

HSU Academic Department Report - Geography September 30, 2008 - Program Prioritization

Insert the department mission statement and the department goals. In addition, provide a brief (2 page limit) overview of the departmental history with emphasis on the last 5 years.

Mission and Goals

The Geography Department at Humboldt State University is committed to providing a top quality undergraduate education to students in the field of contemporary geography. Geography is a holistic discipline, which integrates both the social and physical sciences, bringing to bear a spatial perspective on human and physical phenomena.

The integrative approach offered by geography is attracting attention nationwide. Alexander Murphy, the President of the Association of American Geographers, attributes geography's rising profile to three overlapping developments:

1) growing recognition of the importance of spatial perspectives in the environmental and social sciences, (2) expanding employment opportunities for individuals with geographical training, and (3) mounting interest in the subject in the face of increasing globalization and heightened environmental awareness.¹

Geography at Humboldt State University rests on five foundations. Our major is built around a core of human-cultural and physical geography courses, augmented by strong training in cartography and mapping science. In addition, our majors are required to take a sequence of cornerstone and capstone courses that emphasize college level skills in reading, writing, research, oral presentation, and technology. Finally, the department maintains an abiding commitment to getting our students out into the field, whether in the local region, the mountains and canyons of the American West, or the remote reaches of China and Tibet.

To add breadth to the major, geography students also sign up for a minor, designed to provide an additional specialized skill. This might include GIS (Geographic Information System) training

¹ Murphy, A. B. "Geography's Expanding Place in American Education." *College Board Review*, No. 191, August 2000, pp. 2-6. [Reprinted in *AAG Newsletter*, 35 (11), November 2000, pp. 6-8.]

for those specializing in cartography and mapping sciences, a language for those pursuing foreign area studies, statistics, or other topics

Departmental History

Humboldt State University hired its first geographer in 1964. The department was established formally in 1972. Geography's first decades were dominated by traditional regional geography, complemented by old-style "pen and ink" cartography. At its peak, the department boasted eight full-time equivalent faculty members. The Recession of the 1990s eroded this number, as some retirements were not replaced, and like many departments at HSU, geography remains below full strength.

At present geography has 5.1 full-time equivalent faculty members. However, the department's influence far exceeds its relatively small size. Averaging 30, geography has the one of the highest student-faculty ratios in the University. We consistently produce over one hundred majors, and graduate between forty and fifty students per year. Despite having many fewer faculty members than other departments in the CSU, Humboldt Geography produces the fourth highest number of geography majors in the system.

In 1997, Dr. Margaret Pearce was successful in obtaining a National Science Foundation grant, which completely transformed our cartography program. Humboldt State University shifted from "pen and ink" cartography to state-of-the-art computer generated mapping. The "Kosmos" lab was established, training HSU students in new techniques of digital cartography, incorporating related techniques of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Kosmos is not merely a mapping lab, but one dedicated to introducing contemporary visualization techniques across the curriculum. Many geography classes now incorporate large posters and other graphic elements produced by students in the Kosmos lab. As a result, HSU geography students have acquired a national reputation. Our students compete—and often win—in competitions with students from such cartographic powerhouses as Harvard University and Pennsylvania State University at the national meetings of the North American Cartographic Information Society (NACIS).

HSU geography students also have a record of outstanding performance in state and regional competitions. Our students regularly dominate the map, paper, and poster competitions at the annual meetings of the California Geographical Society (CGS) and the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers (APCG). HSU Geography students also perform well at regional competitions such as the West Coast Model Arab League, where Humboldt State students have won "Outstanding Delegate" awards and have even been elected to the position of Secretary General.

Our faculty members have published widely, and have taken leadership roles in numerous interdisciplinary and cross-college initiatives. These include strong linkages with Environmental Studies, Natural Resources Planning, International Studies, Women's Studies, Environment and Community, and other programs.

II. Departmental Faculty and Staff

Geography Dept Instructors -- AY Average Count of Appointments facpos_GEOG report generated: 22-FEB-08						
Appt Category	AY 02/03	AY 03/04	AY 04/05	AY 05/06	AY 06/07	AY 07/08
Lecturer	4	3	3	4	3	4
Assist Prof	0	0	0	0	1	1
Assoc Prof	1	1	1	1	1	0
Professor	3	3	3	4	4	4
Volunteer	0	1	1	0	0	0
Total	7	7	8	9	9	8

Geography AY average FTEF (time base totals) facpos_GEOG report generated: 22-FEB-08						
Appt Category	AY 02/03	AY 03/04	AY 04/05	AY 05/06	AY 06/07	AY 07/08
Lecturer	1.43	1.19	1.09	1.36	1.13	1.32
Assist Prof	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00	1.00
Assoc Prof	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	.00
Professor	2.50	2.50	2.50	3.00	2.60	2.80
Volunteer	.00	.10	.17	.00	.00	.00
Total	4.93	4.79	4.76	5.36	5.73	5.12

Geography department release/assigned time facpos_GEOG report generated: 22-FEB-08						
Assignment Description	AY 02/03	AY 03/04	AY 04/05	AY 05/06	AY 06/07	AY 07/08
Excess Enrollment (=>75)	.53	.37	.53	.40	.47	.20
New Preparations	.00	.00	.00	.00	.10	.00
Instr Experimt Innov/Research	.00	.00	.03	.00	.00	.00
Calif Faculty Assoc Activities	.20	.20	.00	.10	.10	.20
Dept Chair AY, Leaders/Dir.	.13	.13	.13	.13	.13	.13
Dept Chair - 12mo	.26	.26	.26	.26	.26	.26
Total	1.12	.96	.95	.89	1.06	.79

Personnel (At least .5 FTE)

Name	Position	Description of Specialty and Key Contributions (no more than 100 words per person)
Dr. Joy Adams	Asst. Professor	Primary interests are in Ethnic Geography, Landscape Analysis, Heritage tourism, North America and Experiential Learning. Active in local area with Hoopa Tribe, Barn Preservation Commission and lower division cross-disciplinary GE program.
Dr. Paul Blank	Professor	Primary interests lie in Historical Geography, Cultural Geography, Middle East, Pacific Basin and World Economy. Director of West Coast Model Arab League on campus, active in International Studies and Global Awareness.
Mary Beth Cunha	Cartograp ic Lab Manager (.5); Lecturer	Teaches Mapping Sciences, Mapping Practicum and has taught Cartography and Cartographic Design. Manages our cart lab and is co-director of Institute for Cartographic Design. Currently on board of Directors of North American Cartographic Information Society.
Dr. Stephen Cunha	Professor	Primary interests in Cultural Geography, Environment and Conservation, Mountain Geography and Central Asia. Director of the California Geographic Alliance, state Geographic Bee. Recipient of multiple grants.
Dr. Dennis Fitzsimons	Professor	Teaches beginning and advanced Cartography, Research and Writing. Served as Cartographic Editor for two professional geography journals. Active in presenting to Teaching American History teachers and principal investigator to multiple Wintu Tribal grants. Director of Institute for

		Cartographic Design.
Chris Haynes	Lecturer (.80)	Teaches Intro to Physical Geography, California, Agricultural Geography, Advanced Physical and Field Geography. Also serves on the Academic Senate and as Lecturer Representative to the California Faculty Association.
Mary Hackett	ASC (.60)	Office manager for department budget, scheduling, administrative duties. Also serves as administrative support for the California Geographic Alliance.
Thomas Jones	Emeritus Professor	Teaches GE course Darwin and Darwinism and workshops on Mayan Hieroglyphics.
Dr. Joseph Leeper	Emeritus Professor and Dept Chair	Serves as department chair and teaches Geography for Teachers and Latin America. Active in Social Science education.

III. Recruitment and Retention

Describe any specific actions (other than HOP or similar standard efforts) the department has taken to recruit and/or retain students, particularly diversity students and/or students who are underrepresented in your discipline. What have been the results of those actions?

- The Geography Department has had at least one faculty person teaching either *Introduction to Cultural Geography* or *Introduction to Physical Geography* at College of the Redwoods for over two decades. This has typically resulted in six to 10 majors a year from transfer students.
- The Geography Department has developed a list of California junior colleges that offer geography courses for which we have direct contact people. We have sent letters and departmental literature to each of these campuses. This effort has resulted in two to four transfers per year.
- The Geography Department has developed a list of California high schools that offer AP Geography courses and sent letters and departmental literature to AP teachers. Only one student has enrolled at HSU as result of these efforts.
- The Geography Department has multiple contacts with local high school teachers through Geographic Education programs, the California Geographic Alliance Outreach Program, and the Teaching American History Program. Usually two to three students come to HSU as result of these contacts.

- Several of our alumni and current students visit their local high schools and junior colleges and act as HSU ambassadors. Their efforts have produced several students.
- The Geography Department takes group of majors to annual meeting of the California Geographic Society, where our students participate in various student competitions. Our students have been very successful, and we often get two to four students to transfer to HSU after seeing our students and faculty at these meetings.

Retention:

- The Geography Department has an active geographic society that promotes geography and geographical activities. Its activities include study groups for classes, fundraising, field trips, and community service.
- The Geography Department provides list of qualified majors who are qualified to act as tutors to the University Testing Center and Student Affairs.
- Dr. Adams has founded a chapter of Support Women in Geography (SWIG).
- Two Geography Department faculty who are qualified GWPE graders offer regular help sessions to interested students.
- Our cartography lab services multiple classes, and our two primary cartography instructors often are available during off hours for help. In addition, many students help other students on regular basis.
- Several faculty members have student educational assistants they use for student study sessions.
- Reflecting national trends, the Geography Department has few diversity majors. However, the few that we do have have often excelled. These include Sebastian Araya, HSU's "Man of the Year" for 2002.
- Our male/female ratio among students is currently 60/40. This ratio has improved with the hiring of Dr. Joy Adams, who serves as an excellent role model for women in the discipline. We hope future hires will attract more women into the program.

IV. Learning, Curriculum, and Assessment.

List the student learning outcomes for your academic programs. Then for each learning outcome that has been assessed, provide a summary paragraph that includes the methodology and results of the assessment.

The Geography Department has condensed the standards of geography into eleven departmental goals used for assessment purposes.

- *Goal One:* To foster a holistic view of the world, its regions and their spatial relationships and its environmental problems through integration of ideas and information from different disciplines and perspectives
- *Goal Two:* To cultivate a keen sense of place and an appreciation of the cultures of landscape as a product of human activity and value, fashioned from the elements of the physical environment
- *Goal Three:* To develop in students the ability to analyze the elements of the physical and cultural landscape through the evolution of focus and/or in a historical perspective
- *Goal Four:* To introduce selected regional specialization of the world and allow for selected breadth in required offerings
- *Goal Five:* To introduce selected sub-fields of physical and human geography and provide the opportunity for a reasonably comprehensive exposure to one or more of them
- *Goal Six:* To use and interpret maps and other “geo-graphics” as basic means of communication and to emphasize locational analysis through the active use of maps
- *Goal Seven:* To allow for exercises in effective presentation of the results of geographic analysis through development of proficiency in verbal and written modes of expression to complement the geographic skills
- *Goal Eight:* To cultivate the multiple abilities basic to geographic research, especially through actual off-campus field studies, locally, regionally and/or internationally

- *Goal Nine:* To encourage breadth in the academic experience through a minor within the major in complementary discipline or disciplines
- *Goal Ten:* To demonstrate through a combination of community service (such as student internships) in applied field research experiences that a geographer is a valued partner in any problem-solving, critical thinking, decision making enterprise in either academic or career context
- *Goal Eleven:* To help the student prepare to be an enlightened citizen, able to play an active role in society's determination of the importance of events through objective analysis and objective critical thinking

Example One: Departmental Learning Outcome Eight---*cultivate basic multiple abilities basic to geographic research, especially through actual off-campus field studies, locally, regionally and/or internationally.*

All three of our required majors classes (*Geography 216-Mapping Science; Geography 311-Geographical Research and Writing; and Geography 411-Senior Field Research*) have employed several assessment techniques over three semesters. One method employed a questionnaire dealing with geographic skills and student self assessment. This was administered at the end of the semester. A second method involved an extra credit assignment asking students to develop a research topic and which geographic skills would be employed. A third method involved embedding a scenario as part of test asking students to demonstrate knowledge of research and basic skills by solving a detailed problem. The Geography faculty examined each assessment and compiled the results.

Example Two: General Education Assessment (Areas B and D)

The Geography Department has also done General Education Assessment of both Area B and Area D courses. All departments in The College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Science offering Area D General Education courses were required to assess the same learning objective: students' knowledge of disciplinary terms and concepts. Geography has done a pilot study using

analysis of essay questions on tests and key word analysis of book reports. The Geography faculty discussed these results, and resolved to refine and continue these assessment efforts.

The Geography Department faculty has now instituted a policy of embedding needs assessment across all skills classes, and currently is working on creating a departmental rubric covering all geography classes. We now require learning objectives to be listed in all department syllabi, and anticipate extending our assessment efforts to these classes. Procedures, data and results are now housed in the Geography Department office.