

Department of Geography Annual Report – 2009

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I. Department Mission Statement

The Department of Geography seeks to deliver to its students the best geography education in Arkansas. The Department offers a Bachelor of Arts Degree, a Bachelor of Science Degree, a minor in Geography, a minor in Geographic Information Science, a Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems, a Master of GIS degree, and a Master of Science in Community and Economic Development. The Department strives to maintain the highest academic quality and to assure that its curriculum remains current and responsive to the needs of the students it serves. The Department's mission is expressed in its commitment to the personal, social, and intellectual growth of its students; its support for its faculty members' advancement of knowledge; and its service to the community.

The Department of Geography implements its mission through its emphasis on the following central purposes:

- To deliver excellent curricula in degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels,
- To support its programs with personnel of the highest quality and with optimal resources and facilities,
- To create a departmental community that supports students in their personal, social, and intellectual growth,
- To enhance interaction and understanding among diverse groups and to cultivate global perspectives,
- To foster learning and the advancement of knowledge of its faculty through research and other scholarly and creative activities, and
- To serve the public in ways appropriate to the mission and resources of the Department.

II. Goals for 2009 and Summary of Significant Accomplishments

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 additions as needed.

Goal 2: Increase the Number of Geography Majors

This goal was not met. The number of geography majors has remained stable for the past several years. The number is reasonably good, but as the university has grown, the number of geography majors has not grown. More effort on in-classes recruitment is needed.

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

This goal has been successfully met. Collectively, faculty members are engaged in research activities that are leading to presentations and publications. More could be done in this area, but improvement has occurred from previous years.

Goal 4: Be more active in Undergraduate Research

The department is not as successful in that category as it could be. While some undergraduate research is occurring, it is coming primarily from a very few students. The department needs to be more proactive in inviting our better students to become or active in research. We also need to develop more faculty/student research-oriented projects.

Goal 5: Be more active in Academic Service Learning Activities

Faculty members have been fairly active in this area. While there will be expected ebbs and flows, geography faculty are 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 have not yet become successful in this area. 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 is needed.

Significant Accomplishments and Statistics

Curriculum

Changed the required core for Environmental Science majors

Added new electives to Planning and Administration track

Changed GEOG 6390 to GEOG 6190, 6290, and 6390

Changed catalog description for GEOG 3381, Political Geography

Became the host department for the MSCED program

Curriculum-based Workshops Attended

Allender – IDC Design Camp

Allender – IDC Blackboard Gradebook Workshop

Allender – Middle East Workshop

Passé-Smith – ESRI Workshops

Professional Development

Conferences Attended

Allender – National Council for Geographic Education
Allender – Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers
Conyers – Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers
Green – National Council for Geographic Education
Green – Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers
Green – Arkansas Curriculum Conference
Passé-Smith – ESRI International Users Conference
Passé-Smith – Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers
Pearson – Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers
Reynolds – Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers
Yoder – Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers

Conference Presentations

Allender – “Grade Disparity between On-line and Traditional In-class Sections of General Education Geography” NCGE, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Allender – “Moving Part or All of Your Geography Course to an On-line Format: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” SWAAG, North Little Rock, Arkansas
Conyers – “Using a GIS to Study the Spatial Patterns of Bed Material in a Disturbed Watershed” SWAAG, North Little Rock, Arkansas
Green – “Modeling Population Dynamics in Rural Russia” SWAAG, North Little Rock, Arkansas
Green – “Understanding Russian Culture and Ecology” Arkansas Curriculum Conference, Little Rock, Arkansas
Passé-Smith – “Using Regression Analysis for Testing Tornado Modeling Techniques” ESRI International Users Conference, San Diego, California
Pearson – “Deconstructing the Railway Mail Service Maps of Frank H. Galbraith” SWAAG, North Little Rock, Arkansas
Reynolds – “Sustainability and Zoning Regulations: Can They Co-exist? SWAAG, North Little Rock, Arkansas
Yoder – “Form and Function in Small Urban Places: An Overview of Five Micropolitan Cities of Arkansas” SWAAG, North Little Rock, Arkansas
Yoder – “Human Geography and the Rural-Urban Fringe: Case Studies from Northern Mexico and South Texas” Arkansas Geographic Alliance, Conway, Arkansas
Yoder – “Small Cities of Arkansas: What are the Hopes for Economic Development?” UCA Humanities Fair, Conway, Arkansas

Publications

Green – Review of Harm de Blij, *The Power of Place*, in *The Professional Geographer*

Passé-Smith – “Using Regression Analysis for Testing Tornado Modeling Techniques, online, Proceedings of the ESRI International Users Conference

Reynolds – “Hydroelectricity in Arkansas” in *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*

Yoder – Review of Lourdes Casanova’s *Global Latinas: Latin America’s Emerging Multinationals* in *Journal of Social and Ecological Boundaries*

Yoder – Review of Lawrence Herzog’s *Return to the Center: Culture, Public Space, and City Building in a Global Era* in *Geographical Review*

Yoder – Review of Kevin Gallagher and Lyuba Zarsky’s *The Enclave Economy: Foreign Investment and Sustainable Development in Mexico’s Silicon Valley* in *Economic Geography*

Yoder – “Landscapes of Industry and Transportation of North-Central Mexico: Monclova and Torreon, Coahuila,” *Journal of Big Bend Studies*

Yoder – “Contemporary Urban Landscapes of the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas: The Geography of Inland Ports” *Southwestern Geographer*

Grants Funded

Allender – “Advancing Geography Education in Arkansas” National Geographic Education Foundation - \$22,900

Green – “Advancing Geography Education in Arkansas” National Geographic Education Foundation - \$22,900

Green – “Understanding Russian Culture and Ecology” Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program - \$70,000

Pearson – “Visualizing Natural Science Frameworks with Satellite Remote Sensing and GIS,” No Child Left Behind - \$86,767

Pearson – “Arkansas Digital Historical Map Archive,” Arkansas Humanities Council - \$2,000

Pearson – “Arkansas Digital Historical Map Archive/Educational Resource,” UCA Foundation - \$1,650

Yoder – “Micropolitan Arkansas: The Changing Geographies of Small Cities,” UCA Research Council - \$2,100

Other Professional Development Activities

Allender – Review editor, *Society and Natural Resources*

Allender – Review editor, *Journal of Southeastern Geographer*

Green – Review editor, *The Professional Geographer*

Pearson – Review editor, *Cartographic Journal*

Reynolds – Review editor, *Prentice-Hall*

Service

Department

Allender – Chair, Search Committee
Allender – Tenure Committee
Allender – Personnel Advisory Committee
Conyers – Curriculum Committee
Conyers – Graduate Programs Committee
Passé-Smith – Coordinator, GIS Day
Passé-Smith – Search Committee
Pearson – Director, Graduate Programs
Pearson – Search Committee
Pearson – Director, Minton Center
Reynolds – Chair, Curriculum Committee
Reynolds – Search Committee
Reynolds – Coordinator, Internship Program
Reynolds – Coordinator, Graduating Geography Major Assessment Exam
Yoder – Curriculum Committee
Yoder – Search Committee
Yoder – Chair, Search Committee (MSCED Director)
Yoder – Interim Director, MSCED Program

College

Allender – EDGE Committee
Allender – Curriculum Committee
Green – Department Chair
Passe-Smith – Administrator, Social Science Lab
Pearson – Grants Committee
Pearson – Curriculum and Assessment Committee
Reynolds – Promotion and Tenure Committee
Yoder – Research Committee

University

Allender – Coordinator, Environmental Science, Planning and Administration
Track
Allender – Adjustments and Credentials Committee
Allender – Students with Exceptional Circumstances Committee
Allender – Fast Movers
Green – Undergraduate Council
Pearson – Faculty Salary Equity Committee
Reynolds – Advisor, Environmental Alliance
Yoder – Interim Director, MSCED Program
Yoder – Research Council

Community

Allender – City of Conway Tree Board
Allender – Co-coordinator, Arkansas Geographic Alliance
Allender – Coordinator, Arkansas Geographic Bee
Allender – Exam Reader, AP Human Geography
Allender – Judge, Arkansas State Envirothon Competition
Green – Coordinator, Arkansas Geographic Alliance
Green – Project Director, Short-term Seminar in Russia
Pearson – Circle of Friends, Arkansas Children’s Hospital
Pearson – Breakfast with Santa
Pearson – Project Director, Technology workshops for teachers
Reynolds – Judge, Arkansas High School State Science Fair
Yoder – Chair, Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers

Statistics

Curricular/Pedagogical

Number of new programs: 1
Number of new courses approved: 0
Total number of faculty who have been through Technology Associates program to date: 4
Number of faculty teaching in the Residential College Program: 2
Number of faculty teaching in University College: 0
Number of courses taught (including tutorials and theses) in and for the Honors College: 5
Number of independent studies, undergraduate scholars, supervised by faculty: 6
Number of internships supervised: 11
Number of service learning courses taught: 0
Number of study abroad courses delivered: 0

Research

Number of books published: 0
Number of books forthcoming: 0
Number of journal articles and book chapters (forthcoming or published): 3
Number of other items published: 4
Number of international conferences where research was presented: 1
Number of national conferences where research was presented: 2
Number of regional conferences where research was presented: 6
Number of state conferences where research was presented: 2
Number of external grants funded: 4
Number of internal grants funded: 2

Service

Number of College of Liberal Arts committee assignments: 6
Number of UCA committee assignments: 4
Number of community organizations faculty participated in: 10
Number of professional organizations faculty involved with: 3
Number of student organizations and activities faculty participated in: 2

III. Goals for 2010

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. Five-year 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
- Appoint Dr. Michael Yoder as Director, MSCED Program
- Restructure and strengthen MSCED Program
- Add an additional tenure-track line
- Add additional regional courses
- Successfully replace Dr. Reynolds after his retirement
- Successfully replace Dr. Green after his retirement
- Successfully replace Mrs. Rogers after her retirement
- Hire a new department chair
- Examine the possibility of creating a Master of Science in Geography degree

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 program in the department. The four most important challenges may be: 1) increasing the number of majors in geography and enrollment the MGIS and MSCED degree programs; 2) keeping up with the increased demand for graduate-level GIS courses; 3) keeping pace with the demand for greater environmental understanding; and 4) perhaps developing a Center for the Study of Micropolitan Cities and Rural Areas

VI. Opportunities

First, we must do more to attract additional geography majors. That will be accomplished when we more proactively promote geography as an excellent career choice and become more visible on campus.

Second, Dr. Pearson's workload related to graduate student advising and online course instruction may need to be balanced with some students being advised by Ms. Conyers and with her playing a larger role in online course instruction. This may require the rearrangement of existing curriculum and adding an additional tenure-track line.

Third, growing environmental awareness and associated issues must be dealt with by examining curricular offerings and potentially adding at least one more tenure-track line. We also need to look carefully at the pros and cons of a possible joint appointment with the Department of Biology.

Fourth, there appears to be a lack of focus among the institutions of higher learning in the micropolitan cities and rural areas of Arkansas. With some curricular realignment, perhaps new courses, and perhaps a focused tenure-track line, we could play an important role in study of micropolitan cities and rural areas in Arkansas.

VII. Summary

The year, 2009, was an excellent year for the Department of Geography. First, all faculty members were actively engaged in teaching, professional development and service. Second, Ms. Mindy Conyers joined the faculty. Third, the Master of Science in Community and Economic Development is now hosted by the department with Dr. Michael Yoder as Director. And fourth, the department, with Dr. Jeff Allender's skillful leadership, successfully hosted meetings of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers.

The department is excited about the future as we work toward achieving the goals set for 2010.