UWGB mission describes present situation—Weidner

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UWGB is on a special mission from the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents.

It's a new mission which, after nearly two years of faculty and administrative work, was approved by the Regents in August.

The new mission provides for "programs offering a problem-focused approach, including an emphasis on regional, national and global environmental issues..."

The old mission, written in 1974, had similar language: "...emphasizing interdisciplinary, problem-centered study of man in the environment."

Historically, the words "environmental" and "environment" have been interpreted differently causing some to claim the mission was originally and solely to address natural environment issues. Not so, according to UWGB's first employee.

"We always meant it (environment) as all human environments," said former UWGB Chancellor Edward Weidner. "But many, especially in the 70's, thought we were strictly green environmentalists."

"Actually, contrary to what many believe, UWGB did not begin on an environmental plank, but began on an order by the Regents to offer an interdisciplinary focus," said Weidner.

He said prior to 1974, UWGB used a statement developed by its faculty. The first formal mission statement came as a result of the 1972 merger between the UW and Wisconsin State systems.

"In the past, UWGB did focus more on environmental issues," said Science and Environmental Change Chair Harold Day. "But 'environmental' had a much broader meaning than it does today." Day said both the old and new mission statements clearly tie UWGB to area trends and needs.

He said there are fewer teaching assignments in his field today because there are fewer students enrolled there. "Locally and nationally, people are becoming less interested in their natural environments," Day said.

Weidner said the new mission has not changed the direction of UWGB, but has described the prevailing situation in more depth.