

Department of Geography Annual Report – 2011

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I. Department Mission Statement

The Department of Geography is committed to excellence through the delivery of outstanding undergraduate and graduate education that remains current and responsive to the diverse needs of those it serves.

II. Summary of Significant Accomplishments and Goals for Past Year

Goal 1: Maintain and Enhance Undergraduate/Graduate Curricula

This goal was successfully completed. The department continuously monitors undergraduate and graduate course offerings and makes adjustments and adds and deletes course as needed. Considerable discussion was held regarding the content and name of GEOG 2330, Quantitative Methods in Geography. It was determined that the name be changed and the content reconfigured. A proposal was submitted to offer a non-thesis option in the Master of GIS degree program.

Goal 2: Increase the Number of Geography Majors

This goal was not met. The number of geography majors declined this last year and is lower than it should be. As the university has grown, the number of geography majors has not grown. More effort on in-class recruitment is needed.

Goal 3: Increase Research/Publication Productivity of Geography Faculty.

This goal was successfully met. Collectively, faculty members were engaged in research activities that led to presentations and publications. More could be done in this area, but improvement occurred when compared to previous years. Grants were submitted and funded and articles were submitted and accepted for publication.

Goal 4: Be more active in Undergraduate Research

The department was generally successful in that category. Each semester a few students enroll in GEOG 4360, Special Problems in Geography where they conduct research and write a paper. While we would like to see more students participate, the number has remained rather steady. We do not have enough students participating in the Undergraduate Scholars Program, but the quality of our students this past year was somewhat reduced. Additionally, we do not see many student/faculty research projects. There is room for improvement in this area.

Goal 5: Be more active in Academic Service Learning Activities

Faculty members were less active in this area this year. While there will be expected ebbs and flows, geography faculty have been supportive of academic service learning. We

were less involved this year than last, but we understand the value of academic service learning and will continue to pursue those experiences for our students.

Goal 6: Be more active in Study Abroad Experiences

We were not successful in this area, but plans for future experiences are in the works. While a few students have participated in travel and short-term study experiences with Dr. Green in Russia and Dr. Allender in China, for the most part, we have not pursued study abroad experience for our students. This is a goal where more planning and work are needed.

III. Goals for the Next Year

Goal 1: Maintain and Enhance Undergraduate/Graduate Curricula

Goal 2: Increase the Number of Majors

Goal 3: Increase Research/Publication Productivity of Geography Faculty

Goal 4: Be more active in Undergraduate Research

Goal 5: Be more active in Academic Service Learning Activities

Goal 6: Be more active in Study Abroad Experiences

IV. Long-range Goals

- Increase the number of geography majors to 70
- Increase the number of MGIS students to 30
- Increase the number of CED students to 35
- Add additional regional courses
- Hire a person to replace Dr. Conyers
- Hire a person to replace Dr. Green
- Hire a new department chair
- Strengthen the MGIS degree program
- Purchase needed GPS equipment

V. Challenges

We have had a sound geography program for many years. When students leave our program, they leave very well prepared to enter the workforce or continue their education at the graduate level. Students in our program receive excellent instruction in our topical, regional, technical, and methods courses.

That does not mean, however, that there are not challenges as we attempt to improve each element of the program in the department. The five most important challenges are: 1) increasing the number of majors in geography, 2) meeting the demand for and covering

undergraduate General Education courses, 3) employing a sufficient number faculty members to provide the number and type of courses needed in a quality geography program, 4) transitioning from a department that has consisted of senior faculty members to one consisting of more junior faculty members, and 5) reconfiguring the MGIS degree program to strengthen the course content, provide a better course sequence, and ensure that the reputation of the program is positive.

VI. Opportunities

Opportunities for the Department of Geography lie generally in two areas. First, we must be vigilant in our assessment of current trends in geography so that each element of our program remains relevant and cutting edge. Second, related to that, is the necessity of maintaining the most current technology in software, hardware, and other pedagogical equipment needed in the classroom.

VII. Summary

Each faculty member in the department has been engaged in a wide range of professional growth activities and has generally excelled in his or her attempt to maintain the best geography program possible. Students have generally received an exceptional education and have been well prepared for careers and/or graduate degrees. Our goal is to continually grow the department. The year 2011 played an important role in reaching toward the goal.