

Progress Update (Past Two Years)

1. Provide an update on your program or department's progress on your last objectives or action plans:

Progress Update Past Action Plans

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What type of program review did you last submit?

- Old annual
- Old six-year
- PU
- CPR

What is the status of your last program review action plan/objective?

- Completed
- In Progress
- No Longer Pursuing

Discuss the progress made on the goals in your action plan(s) (if last program review was a PU or CPR) or annual objective(s) (if last program review was an annual or old six-year).

In winter 2025 the Earth Sciences department completed their move into the new MSB. They were the first department to move into the structure and were the first department to start teaching classes in the building during Spring 2025. The department worked through challenges with contractors who remained in the building and who continued completion of the structure during the opening semester.

In Fall 2025 the Earth Sciences department was instrumental in planning, promoting, and running the MSB open house for the broader Santa Monica Community. Tours of labs, demonstrations, tours of the new telescope and planetarium were all facilitated by numerous Earth Science faculty.

The second goal from our previous program review was to revitalize off campus learning opportunities. This was achieved with the successful completion of GEOG 35F: Field Studies of California course which ran over spring break 2026. The course was organized and directed by Drs. Lisa Collins & Joy Fritschle with 21 students who participated and spent a week on Catalina Island at the USC Wrigley Marine Science Center.

As a department, we also leveraged this work to spend our spring department flex time volunteering and tending the land at the [Tongva Kuruvungna Springs](#).

End of Progress Update Past Action Plans

2. Considering your program's past plans and the developments over the past two years, what challenges and concerns need to be addressed in the next two-year review period?

The biggest challenges remain staffing (both classified and faculty) and preserving WTH in scheduling. Inadequate resources from both of these are the primary drivers of low morale within our department.

3. Broadly discuss the most critical resources you anticipate needing to effectively implement the goals in your program's action plan in the next review period. If applicable, your answers here should inform the specific line item requests in your future Annual Resource Requests (ARR).

In every Program Review report over the past 20+ years, the Earth Sciences Department has requested the hiring of a laboratory technician. We are the only science department on campus who does not have a lab tech. An outcome of the last program review cycle was the acknowledgement from senior administrators that departmental support was woefully inadequate and required a lab technician. That support never materialized.

The Earth Sciences department previously employed a full time Planetarium Director, Jon Hodge. After he passed over two decades ago, the college has filled the gaps with part-time contractors. With the new Planetarium and the world-class Astronomical Observatory atop MSB, we require a full time Director of Planetarium and Rooftop Observatory outreach programs. This request was not fulfilled and as a result, the multi-million dollar telescopes on the roof of MSB are unused assets. This type of equipment requires regular maintenance and the lack of personnel to operate and maintain it runs the risk of the equipment being ruined or requiring costly repairs after sitting dormant for years.

We also need to have our retiring full-time faculty positions filled in the next hiring cycles. Like many other departments across campus, several of our full-time department faculty are planning or nearing their retirement. As a small department, the loss or gain of a full-time hire has enormous impacts. Retirements that are not replaced with new full time faculty lines will disproportionately impact our small department. We are currently down one full-time astronomy faculty. With shrinking full-time faculty in the Earth Sciences Department, it becomes increasingly difficult to staff all the committees that are required of an academic department (Curriculum, FA, AS etc.), and to also meet our outside of teaching responsibilities (faculty evaluations, AS Club advisors etc.).

Another challenge we face is the desire to expand our field classes and off campus opportunities for learning. The disciplines in the Earth Sciences Department (Anthropology, Astronomy, Geography, Geology, Sustainable Technologies) are based upon field research and field methodologies and practices. The demand and desire for courses similar to GEOG 35 F (offered spring 2026) is high, yet it is very difficult for faculty to create these opportunities due to the College's high risk-aversion. Nearly all field course opportunities that faculty desire to create require some driving in order to fulfill course learning objectives. We know our students frequently lack reliable means of transportation.

Asking students to drive themselves (and others) along with shouldering the burden of the costs of driving is inequitable. Requiring students to use a private vehicle for transportation during a course also selects against our most marginalized students.

STEM funding is another critical area of need. Given the college's current budget issues, this may be an ongoing problem for next few years.

Instructions for Area Vice President

This section is to be completed by the Area VP Please provide feedback, comments, and observations regarding the department or program's progress update. Your input will help guide next steps and support continuous improvement

N/A

Submission Instructions

CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed the Progress Update! Please save your document in PDF and email it to your Area Vice President for review.

This form is completed and ready for acceptance.

Completed Date: 5/11/2026

Completed By: COLLINS_LISA-COLLINS_LISA