

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Mission

The Department of Geography advances geography instruction, research and extension to promote and maintain a growing statewide workforce skilled in geographic research and applications.

Vision

The Department of Geography will achieve national and international stature in scholarly and creative activities to enhance the visibility and desirability of the geography program at Oklahoma State University, and capitalize on new opportunities and respond to the changing needs of Oklahomans and society to provide Oklahoma schools, universities, industries and businesses, and those in the surrounding region, with the highest caliber professionals in the field of geography.

Core Values

Excellence – We seek excellence in all our endeavors, and we are committed to continuous improvement.

Intellectual Freedom – We believe in ethical and scholarly questioning in an environment that respects the rights of all to freely pursue knowledge.

Integrity – We are committed to the principles of truth and honesty, and we will be equitable, ethical, and professional.

Service – We believe that serving others is a noble and worthy endeavor.

Diversity – We respect others and value diversity of opinion, freedom of expression, and other ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Stewardship of Resources – We are dedicated to the efficient and effective use of resources. We accept the responsibility of the public's trust and are accountable for our actions.

Goals, Critical Success Factors, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal 1: Human Resources: Retain, promote, and reward outstanding staff and faculty members.

Critical Success Factors:

- Add 2 faculty members to the urban-transportation focus of our department to strengthen research and add specialty classes in this area.
- Add an endowed professor position to our faculty lines (in addition to the 2 faculty lines mentioned above).
- \$48,000/year additional funding for 4 Teaching Associates to permit continued phase-in of reduced teaching loads and offering of 6000-level specialty courses to support new doctoral program.
- Continue phase-in of 2 course per semester teaching load for all full-time faculty.
- Raise salaries for all professorial ranks to levels competitive with peer institutions.
- Improve salaries and benefits for faculty and staff commensurate with regional private sector.
- Increase travel stipends.
- Foster a climate of respect, civility, and fairness.

Objectives:

Objective 1.1: Improve the quality of the work experience for all members of the Department of Geography.

Strategies:

- Encourage a sense of mutual respect and appreciation for each individual's worth and role within the department.
- Encourage faculty participation in all facets of department operations.
- Seek the advice of faculty on matters of department policy and management.
- Regularly nominate faculty and staff for university awards and celebrate occasions of professional and personal accomplishment.
- Regularly schedule functions to encourage social interaction.

Objective 1.2: Improve the terms of employment and conditions for faculty and staff..

Strategies:

- Be courteous and professional toward staff and faculty members.
- Increase faculty travel incentives and make these monies available to staff for occasional professional travel.

- Provide non-conference professional development funds and incentives for faculty and staff.
- Solicit the advice of staff on department issues that affect their situation.
- Better equip offices and enhance computer equipment.
- Strive to avoid conflicts between personnel and move swiftly to resolve disputes.

Goal 2: Access and Diversity: Increase our majors and graduate students and the number of students and faculty from under-represented groups.

Critical Success Factors:

- Increase the number of majors and minors in our program by 25%.
- Increase the percentage of under-represented groups to 25% of our total student body.
- Recruit and retain high quality U.S. graduate students.
- Recruit and admit high quality international graduate students using existing or developing channels.
- Increase the number of doctoral students in our program by 2 per year until reaching a minimum 20 doctoral students enrolled in the program.
- As hiring opportunities allow, recruit women and under-represented faculty members.

Objectives:

Objective 2.1: Attract more undergraduate majors and graduate students.

Strategies:

- Provide superior student advising and counseling.
- Work with university recruiters to inform potential students of our programs.
- Have the advisors of our undergraduate and graduate programs personally contact interested students.
- Identify new sources of financial aid.
- Work to bring in new sources of extramural funding that provide support for the hiring of graduate students.
- Provide faculty guidance, involvement, and funding assistance to invigorate departmental students associations (GTU and Geography Club).
- Maintain contact with students who graduate from our department.

Objective 2.2: Recruit and retain more students from under-represented groups.

Strategies:

- Commit financial and faculty/staff resources to recruit students from under-represented groups.
- Advertise the value and usefulness of our programs to members of minority groups.
- Establish ties with campus women and minority organizations.
- Develop recruiting materials aimed at under-represented groups.

Objective 2.3: Increase faculty diversity.

Strategies:

- Use campus-wide offices and minority colleagues to assist recruiting efforts.
- Utilize personal contacts and specialized media to identify and recruit a more diverse faculty.
- Seek additional resources from OSU to improve the terms of employment for under-represented faculty.
- Foster a climate within the department that works toward fairness and equal opportunity in hiring while respecting and appreciating diversity.

Goal 3: Excellence: Achieve the highest standards of excellence in teaching, research, service and extension.

Critical Success Factors:

- Increase the number of well-qualified doctoral students by 60% (to minimum of 20).
- Each year nominate at least 1 faculty member for at least 1 college/university teaching or research award.
- Expect each faculty member to generate at least 2 external grant applications each year and/or secure sufficient grant funding to cover 2 summer months
- Adjust our student/teacher ratio to the average of the Big Twelve institutions.
- Expand the number of awards offered to students requesting funds to travel to deliver research papers at professional conferences.
- Seek support to sustainably fund the 2 international journals edited by department faculty (Journal of Central Asian Studies and the Journal of Cultural Geography).

Objectives:

Objective 3.1: Enhance the quality of our undergraduate program.

Strategies:

- Structure the training of graduate assistants for classroom responsibilities.
- Promote a department award and recognition for the best freshman, junior and senior undergraduates.
- Add new faculty to enrich our program and reduce high student/teacher ratios
- Make use of OSU teaching effectiveness programs to strengthen teaching performance.
- Stress the importance of good undergraduate instruction and reward those who succeed.
- Give appropriate weight to teaching in tenure and promotion decisions.

Objective 3.2: Build on success to enhance the graduate program

Strategies:

- Continue to push for resources required to sustainably maintain our new doctoral program (new GTAs, new faculty lines and endowed professor).
- Recruit high quality graduate students by using “pipelines” to schools in the U.S. and abroad.
- Use highly visible and quality research in department focus areas—cultural and historical geography, natural resources, urban-transportation geography—to attract first-rate graduate students.

- Use our unique and most successful research activities and department research facilities and centers as a tool for recruiting graduate students (e.g. Center for Applications in Remote Sensing, Cartography Service, Geographic Information Science teaching facilities, and the palynology/paleoecology laboratory).
- Formalize a mentoring and instructional effectiveness program for new Graduate Teaching Associates.
- Promote a department award and recognition for the best graduate teaching assistant.
- Involve students in faculty research projects and encourage co-authored scholarship.

Objective 3.3: Provide incentives and resources for faculty research, teaching, service and extension.

Strategies:

- To ensure that we can offer all courses to support our undergraduate and graduate programs and still maintain our 2-2 teaching load, seek support for 3 new faculty positions (including 1 endowed professor position).
- Immediately seek support for 1 new faculty line to meet requirements to augment our graduate program focus in urban-transportation geography.
- Continue to seek support for endowed professor in urban-transportation geography to augment our focus in urban-transportation geography.
- Encourage faculty to participate in departmental course banking program to enhance faculty research opportunities and collective department research and creative activities.
- Encourage faculty sabbaticals and visiting professor appointments to enhance research and creative activities.
- Encourage and reward faculty involvement in extension or outreach service presentations, workshops and cooperative programs.
- Seek funding support for faculty travel.
- Seek funding to provide undergraduate research assistants to faculty to enhance research and creative activities.
- Publicize the results of the department's excellence in teaching award.
- Create an environment for the free flow and exchange of ideas.

Goal 4: Engagement and Connections: Promote public outreach and leverage resources to enhance strategic alliances with academic, government, and community entities to enhance economic development and the quality of life.

Critical Success Factors:

- Maintain the current level of support (e.g. School of International Studies, Environmental Sciences graduate program, Oklahoma Transportation Center, etc.) and cooperate with new interdisciplinary programs.
- Sustain collaborations in GIScience spatial technologies (research and instruction) with other units on campus and local and regional government agencies and private companies.
- Enhance our internship program and enable geography students to work with appropriate government and corporate institutions.
- Encourage and enable geography students to travel and study abroad.
- Provide faculty with additional budget support for foreign travel (research and presentations).

Objectives:

Objective 4.1: Foster the freer flow of ideas, communication, and information.

Strategies:

- Advertise our faculty colloquium programs more widely across campus and with regional universities.
- Encourage greater social exchange between faculty, staff, and students and nurture the concept of “shared community” (colloquium, field trips, social functions).
- Encourage and promote cross-disciplinary grants and publications.
- Promote joint teaching and research activities.

Objective 4.2: Foster department interaction with other academic programs centers in the OSU system.

Strategies:

- Maintain and/or expand our participation in interdisciplinary research and teaching programs including the School of International Studies, the Environmental Sciences graduate program, American Studies, Central Asian Studies certificate program, and the Oklahoma Transportation Center.
- Assume a leadership role in the OSU system for driving research and instruction in geographic information systems and related spatial technologies (GIS, GPS, remote sensing, cartography).
- Promote our department’s Certificate in GIS.

- Encourage new course offerings in distance education.

Objective 4.3: Develop mutually advantageous relationships with local colleges and junior colleges.

Strategies:

- Assist regional colleges and the local Northern Oklahoma College with finding quality geography instructors.
- Establish routine communication and periodic joint meetings between our department and other geography programs at OU, regional colleges, the Oklahoma Alliance for Geographic Education, and the Consortium of Oklahoma Geographers.
- Invite faculty, staff and students from neighboring institutions to seminars, conferences, and professional meetings at OSU.
- Encourage joint research projects with regional faculty members.
- Recruit graduate students from regional institutions that do not offer advanced degrees.
- Promote geography awareness in the community and region.

Objective 4.4: Connect the department more closely with education, business, government, and citizens of Oklahoma.

Strategies:

- Encourage faculty members to communicate with and visit local schools.
- Promote service and cooperation with regional and state geography bees and similar activities that promote geography awareness.
- Encourage faculty, staff and student interaction with the public media.
- Offer short courses and summer classes in geography and GIScience techniques for teachers.
- Assign appropriate credit for effective and visible community service in tenure and promotion decisions.
- Encourage faculty, staff and students to lend expertise to local agencies and organizations, offering students internship credit for such work.
- Invite representatives of regional businesses to the department to meet faculty, staff and students and discuss areas of mutual interest and opportunity.
- Encourage greater interaction with the citizenry of Oklahoma by becoming a resource for geographic information technology and applications for the public good.

Objective 4.5: Maintain and extend external collaborations.

Strategies:

- Promote faculty research collaborations with colleagues at Big Twelve institutions.

- Encourage joint research projects with colleagues at smaller institutions and with colleagues and former Ph.D. students at schools nationwide.
- Expand on the successful public-private collaboration which created the Oklahoma Center for Geospatial Information (OCGI) and invite other GIS users on campus and in the state to contribute data for serving on this public FGDC site.
- Support and facilitate research and outreach activities of the Center for Applications of Remote Sensing (CARS) and Cartography Services activities in the department.
- Encourage collaboration with international faculty exchange programs (research and teaching).

Goal 5: Information Technology: Enhance physical facilities and equipment to maximize the effective use of technology in teaching, research, and outreach.

Critical Success Factors:

- Encourage faculty to optimize the use of the internet to teach undergraduate courses.
- Increase the availability of statistical data for faculty and student research.
- Provide incentives (time and/or money) to faculty to develop new instructional technologies.
- Encourage faculty to employ computer simulations and related multimedia technologies in non-techniques courses by utilizing the department's NSF created and STF-supported simulations laboratory.
- Provide regional leadership and achieve premier status in GIS-related technologies.

Objectives:

Objective 5.1: Provide leadership in campus and regional use of GPS, remote sensing, and GIScience technologies.

Strategies:

- Offer and promote more GIS and GPS extension workshops to regional government employees, private companies and consultants.
- Remain a campus leader of GIS instruction and coordinator of the GIS Certificate.
- Maintain regular upgrades in equipment and software to keep our GIS and related spatial technologies state-of-the-art.
- Make funds available to hire a soft money GI Systems expert and grant writer to secure grants to upgrade equipment and data base outreach facilities.
- Secure funds and enhance displays to ensure that we remain state leaders in hosting and serving public spatial data sets.

Objective 5.2: Increase faculty and student usage of computer technologies.

Strategies:

- Address faculty, staff and student needs for state-of-the-art hardware and software.
- Enhance all instructors' capacity to use information technology for teaching.
- Provide site licenses to satisfy the need for statistical information.
- Recognize and reward faculty who are innovative in the use of instructional technology.
- Support efforts to develop distance education courses.

Goal 6: Leadership and Pride: Project a strong and positive image locally, regionally, and nationally.

Critical Success Factors:

- Communicate with alumni once a year.
- Place at least 3 faculty on the editorial or leadership boards of professional journals and organizations.
- Have all faculty involved in professional organizations and attend at least 1 professional meeting a year.
- Hold an annual banquet, invite alumni and regional faculty and students, and attract a prominent speaker.
- Make funds available for inviting several notable speakers each year from across the region and nation to present at our department colloquium series.
- Actively engage in public relations and cooperate with the campus PR office to increase our visibility with local and regional media.
- Revitalize our monthly department newsletter.

Objectives:

Objective 6.1: Build a strong and positive public image.

Strategies:

- Communicate department news to alumni and friends.
- Maintain contact with recent graduates and solicit annual feed back on their careers and successes via Zenith alumni newsletter input and through annual program review solicitations.
- Cultivate a positive image of the department in the public media.
- Promote and actively publicize faculty who achieve national and international recognition for their work.
- Elevate our stature through effective alliances and cooperative endeavors with local agencies and businesses and with other units at OSU.
- Encourage and reward faculty participation in college and university governance.
- Encourage and promote public presentations by faculty.
- Work to expand our record in publications and grant applications.

Objective 6.2: Establish a greater presence in professional organizations.

Strategies:

- Nominate faculty for offices in regional and national professional associations.
- Encourage faculty to accept duties as book and manuscript reviewers.
- Increase funding for attendance at professional meetings.

- Provide subvention funds to encourage participation at international conferences.
- Publicize faculty leadership in the editing of major professional journals.
- Publicize and promote our strengths in teaching and research.
- Assign adequate weight to professional service in making merit decisions.
- Reward faculty whose scholarship appears in top-tier journals.
- Encourage and support our student honor society (Gamma Theta Upsilon).

Objective 6.3: Establish an active presence in the local community.

Strategies:

- Participate in local civic activities.
- Make our professional expertise available for benevolent community purposes.
- Make ourselves accessible to the public and media on issues related to our specialized areas of knowledge and experience.