

Monday 7.13.2026 – 2:56 p.m.

Amanda Poole<pooleab@iup.edu>

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Dear Members of the Student Cooperative Association Board,

Thank you to Dr. Castle and Mr. Garzarelli for meeting with Jonathan Warnock, BA

Harrington, and me on Friday to discuss the proposed tree removal in the Co-op forest.

I am writing to the full Board, and copying President Driscoll and Provost Luetkehans,

because Friday's meeting raised serious concerns about the direction, process, and

institutional implications of this project. I am also writing as someone who represented

IUP at the PASSHE Brandywine Sustainability Summit at West Chester University this June.

There, I learned about the Gordon Natural Area and how a university forest can be

stewarded as a living educational landscape that supports research, student life,

sustainability, wellness, recruitment, retention, and community partnership. What is

happening now in the Co-op forest appears directly at odds with that kind of vision.

We all share a commitment to student well-being and to ensuring that the forest is safe

and managed with care. But the current process raises several concerns that require

Board-level attention before irreversible work proceeds:

- **This has not been a transparent process.** We were told that the full plan and related documents cannot be shared because of contractual confidentiality. We were also told that students and faculty were represented through Board members. But representation is not transparency if representatives do not inform, consult, or report back to their constituents. Faculty and students were not meaningfully alerted to the scale, timing, rationale, or consequences of this project before approval.
- **The process is out of step with IUP's mission, strategic plan, and values.** IUP has committed itself to student-centeredness, experiential learning, shared governance, sustainability, community partnership, and the production and dissemination of knowledge. A confidential tree-removal contract, developed without meaningful student or faculty engagement, does not reflect those commitments and is already damaging relationships with alumni, community members, environmental partners, and others who care deeply about these connected forests.
- **No current PNDI review was conducted for this project.** Please explain why. Even if the Co-op believes it is not legally required to conduct a PNDI, that does not explain why it would not do so as a matter of due diligence, ecological care, and educational responsibility. This is especially concerning because a recent PNDI for the connected White's Woods area identified sensitive bat habitat and seasonal concerns related to timbering.

- **The scope and ecological impacts remain unclear.** Please clarify the acreage affected by the current project, including cutting areas, access routes, staging areas, and equipment movement. We were told that approximately 250,700 board feet are scheduled for removal. Many marked trees visible in the forest appear healthy and are not limited to obvious hazards along trails or near buildings. What is the plan for preventing and managing invasive species, soil disturbance, stormwater impacts, damage to unmarked trees, and effects on the contiguous forest system shared with White's Woods?
- **There appears to be no long-term stewardship plan for the Co-op forest.** This is perhaps the most troubling issue. If safety is the concern, a stewardship plan is the appropriate framework for addressing it alongside forest health, trail access, invasive-species management, education, recreation, and ecological protection. A confidential contract with a commercial logger is not a substitute for long-term stewardship. The forest is an ecological system, an educational space, a place with history and meaning for students, alumni, and community members, and a potential asset for IUP's future. Best practices for stewardship planning begin by understanding a site's history, purpose, current uses, ecological conditions, and community relationships. This process would be a wonderful learning opportunity for our students. A process that begins and ends with a confidential tree-removal contract cannot substitute for that work and will likely make it much harder to accomplish.

It is not too late to choose a better path. **I respectfully ask the Board to halt all non-emergency tree removal until a current PNDI review is completed, the full project scope and ecological rationale are shared, and a public meeting with students, faculty, alumni, and community stakeholders is held.** Trees that pose an immediate, documented hazard can be addressed separately through an independent tree-risk process.

The Co-op forest could become one of IUP's most meaningful natural assets, supporting wellness, research, environmental health, rehabilitation, recruitment, retention, and place-based learning through partnerships among the new medical school, Sustainability Studies, AGES, Biology, the Wood Center, student recreation, alumni, and community partners. As an environmental anthropologist, I would be happy to facilitate such a process. Models such as West Chester's Gordon Natural Area show what is possible when a university forest is treated as a living educational landscape rather than a liability problem.

Proceeding now risks irrevocable harm to the forest, to IUP's ability to build such a landscape, and to the university's reputation and community relationships. I urge the Board to pause, disclose the plan, invite public discussion, and begin a true stewardship process.

Sincerely,

Amanda Poole

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Now available from Indiana University Press - [*Hosting States and Unsettled Guests: Eritrean Refugees in a Time of Migration Deterrence*](#).
Jennifer Riggan and Amanda Poole, 2024.