March 18, 2014

TO: Divisional Chair Kum-Kum Bhavnani
   Academic Senate

FR: Chair Naomi Tague, Faculty Executive Committee
    Bren School of Environmental Science & Management

RE: ESCI On-line pilot program

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the ESCI on-line pilot program. The Bren School Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) supports an expedited move to the on-line ESCIs. The Bren School would like to move to on-line ESCIs as early as spring 2014.

As we already do for paper evaluations, we would reserve the last 15-20 minutes during the last lecture or discussion of each Bren course to complete the online ESCIs. The timing of the evaluation would be an incentive for participation by all students who attend the last class session (typically most enrolled students).

In advance of the evaluations, the instructor would ask students to bring laptops to the last class. Most Bren graduate students own laptops and regularly bring them to class. If a student does not own a laptop, we would invite him/her to the Bren Student Computing Facility (SCF) to complete the evaluation. The SCF has over 50 computers for use by Bren graduate students. We recognize that student access to personal laptops and desktop computers in the SCF will facilitate the move to on-line ESCIs. We acknowledge that other UCSB departments may not have ready access to computing facilities and not all UCSB students own laptop computers so these issues may present challenges to completion of on-line ESCIs in those departments.

We propose that, during the online evaluation period, the instructor would leave and a Bren staff member would lead the students through the process to log on to the online ESCI evaluation. The staff member then would stand by to answer questions that students might have.

The Bren FEC members do not agree that the ESCI evaluations should be open for a period of time (weeks) prior to the end of the class. Bren courses frequently offer synthetic topics, discussions, assignments, and projects in the last few weeks or days. If evaluations are completed early, they do not take into account the full scope of the course.

The Bren School offers many 10-week courses, which would be evaluated in the last week of the quarter (Week 10). We also offer short courses, e.g., 5 weeks, 2 weeks, 1 week, 2 day and
1 day. For these short courses, we would like to schedule the ESCI evaluations during the last class period, whenever that falls within the quarter. This could be anytime, including Week 1, Week 2, etc. We would like to have the ability to open the ESCIs for a particular course at the appropriate time. If we are not able to access digital ESCIs for short courses that finish prior to Week 10, then we propose that we could use paper ESCIs for these short courses and on-line ESCIs for the standard 10-week courses.

The Bren School FEC does not recommend making the grade available early as an incentive for students to submit the evaluations. Many faculty need all the time between the final exam or paper and the time when grades are due to the Registrar.

The on-line ESCIs will save our staff a great deal of time (weeks) that is currently spent typing the student comments into Word documents. We are requesting access to on-line ESCIs in spring 2014. Thank you for your consideration.