obviously affect more than 6% of undergraduate and graduate students.

4. “Fourth, the arts and humanities are fundamental to a college experience.”

- Why does this plan cut majority of the arts and humanities? As science majors, we are required to take Block I and Block II courses that stem primarily from the arts and humanities. Our choices will now be severely limited. Personally, I have taken art and language classes each semester to balance out the rigors of STEM classes. I found these classes critical because they gave me an outlet to express myself. Creativity is a necessary part of science.

5. “Fifth, being everything to everyone is a lofty goal, but is also unsustainable.”

- We don’t disagree with this statement. We disagree with how this plan has been formulated and announced. A better approach would have been to involve students, faculty, and alumni across the whole university to discuss your findings before making your final decision.

- We feel “True Commitment” as is defined today, would result in The University of Tulsa itself becoming unsustainable.

6. “Sixth, TU is fully accredited by the HLC and on solid financial ground.”

- We find this statement confusing. If TU is on solid financial ground, why are STEM degree pathways being cut? Why are professors being offered early retirement?

7. “Seventh, there is so much to like about the reimagining of TU.”

- Please elaborate on this. Morale on campus is at an all-time low for both faculty and students. The Student Association has passed a vote of no faith in “True Commitment”, the Law School has voted against “True Commitment”, and the Arts and Sciences have voted against “True Commitment.” External Geoscience National Organizations (AGU, AGI, AIPG, AAPG, and SEG) have expressed disappointment in “True Commitment.”

We applaud all of our professors for handling what we feel is a short-sighted decision that purposely ambushed multiple departments with grace, and we applaud them for still putting their students as their top priority in the face of this new plan. “True Commitment” risks TU losing some of their best professors as they choose to continue their careers at other universities. And who can blame them?

These professors have spent years building research groups and recruiting top-notch students to be a part of these research groups. These research groups conduct ground-breaking research in the fields of geoscience, geochemistry, geophysics, environmental science, biogeoscience, planetary science, and so much more.

According to the AGU Science Policy, the geosciences is a growing field. In fact, there will be shortage in workforce of geoscientists due to 48% of the current geoscience workforce beginning to retire. This will create a shortage of approximately 150,000 geoscientists. TU geoscience alumni get employed with highly esteemed companies, both in Tulsa and international. These alumni give back to TU, whether it be financial or providing internships to students across a variety of disciplines. By reducing the number of geoscience degree paths offered, there will be fewer alumni. This would mean there would be fewer alumni to give back to TU; fewer alumni to promote TU; and fewer alumni to help current students.

I invite you to come speak with the entire Geoscience student body after you have read through the attached documents. We would like to know the administration's data, facts, and reasoning behind the elimination of majority of our programs.

We do not support "True Commitment" and we respectfully request that an independent task force be created to study the effects of the proposed changes before it is implemented.

We have the support from National Geoscience Organizations, currently from AGU (American Geophysical Union), AGI (American Geoscience Institute), AIPG (American Institute of Professional Geologists), AAPG (American Association of Petroleum Geologists), and SEG (Society of Exploration Geophysicists). I have attached their emails of support.

I have attached various documents to support the points included in this letter.

Thank you for taking the time to read this,

Lauren Haygood
Geo Club President