

Ecosystem Science Center (ESC)

Charter

Approved: September 2004

A. Mission

“To promote understanding of ecosystem function through education and research at Michigan Technological University”

B. Vision

The Ecosystem Science Center (ESC) will advance our understanding of how ecosystems function and how human activities influence ecosystem processes. To achieve this, the Center will:

- (1) foster ecosystem research through the acquisition of extramural support; and
- (2) improve Michigan Tech’s ability to educate graduate and undergraduate students in the area of ecosystem science.

C. Description of Proposed Activities

The ESC will be located in the School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science and open to all interested faculty, staff and students at Michigan Technological University.

The Center engages in three main activities:

Activity 1: Fostering quality ecosystem science through the acquisition of extramural grants and contracts.

Activity 2: Improving educational opportunities.

Activity 3: Promoting Ecosystem Science and Education at Michigan Tech

Activity 1: Fostering quality ecosystem science through the acquisition of extramural grants and contracts.

The ESC brings together faculty and staff interested in ecosystem science and provides the guidance and resources necessary to attract funding from competitive sources such as the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, the USDA National Research Initiative and other agencies/organizations that primarily fund highly competitive extramural grants. Senior scientists of the ESC will mentor young faculty, post-doctoral scholars and graduate students on how to assemble successful grant applications. The ESC will also hold meetings at least twice each semester during the academic year for faculty and staff to review pending research opportunities and to encourage interdisciplinary grant applications.

Activity 2: Improving educational opportunities.

The ESC will focus on attracting extramural support for educational activities. This will occur through applications for extramural resources to advance education. Examples of programs that fund such activities include, but are not limited to: NSF Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) supplements and site awards, other targeted calls for educational initiatives from NSF, DOE, and NIH, for example, the NSF IGERT program, Graduate Fellowships and Post-Doctoral Grants through agencies (NSF, DOE, NIH, etc.), and educational initiatives supported by Private Foundations.

Activity 3: Promoting Ecosystem Science and Education at Michigan Tech

The ESC will join in the financial support and promotion of the new and highly successful “Distinguished Ecologist Lecture Series”, which currently enrolls approximately 20 graduate students and attracts distinguished ecologists from around the world to Tech’s campus in the fall semester. The establishment of the Center will *de facto* help in attracting graduate students to campus. In addition, the Center’s Director and Members will work together to build high-quality internet and printed recruiting materials that attract better graduate students to Michigan Tech.

The ESC will to help sponsor national and international workshops hosted by MTU, which will aid Michigan Tech in meeting its strategic plan. In addition, the ESC will encourage and support graduate student and member attendance at national meetings such as the annual meeting of the Ecological Society of America and the Soil Science Society of America. The Center will also promote research in ecosystem sciences at MTU through the sponsorship of on-campus faculty and student activities and events at appropriate national and international scientific meetings.

The ESC will also promote the availability of advanced instrumentation for ecosystem research through the maintenance of its stable isotope facilities

and other laboratory instrumentation. Center members will seek additional support for instrumentation through extramural sources such as the USDA NRI Program and the NSF Division of Biological Instrumentation. The ESC Director will negotiate matching funds for extramural equipment grants with the Vice President of Research and the Dean of the School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science.

D. Governance Structure and Management

The Director will serve a four-year renewable term. In the spring semester of 2008, at the end of the first four-year term, the Director will be selected based on a nomination process and secret ballot of the eligible voting members of the Center. Should the Director resign mid-term, a new Director will be chosen through a nomination process formulated by eligible voting members of the ESC. The Director will be provided with a half-time assistant supported by the ESC.

Responsibilities of the Director

- The Director will distribute an agenda at the beginning of each of the four annual meetings, and meetings will follow the agenda as amended by members at the beginning of each meeting.
- The Director will distribute an updated summary of the ESC finances at the beginning of each of the four annual meetings.
- The Director will supervise the Director's assistant to ensure that the duties of that position are met to the satisfaction of the members of the Center.

Responsibilities of the Director's Assistant

- All meetings will be announced at least two weeks in advance and members will be able to forward agenda items for each meeting to the Director's Assistant.
- The Assistant's responsibility will be to maintain the Center's books, help maintain the Center's web presence, answer queries and correspondence, and solve general problems.
- The Assistant will keep minutes of each meeting and they will be distributed to members within two weeks following each meeting.

Responsibilities of Members of the ESC

Members will collectively decide how to distribute resources among the three activities described above at the first and third meeting of each academic year (near the beginning of the fall and spring semesters). Priorities for the distribution of resources will hopefully be decided by consensus, but a simple majority vote will be used to resolve any disagreements. Members have the responsibility for making proposals for the distribution of resources through the meeting agenda and planning

activities in advance so that all voting members have a voice in the distribution of resources.

Membership in the ESC will be open to all faculty, staff, post-doctoral associates, and adjunct-faculty participating in research and graduate education in the subject area. However, full membership (including voting privileges) will be limited to those members serving as Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigator or Official Collaborator on currently funded extramural projects that generate overhead return. An Official Collaborator is defined as a Co-Principal Investigator that has attached a letter of collaboration to an extramurally funded grant that generates overhead return at the time of submission, but he/she is not listed as a Co-Principal Investigator on the grant cover sheet. Full membership may also be granted to faculty and staff that directly support ESC activities through other funding avenues, such as direct support of ESC staff. New and existing members that are not involved in active grants that generate overhead or direct staff support can participate in all ESC activities, but they cannot vote on the allocation of ESC resources, appointment of the Director, or on changes in the ESC Charter. However, the amount of overhead generated by any full members of the ESC will not be criteria for decision-making. Any amount of overhead generated is sufficient to participate as a full voting member of the ESC. The purpose of these restrictions is to keep the ESC focused on the generation of extramural grant support that will encourage growth of the Center. The Center cannot accomplish its mission without extramural grant support.

Meetings

The ESC will hold at least four meetings each academic year, two in each academic semester.

E. Annual Report

The ESC will submit an annual report to the Vice President for Research at the end of each academic year. The Director will prepare the annual report in consultation with the ESC members. The annual report will summarize the activities of the Center for the past year.

F. Governance Document Review

Proposed changes to the Charter can be initiated and discussed by a simple majority of voting members of the ESC. Changes to the Charter must then be approved by a two-thirds majority of the members eligible to vote.

G. Approval Signatures

Kurt S. Pregitzer, Director Date

Margaret Gale, Dean, School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science Date

David D. Reed, Vice President for Research, Dean of the Graduate
School Date

Warren K. Wray, Provost and Senior Vice President Date