

Geography Department: End of the Year Report 2012-2013

Summary: The Framingham State University Geography Department went through several transitions this academic year. Our only Senior, full-professor left in January 2013 for an administrative job, Dean of Graduate Studies. This left 5 full-time faculty members caring for a full load of students and advising. Also in January, the full-time administrative assistant, we share with three other Departments, took a permanent medical leave of absence which left our department with only outside staff members to call upon. The resiliency and dedication of the faculty in the department and the hiring of VL's kept the Geography Department vibrant and moving forward. We are grateful to Academic Affairs for giving us the ability to hire a new Tenure Track position during AY 2013-2014.

Academic Plan Priorities:

1. Develop and Retain Quality Faculty and Staff

As was mentioned in the above summary, The Geography Department we one members of the department but will be gaining a permanent tenure-track Assistant Professor position in AY 2014-15 academic year. Four of our five faculty are tenured, only one is still tenure-track. Four are Associate Professors and one is an Assistant professor. The internal Geography hiring committee is in the process of placing an ad in the professional publication of the Association of American Geographers to begin the recruiting process.

Given the tremendous load of students and course preparations, our only Assistant professor, has had a very heavy load and even has taught four courses during an academic year without compensation. All of us have a full complement of students and do our best to support each other. Several of our faculty utilize CELTSS and attended and or have presented at "Day in January" and "Day in May". A Geography Faculty member gave the CELTSS Lyceum lecture this year.

2. Strengthen New Student Preparations, Induction and Early Academic Success

Several members of the department teach the first year course. When planning our courses, we discuss what is needed to promote and facilitate graduation and make sure the necessary courses are available or at least a substitution. We are in the discussion process of removing our GIS concentration as we have not had a single student sign up for it, in the last three years, and combine GIS with the Planning concentration. A GIS minor would then be created.

3. Pursue Excellence and Engagement in the Academic Experience

In terms of student-faculty collaboration, the Geography Department has witnessed an increase in independent studies with faculty working with or overseeing student research, one example is an independent study on post-earthquake development issues in Haiti. The Department was fortunate to

have a student present a poster board at the professional conference of the Association of American Geographers conference in Los Angeles. The student' research was on "Geographical Knowledge" of students in the beginning of a semester and how much or little they know about the world. Interesting findings were presented. Due to the ability of funds supplied by Academic Affairs, this student was able to attend this conference and also present at CELTSS.

We have also had an increase in internships within the Metro West Community, which brings students and faculty together with the community and the labor market. One of our most noticeable internships was a student who worked for a solar panel company outside of Boston. We also have students currently doing summer work and fostering ties with local planning boards on both environmental and planning issues.

4. Prepare Students for Global Citizenship and Competitiveness

Geography as a discipline teaches global awareness. One of our concentrations is Global studies.

Two Geography professors this AY 2012-2013 brought students on international trips, to South America and to Rome.

Geography has joined a stand-alone major of Global Studies with other FSU Departments. Many of the courses in this new interdisciplinary major are Geography courses.

5. Strengthen and Expand Stem programs and student success in Stem Areas.

Geography supports an educational Interdisciplinary major of IDR, Geography and Earth Science.

Likewise, the Environmental Science major housed in Geography is a collaborative effort between Geography, Chemistry and Biology.

GIS draws from both computer Science and Mathematical knowledge.

6. Respond to Labor Market Trends in Academic Programs and Center Development

Having the knowledge of GIS is a competitive asset in the job market. With a new GIS minor in the works and the development of a GIS Center this skill will be available to more FSU students.

The internships the Department supports is linked to local Planning and Environmental Job prospects.

Global Studies Concentration is more theoretical and prepare students for further research and Higher Educational degrees.

Many of the Geography Faculty have close connections with Planning Boards and Environmental Boards. Some serve on these Boards, fostering an avenue in which FSU students can enter either an internship or the job market during or after Graduation.

One assessment we will do in the future is measure how many of these Internships lead to permanent employment.