

Fresno State task force calls for more water education programs

By Ricardo
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Fresno State president Joseph Castro received the report from a water task force that calls on the university to lead research into water saving.

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A water task force report by Fresno State faculty and administrators and local agriculture leaders calls for strengthening the school's programs and research aimed at educating the next crop of Valley water policy leaders and managers.

The report, which was released Friday, was comprised over the course of a year by a 19-person task force formed by university President Joseph Castro. Much of the report's findings and recommendations are aimed at improving or creating new water education programs and academic curricula.

Among the recommendations were the creation of new majors and minors — as well as establishing a water-related graduate program — that will include more specified courses on water systems operations and management, irrigation technology and water resource management. Also suggested were more opportunities for students, such as internships at the Water and Energy Technology Incubator housed on campus.

The school offers a water management graduate degree through an online extension program, but no undergraduate

degree programs are specifically focused on water policy or management.

The report also calls for the creation of a new administrative position, the “associate vice president for water programs,” that will oversee Fresno State’s efforts and serve as director of the California Water Institute. The task force said the new position would provide much-needed oversight and guidance in the university’s efforts to broaden its water programs, especially as it hopes to bolster degree offerings.

“Public perception is that Fresno State suffers from a lack of focus and coordination of activities,” the report said.

Castro created the task force in his first year as president.

“Fresno State is uniquely positioned to help the Central Valley and state shape our evolving water management practices,” Castro said.

“Located in the heart of the nation’s richest agriculture area, our university has an opportunity to dramatically strengthen connections between and among our faculty, staff and students from disciplines such as agriculture, civil engineering, earth science and public policy to create a new, bolder vision of how to use water more wisely in the 21st century.”

The report also called for the possible formation of an “executive committee for water” and an advisory board composed of regional water leaders.

A copy of the full report is available at <http://bit.ly/FS-water-task-force-report>.

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