Follow up: The Institute of Earth Sciences (April 2007)

1. The review committee on the Institute of Earth Sciences completed its evaluation with a positive assessment of the Institute, its staff and students, and with the recommendation that there should a strong focus on mapping out a long-term strategy for its future development. As the result of the evaluation process, the faculty members of the Institute of Earth Sciences are now in the finishing stages of formulating a ten-year planning and development program.

2. The committee recommended that emphasis should be placed on environmental studies and strengthening the fields of climatology, oceanography and atmospheric sciences. In response to this recommendation, the Institute has created a new undergraduate teaching program (major) in Climate, Atmospheric Sciences and Oceanography, which will begin in the next academic year. Recently, Professor Yehuda Enzel was appointed head of the Environmental Sciences teaching program, which comprises approximately 120 students from different teaching units. Likewise emphasis has been given to these fields (together with Geophysics) in the search for new academic appointments at present being made by the Institute’s search committee and to be brought to the Faculty appointments committee in the near future.

3. The Committee recommended strengthening and expansion of the ties with the Interuniversity Institute in Elat, the Geophysical Institute, and the Geological Survey of Israel, including their warm commendation for the proposed movement of the latter institution to Givat Ram. In the above context, an appointment of researcher/artist is presently in progress, which will strengthen the connection between the Institute of Earth Sciences and the Interuniversity Institute. Likewise, an agreement has been signed for cooperation in research and teaching, and considerable progress has been made in the negotiations for the future movement of the Geological Survey to Givat Ram. Most recently, there have been serious discussions on engaging several of the research staff of the Geological Survey as adjunct lecturers in the teaching programs of the Institute of Earth Sciences.

4. The committee recommended expansion of the teaching in physics and mathematics to students of the Earth Sciences. The Faculty administration will make every effort to achieve this aim through the creation of smaller tutorial groups by appointing more teaching assistants in physics and mathematics. It must be emphasized, however, that the continuous depreciation in recent years of the university funding for teaching has especially damaged learning in physics and chemistry.

5. The committee strongly recommended unification of Physical Geography in the University. In our opinion, implementation of this recommendation necessitates a critical university examination of the present-day needs of both Faculties and their plans for the future.

6. The Institute of Earth Sciences was the first academic unit in the Faculty to be examined by an evaluation committee and this choice came as a considerable surprise to its members. Thus, it is important to emphasize that on the completion of the work of the committee, the Institute members were unanimous in their praise of the evaluation process, and felt that very positive lessons and insights had been accomplished that were not possible by any other means.

Addendum: Professor Yehuda Enzel, previously with a joint appointment at Physical Geography, Social Sciences and at the Institute of Earth Sciences, Givat Ram has now formally moved to a full-time position in the Institute of Earth Sciences. This move implements a key recommendation of the committee summarized in item 5, and completes our action in that respect.