

Geography

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED ISSUES

Geography had a good first year, and we are looking forward to more faculty understanding and participation to improve the transfer majors. Like any ecosystem, each organism has its own niche, and competition arises most strongly where the niches are very close. We hope to support each unique contribution and work toward greater “symbiosis.”

Major discussion topics included attitudes about California community college transfers by CSU and UC faculty, transfer preparation, evaluation of CAN descriptions, risks and advantages of field trips in teaching geography, and tightening equivalency requirements for instructors.

Geography’s spatial perspective, physical and cultural branches, rigor, and integrative power are generally not well understood by the American public nor by colleagues in other disciplines, who may reduce it to place location or think that it could be taught by anyone.

IDENTIFIED TRENDS/FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Several CSU professors reported that the California community college transfers usually outranked their own majors, which was encouraging to the California community college professors who are “giving birth” to the geography majors.

Concern was expressed that in order to do spatial statistics, manipulate map projections, and other quantitative tasks, geography majors should have more mathematics.

Four new CAN descriptors were proposed and discussed for World Regional Geography, Introduction to Geographic Information Systems, Geography of California, and Introduction to Weather and Climate. The biggest debate was about Geography of California: the issues are about academic and enrollment “turf” and trust between the different segments. California is widely taught at California community colleges, but is usually taught at CSUs as a junior-level class, and opinion varies regionally and locally about whether it should be articulated. Some CSUs already offer a “waiver” when it is recognized that the content and difficulty are comparable.

COMMENTS FROM STATEWIDE MEETING AND THE GENERAL FIELD

JANUARY 19 MEETING (METRO-CERRITOS)

The discussion started about geographical patterns of transfer and how to ease and strengthen the transfer process. Students who want to go to UCLA get in honors programs to use as a stepping stone. The UCLA participant spoke about UCLA's geography outreach program to community colleges started in the 1980s, which was "life-changing," and the national network of Geographical Alliances was born of that. CSU Fullerton also uses graduate students from their Master's program to teach and reach out to surrounding CC's.

Cal Poly Pomona wants community colleges to offer Introduction to Global Information Systems (GIS). It's a natural recruiting aid and the four-year universities have three concerns: they do not want to teach so many basics repeatedly; there is pressure on them to offer GIS as a service course to other majors, and there is need to favor geography majors because of a limited number of seats (e.g., 24) in computer labs.

CSU Northridge changed their 300-level Introduction to GIS to a 200-level so incoming community college courses will be transferable. At Rio Hondo, GIS has an intense program taught by Warren Roberts, in Landscape Architecture and Administration of Justice, a "police GIS."

We then discussed the overall decline in students electing geography as their major. Michael Shin said in a UCLA study, Geography showed less growth in numbers of majors than other disciplines, perhaps because students rated Geography 1 Physical and 3 Cultural Geography, and the professors of these courses, as "difficult." In the 1990s, 2/3 of the geography majors were Geog/Environmental Studies majors, but the proportion has declined somewhat. Also in the 1990s, other area/regional studies majors competed.

A review of the Physical Geography CAN descriptor recommend slashing "landforms" with geomorphology, and to add GIS with the list of techniques to make it current.

In the afternoon, we were invited to cross-discipline discussions with Economics and Political Science faculty (all at California institutions). Many of these faculty were from foreign countries where they studied geography regularly in their school systems, and they queried us why the American students were so poor in geography. We told them we have the same students! We all contributed significant ideas about how they can incorporate geography and can contextualize that study. We suggested:

- map exercises,
- atlases,
- GIS exercises,
- guest lectures, etc., and
- recommending that their students take more geography.

The exchange was fun and invigorating; geographers are very enthusiastic about our discipline and zealously defend it.

STATEWIDE MEETING, APRIL 12-13, 2002 (LOS ANGELES)

First we reviewed Regional Meeting Notes, and summarized highlights with the addition of information from the Los Angeles Metro Meeting, 1/19/02 (see notes above), where there was discussion related to ideas for field trips, the possible addition of new CAN numbers, and an afternoon session with joint Economics and Political Science Discipline groups. We shared what we could do to work together to improve geographic understanding in a variety of disciplines.

Discussion of CAN Numbers: Jose Michel, Director of CAN, joined our discussion group and offered the following ideas:

1. Past practice was that there was no set rule other than four CSU or private institutions teaching the class at the lower division level.
2. Unless there is a prerequisite, the upper division status of a course may not be warranted. (Renfrew's note: Many CSUs want to keep the upper division status of their course because of money given to departments for upper division enrollments.)
3. Geography's intersegmental solution may be in terms of numbering to facilitate common courses.
4. Find schools that are articulating equivalent upper division courses to help transfer and establish numbers to facilitate articulation.
5. A number of courses CANned does not mean they are all articulated.
6. Electives and core courses can be "CANned."
7. Having a course canned does not mean that it will have to have to be accepted as applicable to the major.
8. Articulation will recruit more students.
9. Look for crossover courses and those accepted electives that are not required as a part of major.
10. As we continue to discuss our field, academic interests should take precedence over enrollment and funding decisions.
11. "Non facilitation of similar courses does not take student interest into concern."
12. CANning of lower division courses does not preclude universities from offering an upper division course of a similar topic.
13. CAN agreements may result in increased majors and larger numbers of student transfers.
14. The end product of CAN is to encourage a proliferation of articulation agreements and facilitate the transfer of geography students.

On Saturday of the meetings, the group reviewed a draft proposal of 4 geography courses: World Regional, Geography of California, Introduction to Geographic Information Systems (G.I.S.), and Introduction to Weather and Climate. There was extensive discussion about CCC/CSU "turf" and transfer issues, especially about California. Melanie represented the CSU/UC (upper division) viewpoints as forwarded by Steve Cunha (CSU Humboldt) and by her experience at UCLA, CSUDH, and CSULA. Other community college faculty represented the California community college viewpoints that if the courses are very similar, use the same book, and are even taught by the same instructors in several cases, that transfer students should get credit for it as the same course. Having a CAN number does not mandate that any particular school must articulate it. In the end, it was decided to go forward with the proposal of all four courses to

get CAN numbers, to present the proposal at a panel at the California Geographical Society meeting in Lone Pine May 3-4, and see how the CSU responded.

Addendum: After this meeting, IMPAC leaders were asked by Steve Cunha not to forward all four courses for CAN until more CSU and UC faculty have a chance to participate in the discussion. They argued that some did not know about the IMPAC meetings where these CAN descriptions were discussed and approved.

Gary Anderson led a discussion about changing “Minimum Qualifications” for California Community College geography instructors. The problem is with the 2 branches in geography, and “militant adjuncts who try to claim territory they can’t support,” e.g., a historians may want to teach physical or geologists want to teach cultural, when they have never had geography coursework to equip them with a genuine spatial perspective; these minimum qualifications must also be applied to adjuncts in assigning them only to courses they are prepared to teach. After some discussion about the possibility of making 2 different requirements, one for physical and one for cultural, it was decided instead to recommend requiring a minimum of a Master’s Degree in Geography. The “Disciplines List” Review is on a 3-year cycle, so the next review is not until Fall 2004, and this recommendation will be forwarded at that time.

Note: Though not an IMPAC regional meeting, these matters were also discussed at the annual geography conference held at Lone Pine, California. For a summary of that discussion, please see the report of this meeting contained in Appendix A below, or on the IMPAC website where the Geography link will provide you with that summary:

<http://www.cal-impac.org/SocialBehavioral/SocialBehavioral.html>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DISCIPLINE

At the statewide meeting, participants voted to recommend a change to require a Master’s Degree in Geography at the next (3-year) review cycle of Minimum Qualifications for California community college Instructors (Fall 2004).

It is recommended that the following proposed CAN descriptor be discussed at IMPAC Regional Meetings in 2002-2003:

GEOGRAPHY OF CALIFORNIA (3 UNITS LECTURE)

Introduction to the state’s diversified geography including climate, landforms, natural vegetation, water resources, the cultural landscape, our Native American past, urban and agricultural regions, and the economic challenges of the future. Course emphasizes ethnic diversity; human alteration of the landscape; and contemporary social, economic and environmental issues, using maps and other geographic imagery.

RATIONALE:

Geography of California is a survey course taught in more than 27 colleges. It is often a recruiting course that introduces the first-time student to geography. It is also a crossover course accepted as an element or requirement of the California Studies major, teacher preparation curriculum, and general education ethnic diversity requirement.

TOPICS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Desired exit skills for Geography majors.
2. Geography's role in General Education in California: strong and weak areas, impacts on enrollments and numbers of majors, plans for improvement.
3. Field trip risks and benefits: discussion, pooling of successful field trip experiences, locations, and skill-building exercises.
4. GIS Articulation.
5. Additional possible CAN Descriptors with discussion of difficulty levels and content (see below).
6. Development of A.A. or A.S. programs for geography majors (for California community college faculty who are interested).
7. Items of concern to participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS FORWARDED/TO BE FORWARDED TO

CAN

REVISIONS TO EXISTING CAN DESCRIPTIONS

Introduction to Human/Cultural Geography CAN GEOG 4

This course is a study of diverse human populations, their cultural origins, diffusion and contemporary spatial expressions. Topics include demography, languages and religions, urbanization and landscape modification, political units and nationalism and economic systems and development. **Emphasis** is given to interrelationships between human activities and the **biophysical** environment.

Physical Geography GEOG 2

This course is a spatial study of **planet Earth's** dynamic physical systems and processes. Topics include **Earth-sun relations**, weather, climate, water, geomorphology/landforms, soils, and the biosphere. Emphasis is on interrelationships among systems and processes and their resulting patterns and distributions. Tools of geographic inquiry include maps, remote sensing, **Geographic Information Systems (GIS)**, and **Global Positional Systems (GPS)**.

PROPOSED CAN ADDITIONS:

World Regional Geography (3 units lecture)

Introduction to the world's major geographic regions. Survey of population distribution; cultural, political, and economic development; general land use patterns and their correlation with environmental elements including climate, water resources, and landforms. Interpretation of maps and other geographic imagery; emphasis on geography's uniquely spatial perspective within an interdisciplinary approach.

Rationale:

Over 38 California colleges currently teach world regional geography as an introductory course. This course is taught at a majority of the universities with the following teaching it **as a lower division course**: CSU Long Beach, CSU Fresno, CSU Fullerton, CSU Humboldt, and CSU Northridge.

It is recommended or required at many institutions for major/minors in International Relations, International Business, Travel and Hospitality, and Liberal Studies (Multiple Studies Credential). There is a high degree of similarity among published texts for this course, and it is offered without prerequisite at every institution surveyed.

Introduction To Geographic Information Systems (3 Units Lecture/Lab)

Introduction to the use of computer systems and software for geographic analysis; the nature of spatial data; geographic data structures; acquisition, analysis, display of geographic data, and examples of practical application. The course combines discussion of conceptual topics with practical exercises using microcomputer software.

Rationale:

Geographic Information Systems is a survey course that introduces students to the technological realm of computer mapping and analysis. Often students begin this course without elementary knowledge of mapping or the computer skills necessary to develop a practical layered map. This introductory course is useful to the college and university student alike, as a foundation for further GIS studies.

GIS competency is now a nearly universal requirement for the geography major, and is increasingly recommended or required preparation for geology, resource management, forestry, life science, marketing, administration of justice, anthropology, CAD, computer information sciences, (CIS), fire science, surveying, construction management, and other majors. The establishment of a CAN description will facilitate transfer in any of these areas by defining a level of competence with the software and techniques.

This technology is so dynamic that current research indicates that this course will be standardized as a lower division course in universities and colleges to allow more advanced applications to be taught in additional specialized GIS courses.

OUTREACH PRESENTATIONS MADE BY MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP

California Geographical Society (approx. 35 members in attendance):

Lone Pine, May 4, 2002, Dr. Melanie Renfrew (see meeting notes below).