The Program Review Committee’s final report on the Center for Environmental Programs underscores the significant return the University realizes from a modest investment in the Center. With only joint appointment and affiliated faculty, one lecturer, and several temporary instructors, the Center supports two undergraduate programs with more than 100 majors. These programs place a heavy emphasis on research and service learning, providing a high quality, student-centered learning experience. The Center is also a significant contributor to general education, BGeXperience, and the University’s science education initiatives. In addition, it has fostered applied research that addresses regional needs and promoted awareness of environmental issues on the BGSU campus and beyond.

While the report recognizes the strengths of the Center and its many contributions, it also suggests several matters that need attention. These include developing a more tightly focused strategic plan, revising the curriculum, clarifying expectations of joint appointment faculty, revising the merit process, enlarging the Center’s research mission, becoming more aggressive in seeking external support, and reconsidering plans to develop an M.A.T. In her response to the PRC’s report, Dr. Holly Myers-Jones, the Director of the Center, accepts most of the committee’s recommendations. She is, however, not persuaded of the wisdom of ENVS majors pursuing traditional minors, remains committed to obtaining lab space for ENVS classes, and articulates a somewhat different approach to clarifying expectations for tenure track joint appointment faculty.

While I accept the PRC’s recommendations, I have given careful consideration to Dr. Myers-Jones’s thoughtful observations in the comments and stipulations that follow, which I hope will provide useful guidance for implementing the committee’s recommendations.

I agree with the PRC that development of a more tightly focused strategic plan that contains goals and timelines is important to the future development of the program. While the plan may need to be altered if the Center becomes part of a new school that includes the Departments of Geology and Geography, a focused plan is critical to set priorities and help the Center achieve them. I will work closely with the Director and her colleagues to assure that a new plan is in place by the beginning of the 2005-06 academic year.

I value the Center’s commitment to high quality, innovative undergraduate teaching. I also appreciate the research it has promoted and realize that as an interdisciplinary unit with faculty whose tenure homes lie elsewhere, the Center often does not receive credit for its contributions to external funding and research. However, I agree that the Center can make additional contributions in these areas, especially as the University seeks to promote the scholarship of engagement and undergraduate research. The Center should carefully consider the place of research in the mix of its activities as it revisits its mission statement and strategic plan.
I strongly agree with PRC that both majors offered by the Center are unwieldy and that the highest priority for the Center is to revise the requirements for the majors, bringing the number of hours required into line with other majors in the College. I agree with Dr. Myers-Jones that Environmental Studies majors ought not be constrained to adopt traditional, disciplinary-bound minors. However, use of existing minors (both disciplinary and interdisciplinary) or creation of new interdisciplinary minors ought to be considered seriously as ways to provide students with a more focused curriculum that is also in keeping with the Center’s commitment to interdisciplinarity.

Additional faculty appointments are, of course, dependent on the availability of financial resources at a time when budgets are very tight. It is especially important, therefore, that the Center tie requests to its new strategic plan and work closely with departments to make a persuasive case for how any new appointment will serve students, enhance programmatic strength, and strengthen our research capacity.

I encourage the Center to develop a merit document that recognizes faculty for their contributions to fulfilling critical Center and University objectives. I share the dissatisfaction expressed by Center faculty and the PRC with allocating merit from the Dean’s pool and will be pleased to work with the Director to assure that faculty are evaluated for merit and recommendations for merit increments made by the Center.

While the College has clarified expectations for joint appointment faculty through carefully crafted letters of appointment and annual reviews and reappointment reviews that provide feedback from each unit as well as the College, I remain open to other approaches, including meeting with all new faculty members and their chairs during the fall semester of their first year at BGSU to clarify expectations and the evaluation process. I also find merit in Dr. Myers-Jones’s suggestion that the Center negotiate with academic departments tenure and promotion guidelines that would apply to faculty holding joint appointments. Such agreements would assure that expectations for joint appointment faculty reflect the needs and values of an interdisciplinary environmental studies program as well as the academic department that serves as their tenuring home. I look forward to working with Dr. Myers-Jones and department chairs to assure that expectations of joint appointment faculty are clear and appropriate to the needs of both units.

I am persuaded that a teaching lab is vital if the Center is to offer students a rigorous, contemporary environmental studies curriculum. Unfortunately, the College has been unable to identify existing lab space that can be shared on terms that meet the Center’s need for access. Working in cooperation with the College, the Center has secured a significant private gift to equip a new lab. Discussions are currently underway to secure space for it. To assure that this space is fully utilized, it will be made available to other units when not required for ENVS classes and projects.

The Center has been quite effective in generating external support. I look forward to working with the Director and her colleagues to identify additional opportunities, which are critical to advancing the program in coming years. While I encourage the Director to remain involved in private fundraising, this is not a principal responsibility of the position. The College
will continue to take the lead in fundraising efforts—working with the Development Office and
the Center to identify potential supporters, involving them with the College and the Center, and
initiating proposals for support. Of course, the College will involve the Director and faculty in
these activities as appropriate—principally in explaining the Center’s programs, successes, and
new initiatives. However, principal responsibility for development activities remain with the
Development Office and the College.

I agree wholeheartedly with PRC that the Center should proceed cautiously—in full
consultation with the College of Arts & Sciences and the Graduate College—in developing an
M.A.T. Not only do we need to be assured that there is a viable market for this degree, but that it
is a market that would not be better served by a more general M.A.T. in science. Moreover, the
Center should carefully consider whether there are other opportunities for developing a masters
degree or a certificate program—perhaps in conjunction with Geography and Geology—that
would better meet regional needs.

Faculty in the Center for Environmental Programs can be justly proud of a long record of
significant accomplishments, the leadership they have shown in offering students a high quality,
innovative program, and their engagement with the Northwest Ohio community. I look forward
to working with the Director and her colleagues to implement the recommendations of the PRC,
which will make a good program even better.

______________________________________
Donald G. Nieman, Dean                        Date

Concurred:

______________________________________
John W. Folkins, Provost                       Date