



Geography Program Review 2021-22

Closing MOU

Date: August 12, 2022

Overview

Degree/Certificate Programs Reviewed: Bachelor of Arts in Geography
Bachelor of Science in Geography
Master of Science in Geography
Master of Science in Land Use Planning Policy
Ph.D. in Geography

Department Chair & Dean: Adam Csank, Chair; Katherine McCall, Dean

External Reviewers & Affiliation: Dr. Kirsten de Beurs, Department of Geography & Environmental Sustainability, University of Oklahoma
Dr. Maria Lane, Department of Geography & Environmental Studies, University of New Mexico

Date of External Visit: March 29 – 30, 2022

Review Process Summary

The Geography program was scheduled for regular program review as mandated by the Board of Regents and University policy. A self-study document for the department and its programs was developed by the department faculty and completed in the Fall of 2021 for Geography programs. These respective reports were provided to the reviewers before they conducted a virtual visit on March 30, 2022. The external reviewers reviewed the program and met with relevant faculty, staff, students and administrators to determine the department's accomplishments, examine strengths and weaknesses, and identify opportunities as it plans for the future. A final report was issued by the review team shortly after the review visit. In accordance with institution practice, responses to the review were solicited from the department and the dean. A final meeting took place on August 12, 2022. This document represents the final MOU of recommendations and findings from the review.

Signatures

Executive Vice President &
Provost:

Jeffrey S. Thompson

Date: _____

Vice Provost, Undergraduate
Education:

David Shintani

Date: _____

Vice Provost, Graduate Education
& Dean, Graduate School

Markus Kemmelmeier

Date: _____

Dean, College of Science

Katherine McCall

Date: _____

Chair, Department of Geography

Adam Csank

Date: _____

Major Findings and Conclusions

The Department of Geography at the University of Nevada in Reno is a department in flux with great potential to grow into a midsized thriving department. The department is uniquely positioned within the State of Nevada to address a series of urgent challenges facing the region. The department's overall goals and general area of expertise fits extremely well with the university's strategic plan. The department's active research program, which closely aligns with the university's strategic plan are vital to preparing students for our changing world.

The department has a strong research profile with excellent faculty conducting high quality research, with substantial publication activity and success in bringing research grant dollars. The department has highly engaged faculty and graduate students and several strong outside supporters. The department is also supported by a very strong and engaged graduate director.

The Department of Geography provides critical training for students who will work in essential sectors for the State of Nevada after they graduate. The Department is uniquely qualified to develop the next generation of leaders who will need integrated skills in communication, policy, and geospatial technologies/analysis. Management of natural resource and public lands in the face of environmental change is a first-order challenge for all western states, with Nevada at the forefront. The reviewers commended the Department for all it is doing to focus on regionally specific training needs, while also leveraging its research capacity to address issues and communities of interest to Nevada.

While the reviewers commented on Geography's strengths, they also identified challenges that the department should address if it is to realize its full potential and thrive as an academic unit.

- Having experienced significant personnel changes, Geography needs to develop a new vision that encompasses its collective faculty.
- The department's undergraduate program has too few students to justify the large number of bachelor degree specializations.

- The department needs better communication from college and university administration to ensure all parties are aware of leadership priorities and expectations.
- Geography does not have a diversity plan resulting in a clear lack of diversity among its students (both undergraduate and graduate) and faculty.
- Faculty morale has been impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic and the departure of colleagues from the department.
- During the recent years, the department has lost several faculty which have not been replaced. This fall the department was down to just 11 regular tenure and tenure-track faculty members. The department has indicated that they believe they need at least 12 faculty to run the department, and as many as 14 faculty members to run a successful PhD program.
- As a result of the age of the Mackay Science Building, there are infrastructure related issues that impact faculty productivity including adequate faculty/student office space and the need for building repairs and maintenance.
- Graduate stipends are not competitive with competing universities, which is impacting the ability of the department to recruit top graduate student candidates.
- Department faculty and students are challenged by issues related to IT support, particularly in regards to adequate cloud storage and access to software/hardware updates.

Next Steps for this Program/Department (topics will vary)

- During fall 2022, the department will develop a strategic vision that correlates with defined core strength(s). The university's recently published strategic plan will help guide the discussion.
- During academic year 2023, the department will reassess the courses and majors offered and make appropriate changes to reflect the department's core strength(s) and current teaching capacity.
- The department will work with the college to improve communications related to college and university policies and procedures.
- The department will participate in recruitment initiatives with the aim of increasing diversity within undergraduate and graduate students.
- As faculty hires become available, it will be important for the department to continue its tradition of recruiting and interviewing a diverse and qualified pool.
- The department will facilitate team building activities that promote collegiality among its students, faculty and staff.
- The department will also work with the college to develop a prioritized hiring plan for the next five years.
- Future renovations of department space will focus on providing appropriate computational infrastructure for geography, both for research and teaching. College IT staff will be encouraged to continue advocating on behalf of the department.
- The department and college will continue to advocate for higher graduate student

stipends.

Vital Statistics on NSHE Reports

Number of students with declared major in the program area:

2021-22	BA Geography	14
	BS Geography	45
	MS Geography	11
	PhD Geography	13

Number of graduates from the program for the following years:

2019-20	BA Geography	3
	BS Geography	15
	MS Geography	5
	PhD Geography	4
2020-21	BA Geography	4
	BS Geography	11
	MS Geography	6
	PhD Geography	2
2021-22	BA Geography	4
	BS Geography	11
	MS Geography	5
	PhD Geography	5

Program-level graduation rate using first-time, full-time, degree-seeking cohort at 150 percent completion time:

2019-20	BA Geography	0%, n=1
	BS Geography	100%, n=1
	MS Geography	66.7%, n=6
	PhD Geography	100%, n=4
2020-21	BA Geography	50%, N=2
	BS Geography	n/a, n=0
	MS Geography	55.6%, n=9
	PhD Geography	25%, n=4
2021-22	BA Geography	100%, n=1
	BS Geography	100%, n=1
	MS Geography	100%, n=3
	PhD Geography	100%, n=3

Headcount of students enrolled in any course related to the program (duplicated):

2021-22	BA Geography	2228
	BS Geography	2228

MS Geography	223
PhD Geography	223