Final Report
Academic Program Review
Department of Geography

Review Process

The Department of Geography prepared a self-study following program review guidelines. An external review team, composed of two faculty/administrators from other institutions, visited the campus, reviewed the self-study documents, and interviewed unit personnel, students, and University administrators. The Program Review Committee (PRC) read and discussed the self-study and the external review team’s report and discussed an early draft of this document with the Dean of Arts & Sciences. This document reflects the PRC’s findings and recommendations.

Self-Study

Historical Background

In 1945, Geography belonged to the Department of Geography and Geology in the College of Business Administration, with ten courses and one faculty member. Geography was separated from Geology in 1952 to become an independent Department and moved to the College of Arts and Sciences in 1967. It had a Master of Arts program from 1966 to 1990 and its faculty members increased from five in 1959 to sixteen in the mid-1970s. The Department lost a total of six faculty positions in the past fifteen years, from fourteen in 1983 to eight in 1998, mostly as a result of ERIP. The self-study states that this decrease has caused the Department to reduce course offerings and limit program innovation. Of the eight faculty now making up the Department, six are tenured and two are probationary; two are full professors, four are associate professors and two are assistant professors; all are male, five are white and three are Asian. Two faculty members have joint appointments, one with the Cooperative Education Program and one with Environmental Studies Program. Currently, the Chair also serves as Director of the International Studies Program.

Mission

The Department’s mission in undergraduate teaching is to provide students with a sound geography program, a practical liberal education, and an international, interdisciplinary, and intercultural perspective. Geography is defined as “a broad and integrating discipline bridging the physical, biological, and social sciences.” The Department also supports its faculty doing research to advance and disseminate knowledge, and it supports service to the public and private sectors of the local community. It strives to be a unit that contributes to the University vision of being the premier learning community in Ohio and one of the best in the nation.
Programs and Policies

The Department’s emphasis is undergraduate education. Its Bachelor of Arts degree is geared toward applied geography and practical liberal education. Although the Department ended a graduate program leading to a Master of Arts degree, the self-study raises the possibility of reinstating the program in the near future. The Department’s allocation of effort is 60% for teaching, 30% for research, and 10% for service. Each faculty member carries nine hours (three courses) per semester of classroom teaching. The self-study attributes the reduction of course offerings over the last few years to the decline in faculty numbers. It also argues that the decline in faculty numbers made it difficult for the Department to implement differential teaching loads. Each faculty member is expected to engage in research including grant activity and publication in peer reviewed journals. The faculty are encouraged to serve in professional organizations, and to assist local businesses and public organizations by providing geographic information and expertise including weather/climatological data and cartographic and GIS (geographic information service) assistance.

Geography Majors

The number of geography majors between 1994 and 1998 averaged about 35 students. Their majority were male (61 to 73%) and white (89 to 94%). Their ACT scores and high school GPA were 22 and 2.92, respectively. Majors are monitored closely by the undergraduate adviser and informed of internships, job opportunities and news of interest by a listserv and geography homepage. Outstanding majors are recognized annually with three awards: the Joe and Zola Buford Award, the Helen Bebout Fletcher Award, and the Ruth and Nathaniel Gordon Book Award.

Student Credit Hours


Instructional Services for Non-majors

Geography courses are required for certification in the elementary and secondary education programs and the professional pilots programs. They also support students of Journalism and Telecommunications minoring in broadcast meteorology. Geography courses are taken by majors of interdisciplinary programs, such as Asian Studies, Canadian Studies, Environmental Studies, and International Studies.

Facilities and Equipment

Hanna Hall houses all faculty offices, nearly all geography classes, two laboratories for cartography and meteorology, a large lecture/laboratory, a weather observation deck and a map storage area. The computers in the cartography...
laboratory were upgraded in January, 1998, by Information Technology Services, which also took over its management. Hanna Hall is scheduled for renovation in the near future. The Department also relies on the University’s Information Technology Services, the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, the Library, the Cooperative Education Office, the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research, the Counseling and Career Development Center, the Placement Office, Instructional Media, and Academic Enhancement.

Financial Resources

The Department receives its personnel and operating budgets from the University educational budget. It has two BGSU Foundation accounts for student achievement awards and faculty research and information activities.

Faculty Quality and Productivity

As documented in the self-study, during the 1983-98 period, the current faculty (7.07 FTE) have seven publications in selected journals in which geographers commonly publish. Within the past five years (1994-98), the faculty members have published 8 book chapters, 14 articles, and delivered 8 invited papers. In the same time period they have given 63 presentations at professional meetings. Stating that the Department has never been a major research unit, the self-study concludes by saying that its current faculty have compiled a fair record of published research. Within the last four years (1994-98), the Department received two grants. The self-study notes that both publications and grants are areas that need improvement. Faculty participation in professional meetings has been more at the regional than national level, thus reducing the Department’s national exposure and contacts. The faculty’s pride lies in their teaching and student advising. The Department encourages student internships through the Office of Cooperative Education, conducts workshops such as Geography for Teachers, and has been involved in the Ohio Geography Alliance and the National Geographic Society’s Geography Awareness Week.

The Quality of the Curriculum, Instruction, and Support Services

The self-study claims that the Department’s courses are solid and excellent. Student evaluations average 2.97 (or high C) on a 4.0 point scale. Graduating seniors majoring in geography responded to exit surveys by expressing satisfaction with their training, instruction, advising, internship and job placement. The Department also conducted an alumni survey during the 1997-98 academic year, and found that most alumni are in careers that use their geographic training. The self-study concludes that the Department has done a good job in the curriculum, instruction and support services.

Instructional Demand

In the self-study’s analysis, demand for and enrollment in geography courses has remained strong. To meet the demand in GEOG 125, for instance, the Department increased the capacity from 210 seats in 1997 to 322 seats in 1998. The
self-study claims that responsibility for large lecture courses for general education has resulted in the reduction of courses at a higher level and limited opportunities to offer specialty courses. Compared with other Geography departments in Ohio, BGSU’s enrollment per full-time faculty is ranked substantially above those of Akron, Miami, Ohio, Toledo and Youngstown.

**Employment Demand for Program Graduates**

The self-study reports that most of the graduates have been successful in job placements with upward mobility to better jobs.

**Research Themes of the Faculty**

The current faculty’s research interests are focused on several themes: development and change in Pacific Asia and South Asia, applied GIS, population analysis, and popular culture geography.

**Interrelationship with Other Programs**

With its “applied geography” emphasis, the Department works closely with three programs: International Studies, Cooperative Education, and Environmental Studies. In addition, Geography courses support programs in Asian Studies, American Cultural Studies, Aerotechnology, Cooperative Education, Communications, Education, Technical Writing, International Business, Marketing, and Sociology.

**Relationship Among Research, Classroom, and Service**

Faculty’s research and foreign-field experiences are beneficial to classroom teaching. Community outreach activities are incorporated into classroom projects, providing students with opportunities to work with private and public sectors in the community.
Areas of Focus and Uniqueness

The Department offers the basic course curriculum and specializations that are typically offered by 69 other geography departments in the nation. The self-study claims that the Department’s focus lies in the Department’s superior advising system for majors, which is integrative and holistic in implementation. The Department’s involvement in cooperative education and internships is unique among geography departments in Ohio.

Areas of Duplication with Other Programs

GIS courses exist in the Geology Department and in Environmental Studies as well. The self-study states that Geography’s GIS course differs in philosophy, method, and content.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The Department has identified five student learning outcomes in the major: 1) to acquire and apply knowledge of geographic concepts, and analyze and explain spatial and global issues and processes; 2) to acquire an awareness of the past and present world’s cultural and physical environments; 3) to develop an appreciation of the interrelationship and interaction of regions at various scales (global, national and local); 4) to develop skills to collect, analyze, and communicate spatial information, including mapping skills, GIS and other techniques; and 5) to demonstrate an understanding of spatial dimensions, global identities and regional variations. The assessment methods consist of evaluating student transcripts, conducting interviews of seniors and alumni, examining student advising, and developing an internship survey questionnaire. During the 1997-98 year, the Department experimented with internship and cooperative assignments and senior research projects/papers as means of assessing student learning outcomes. The student assessment report indicates that there is a need for more breadth and depth in course offerings.

Financial Considerations and Adequacy of Resources

According to the self-study, the faculty’s nine-month salaries are competitive in the professor and associate professor ranks, but low in the assistant professor rank, although they look better beginning in the 1997-8 academic year thanks to a new faculty hired at a higher salary and a market adjustment for a continuing faculty. The Department has one full-time secretary and a part-time student assistant. The self-study states that its needs are greater for faculty positions and operating budget than for additional staff support. As for facilities, Hanna Hall is an old building in need of repair. The self-study notes the needs of the Cartography, GIS and Meteorology laboratories for bigger spaces and more computers. Office supplies and service, such as paper, photo-copying, telephone and other miscellaneous charges are paid out of the operating budget, which has been static for seven years. As a result, faculty’s travel funds are limited to $350 per person for travel.

Planning
The Department’s long-term plan evolved over a period of three years and was adopted in September 1998. Various activities, including the student assessment and chair selection processes, all served as catalysts to move the plan forward. The Department strives to create a “culture of action” that will reward the faculty who are actively engaged in innovations in teaching, research, and service. The Department recently revised the merit system, the faculty recruitment-retention plan, teaching assignments, and resource allocation practice. These are timely changes, given the anticipation that all but three of the current faculty will retire in the next five to ten years.

1. **Faculty staffing.** The Department’s wishes to achieve an optimal staffing level of 12 faculty members in the next five to ten years period with two faculty in spatial analysis (cartography, GIS, interpretation of aerial photographs, and remote sensing), four faculty in physical geography (including three in climatology/atmospheric environment), and six faculty in human geography. The three-year staffing plan includes four new positions: one in applied human geography starting in 1999-2000, two in physical geography, and one in spatial analysis.

2. **Curriculum Focus.** The Department’s specializations consist of three areas: 1) spatial analysis (computer mapping, GIS, interpretation of aerial photographs, and remote sensing), 2) applied human geography (urban analysis, socio-economic analysis, population analysis, cultural geography, and problems of development in global regions), and 3) geographic environmental analysis (climate, weather conditions, human impact on the environment, conservation, resources, and land use). The Department hopes to offer courses in air photo interpretation and remote sensing more frequently, to recover and modernize some of the lost expertise in areas of geographic regions, human and physical geography, and to develop new courses such as advanced GIS and mapping. The Department also wishes to build a specialization in climatology/atmospheric environment taking into consideration the strong student demand in this area as well as the absence of such a program in Ohio. It will strengthen broadcast meteorology as a minor field and would like to consider adding meteorology as a specialization in seven years.

3. **Student Assessment.** All incoming geography majors beginning in the 2000-2001 will be required to complete a capstone experience before graduation.

4. **Graduate Program.** The Department will seek reinstatement of its Master’s program within seven years. They propose that the Master’s degree will focus on applied human geography, integrating spatial analysis and aspects of the physical environment. The process of reinstating the graduate program would involve an increase of graduate faculty from the current five to seven or more, and an improved record in publication, grants and applied research. In the interim, the Department plans to continue to offer some graduate courses to students in other graduate programs.

5. **Research.** The self-study proposes adjustments in teaching assignments to promote research activities, along the following lines. When staffing pressure lessens, a one-time teaching load reduction by one course a semester may be implemented...
for a faculty to pursue research. If two additional faculty positions are gained in the next two to four years, the Department will seek a temporary reduction of teaching load from six to five courses per academic year for selected faculty, subject to annual renewal based on their research productivity. A faculty with a reduced teaching load will lose the privilege if research productivity is low.

6. Service. The Department seeks to expand community outreach activities by providing professional expertise and services in the form of applied research. Income generated by these services will support a Geography Research and Information Fund which will be used for subscriptions, equipment, software and student assistantships.

The self-study concludes by saying that the Department is on the threshold of a new era, exciting challenges and a promising future, and that its goal is to have a balanced Department in the triad of teaching, research, and service, contributing to the University’s vision of being the premier learning community in Ohio and one of the best in the nation.

External Review Team’s Report

In the Preamble, the external reviewers stated that geography is experiencing a renaissance in America. They note that it has a strong position in Ohio: three universities offer the doctoral degree (Ohio State, Kent State, and Cincinnati), seven universities offer the MA degree (Akron, Toledo, Miami, Ohio, in addition to the above doctoral institutions), and three universities offer a BA degree only (Ohio Wesleyan, Youngstown, and BGSU). They believed that the Geography Department at BGSU can and should be revitalized within a relatively short period of time with modest additional university resources and new initiatives outlined in their report.

The external reviewers judged the self-study to be a voluminous document with a wealth of information. However, they found that it revealed a faculty not actively engaged in research and a department without an intellectual focus or direction.
**Strengths Identified by the External Review Team**

(1) a strong commitment to undergraduate teaching,
(2) a caring attitude toward students,
(3) a core of capable and intelligent students who reflect the quality of the younger faculty,
(4) a small cluster of faculty actively engaged in research,
(5) a small number of faculty with administrative assignments in the Co-op program and the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research,
(6) a state-of-the-art computer lab,
(7) a transitional chair providing stability, collegiality, and trusted leadership with a “breath of fresh air,” and
(8) the creation of geography listserv for communication between faculty and students.

**Weaknesses Identified by the External Review Team**

(1) a faculty without professional challenge in teaching, research, and service,
(2) a history of discouraged faculty initiatives, collective efforts and creative endeavors,
(3) an out-of-date curriculum, with all-inclusive, vague clusters and requirements inadequate to prepare students for the next decade,
(4) weak research, publication, grant application records, and
(5) little networking and participation with other units.

In explicating the strengths and weaknesses, the external reviewers commented on the following key areas:

- **Competence and Productivity of the Faculty in Teaching and Research.** The faculty are trained at well-respected graduate institutions and are capable of identifying and solving research problems. The weak research output of the faculty as a whole seemingly reinforces the Department’s emphasis on a strong teaching commitment. The Department should recognize, however, that strong teaching and strong research are complementary rather than mutually exclusive aspects of scholarship.

- **Evaluation of Departmental Leadership and Climate for Work and Productivity.** There is a sense of renewal and renaissance among the current faculty who had experienced a “culture of comfort or inaction” and a “climate of negativism” under the previous chair. The external reviewers considered this spirit of renewal for the “culture of action” essential for the Department’s revitalization.

- **The Department’s Plan for the Next Five Years.** The plan will help advance the Department’s current low ranking to place it on a par with benchmark geography departments in Ohio and the nation.

**Recommendations of the External Review Team**

1) The Department needs a strong, senior, and research-oriented scholar from the outside as a new chair as soon as possible. The new chair from the outside is essential to shepherd the Department through curriculum revision, to build
bridges to other units on campus, and to provide the experience and leadership needed to reinstate the M.A. program.

2) The external reviewers recommended appointing Dr. Holly Myers-Jones, currently Associate Director at the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research, as an Adjunct Professor of Geography.

3) The external reviewers recommended that the Department be given opportunities to provide input on the renovation of Hanna Hall. It is preferable that all the geography offices, laboratories and classrooms are located on the same floor and in close proximity. They further recommended that monetary support be given in the form of 50 hours per week student salary to keep the GIS lab open.

4) The Department’s current three clusters *(spatial analysis, applied human geography, and geographic environmental analysis) are too vague and all-inclusive. They need to be tightly defined and selective. *(The external reviewers erroneously described them as spatial relations, human/environment, and techniques.)
   a) Beginning spring 1999, the Department should form a committee to evaluate the entire program for the sake of restructure. Many regional courses should be reassessed, and new courses should be added to reflect a global content, quantitative methods, diversity (race, ethnicity, and gender) and rural geography.
   b) A survey should be taken of undergraduate majors on the merits of existing courses, course sequencing, and writing and analytical components.
   c) A Department Honors Program, independent of the University’s Honors Program, should be created for students who excel. These honors students can engage in pro-seminar classes and work with faculty on research projects.
   d) A certificate in meteorology and a program in broadcast meteorology should be explored. Faculty should explore linkages with faculty in Physics and Chemistry, as well as Journalism and Telecommunications.

5) With the exception of a few junior members, the faculty need to place a higher priority on funded and published scholarly research.
   a) The Department should schedule a meeting with the Director of the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research to discuss funding opportunities in Geography.
   b) The Chair should foster a climate of collaborative research in the Department by encouraging grants and publications with undergraduate students and with faculty in the Department and elsewhere on campus.
   c) A policy for differential teaching loads should be devised and implemented. This could include a course reduction in one semester with the expectation of a grant proposal or a major research manuscript submitted for publication. Projects could be awarded to individual or to teams of two or three faculty.

6) The external reviewers recommended that the faculty explore collaborative efforts, such as with potential teachers or graduate students in Northwest Ohio.
a) The Department should offer summer courses, such as “World Regional Geography for Teachers,” Physical Geography for Teachers, “American Historical Geography for Teachers,” and “Ohio Geography for Teachers.”

b) The external reviewers recommended cross-listing courses with other programs, such as Popular Culture, Canadian Studies, and the Center for Government Research and Public Service.

c) The Department is advised to designate one faculty member to interface with other units and report back to Geography faculty at a monthly brown-bag luncheon or faculty meeting.

7) The external review team recommended that the faculty develop close ties with other geography departments in Ohio, especially the University of Toledo.

a) The Department should organize bi-monthly or once-a-semester social events, explore plans for conferences and collaborative research between the two departments, and recommend faculty to work with graduate assistants at UT.

b) The geographers at Ohio State University should be invited for colloquia or classroom visits during “career weeks.”

8) The external reviewers recommended that the Department explore three projects that will bring more visibility and a positive image to the campus and the region.

a) It should organize mini-conferences or workshops around a major research cluster of the Department, such as “Contributing to Rural Geography of Northwest Ohio” and “GIS Applications to Climate/Environmental Problems.”

b) It should produce an inexpensive Atlas of Northwest Ohio (30-50 pages). Such an Atlas would not only give the Department visibility in the region but it would also support other programs on campus, such as the Center for Governmental Research and Public Service, Canadian Studies, and Environmental Studies.

c) It should organize and host an annual awards day around some noted alumnus or alumna with an outstanding speaker to deliver an address.

9) The external reviewers recommended that the Department eliminate the current merit system which is unwieldy and ineffective, and replace it with a set of criteria for teaching, research, and service that reward achievement in a variety of ways, including collaborative efforts and active engagement with other units.

10) The external reviewers had a number of recommendations regarding faculty appointments, including:

a) All retirees should be replaced and the Department plan should include a schedule of potential retirees and the types of replacements.

b) The Department should identify and agree on the major areas of strength it wishes to emphasize during the next decade. The external reviewers recommended the following three as major areas of strength: GIS, climate/environment, and rural geography.

11) The external reviewers believed the Department should become involved in national organizations.
a) The chair should encourage faculty members to serve on committees of the National Council for Geographic Education and the Association of American Geographers.
b) Selected faculty should participate in the National Geographic Society’s Geography Alliance for Ohio.
c) The Department should offer to host a future meeting of the East Lakes Division of the AAG.

12) The external reviewers recommended the establishment of a Geography Club:
   a) The chair should support the establishment of a Geography Club for undergraduate students.
   b) A chapter of Gamma Theta Upsilon, the national honorary geography society, should be developed on campus.

13) The Department should promote its identity and visibility nationwide by
   a) developing a strong description of the Department in the annual AAG Guide to Programs of Geography, and
   b) developing an imaginative and attractive WWW page that has links to the activities of the faculty, student, alumni, and information about admissions.

14) Currently the Department is not prepared to offer the M.A. or M.S. degree, but the external review team feels a graduate program is a distinct possibility in four or five years. The external reviewers felt that the Department should demonstrate that its undergraduates can compete successfully in graduate program elsewhere and that its faculty has a strong enough research and professional service record to warrant the M.A. program. The new Chair from the outside should consider this challenge as a major part of her/his responsibilities.

15) The Department should proceed with its discussion on the following recommendations for curriculum changes:
   a) Core courses (five semesters) required of all geography majors and minors consisting of: “Introduction to human geography,” “Introduction to physical geography (new),” “Quantitative methods in geography,” “Computer cartography,” and “A capstone senior seminar on research methodologies, epistemologies, and cutting-edge research.”
   b) Elective courses required to take at least one from each of the three clusters.
   c) The following new courses should be added to update the curriculum: “Geography of Globalization: Economic,” “Geography of Globalization: Cultural,” “Urban Geography,” “Geopolitics,” “Rural Geography,” “Geography of Diversity: Race, Gender, and Ethnicity,” “Geography of Ohio in a US and Global Context,” and “Computer Methods in Geographic Education.”
   d) The large number of regional courses should be replaced by such global or thematically oriented courses as: “Geography of the Developing World” and “Geography of the Transitional Economy States.”
   e) The possibility of offering a B.S. degree in the area of climatology and GIS should be evaluated.
The external reviewers concluded their report by noting that the faculty are aware of the need for change and appear ready to retool and increase their activity levels. They urged the University to provide the modest levels of support recommended. The time is opportune and the change should begin immediately.

**Program Review Committee Findings**

Despite some strengths noted below, the PRC has serious concerns about the viability of this Department. Changes must be made immediately and implemented vigorously in the next three years if the Department is to continue.

**Strengths Identified by the Program Review Committee**

The Department of Geography has maintained a commitment to undergraduate teaching and cultivated a caring attitude toward students. The University values the Department’s emphasis on liberal arts education with international, intercultural, and interdisciplinary perspectives. The Department has some research strength at the junior faculty level. It has operated a state-of-the-art computer lab for students and faculty alike, especially in the GIS and computer-mapping fields. The current chair has brought stability, collegiality, and trusted leadership to the Department during the period of transition. There is a national renaissance in the field of geography in recent years, which could provide an opportunity for this Department.

**Weaknesses Identified by the Program Review Committee**

How can the Department transform what the external review described as the “culture of comfort and inaction” to that of innovation and productivity? The Department has been unsuccessful, to say the least, in meeting its challenge and taking creative initiatives in such key areas as updated curriculum for undergraduate education and the faculty’s research productivity, which the PRC finds to be far below expectations. The PRC considers the following to be of critical importance to the Department’s viability in the next three years:

1) providing the needed leadership for the revitalization of the Department;
2) developing focus in the targeted areas of specialization;
3) updating the existing curriculum;
4) improving the quality of the scholarship and research productivity;
5) enhancing the quality of the faculty;
6) strengthening the Department’s networking with other units in the University and increasing the Department’s visibility and identity by providing professional service to educational, business, and government organizations at the local, state, and national levels. To elucidate each of the above points:

1) **Providing Leadership** The PRC shares the sense of urgency about leadership that led the external reviewers to recommend hiring an external Chair. However, the PRC has reservations about going directly to a national search. We need to be
reassured that the Department is willing to assume the responsibility for change. If an outside Chair had to work with a faculty reluctant to change or reluctant to share the leadership, the outside Chair alone could not bring about the necessary reform. We also feel that the changes in Geography have considerable urgency, and that relying on an external Chair would have the effect of delaying efforts to undertake the work, as an outside Chair could not be hired until fall, 2000, at the earliest. Finally, the PRC feels that to fulfill the vision of the University, we must build on existing strength. We are very reluctant to recommend the resources necessary to recruit a senior scholar as Chair for a unit that has not demonstrated it has a solid foundation on which to build a “premier” department in its discipline. The PRC finds that the Dean has two options: (1) work closely with the current Chair and provide the mandate for curriculum changes, increased research productivity and other changes noted below; or (2) declare the Department to be in receivership and appoint a Chair from elsewhere at the University to direct the necessary changes. In either event, it is the opinion of the PRC that the Department should have up to three years, with annual assessments by the Dean, to meet challenges in research productivity and curriculum development described in this report. After that time, the Dean should decide whether to continue or discontinue the Department.

2) Developing Focus on One or Two Sub-fields . The PRC agrees with the external reviewers that the Department’s current clusters (spatial analysis, applied human geography, and geographical environmental analysis) need to be more tightly defined and less all-inclusive. It is essential for the Department to focus on one or two sub-fields. The decision regarding programmatic focus should be carried out in consultation with the Dean and make a concerted effort to strengthen it (them) in terms of curriculum offerings and faculty resources. If the applied human geography is a general thrust of the Department, the PRC recommends that rural geography with GIS techniques, as suggested by the external reviewers, be the sub-field to build a strong department that can attract attention from business, education, and government organizations. The choice of a sub-field(s) will affect the hiring and recruitment of new faculty.

3) Updating the Existing Curriculum. The PRC supports the external reviewers’ assessment regarding the out-of-date nature of the existing curriculum in geography, and questions the Chair’s contention that the Department courses are solid, sound and up-to-date and that it is a matter of “some honest differences in orientation, points of views, philosophies” or of “eye-catching titles or vORGUES.” The PRC finds that accomplishing fundamental changes that go beyond cosmetic exercise will depend on the leadership provided by the Chair and the collective input by an ad hoc committee that evaluates and restructures the entire program.

4) Increasing the Level of the Faculty’s Published and Funded Research. The PRC shares the external reviewers’ observation that excellence in undergraduate teaching and a research faculty should not be perceived as mutually exclusive goals. The Department must make a demonstrable and sustainable commitment to supporting faculty research activities. While the recently hired junior faculty are noted by the external reviewers for their productive research, the Department’s collective research output is weak. The senior faculty should not expect the junior faculty alone to remedy the situation. If the senior faculty are more productive in teaching and
outreach service than in research, the Department should recognize them by implementing differential teaching loads whereby the faculty are given choices through negotiations with the Chair. The expectation is a four + four teaching load per academic year with reductions in load contingent on research productivity. The Department is encouraged to discuss with the Dean ways to implement differential teaching loads. The reduced teaching load is subject to a periodical reexamination of the faculty’s research productivity. Any differential load policy reflects differential strengths and contributions of faculty, which should, in turn, be rewarded in the department’s merit system. It is also important in this connection that the Department establishes a mentoring system for newly recruited or junior faculty in support of their productive work environment for research, teaching, and service.

5) Enhancing the Quality of Faculty. The primary consideration in evaluating requests for faculty lines should be quality and productivity. If the quality and productivity is demonstrated, requests for new or replacement positions may be brought forward to the Dean.

6) Strengthening the Department’s networking and service components. The Department needs to encourage its faculty to engage in collaborative activities on and off campus. The Department would benefit from visibility and positive image as it expands its networking efforts with local communities in the university, corporate, and government sectors. The external reviewers’ suggestion on rural geography of Northwest Ohio is a good one: The Department expertise in demographic, cultural, and environmental topics as well as GIS contributions should be more effectively utilized to increase its visibility.

**Program Review Committee Recommendations**

The following section of this Report provides recommendations to the Department and the College for actions designed to revitalize the program in Geography. If the Department has not made substantial progress in the next three years, the PRC feels that plans for closing the Geography Department should be developed at that time. Given the gravity of the decision and the difficulty of accomplishing change in this time interval, the PRC recommends that the Dean work closely with the Department during the next three years.

1) By the end of fall semester, 1999, but earlier if possible, the Dean should decide whether to work closely with the current Chair to provide leadership for the Department, or to declare the Department in receivership and appoint a Chair from elsewhere within the University. In either event, the Dean should inform the Department of the urgent need for updating the curriculum and improving the faculty’s research productivity. We believe the Chair’s appointment should be on a year-to-year basis, for up to three years, and should depend upon satisfactory progress on other program review recommendations.

2) The PRC recommends that the Department reorganize its programs around one or two foci. The intent of this recommendation is to couple increased quality with concentration of resources and attention on fewer areas. The recommendation is
guided both by OBOR expectations for high quality, “niche” programs, and by BGSU’s own vision to develop premier learning communities. To have the necessary distinctiveness and national reputation, programs must be developed around a sharp focus. The Department should ask and answer the question: of the several areas we currently cover, in which do we have a competitive advantage? The Department should then concentrate its efforts and resources on developing those areas that build the Department’s distinctiveness and reputation, while trading off areas of lower priority and promise. The focus should be identified as soon as possible during fall semester, 1999. This decision will impact all areas of the Department’s future.

a) **Teaching.** Once the focus has been identified, the Department should form an *ad hoc* committee to evaluate the entire curriculum for the sake of restructuring. Examples of actions the Department can take include:

i) With the help of the Dean, provide support for consulting and professional development, so that the process of identifying a focus and redesigning the curriculum is informed by current ideas.

ii) Reassess regional courses and add new courses that reflect a global content, quantitative methods, diversity in race, ethnicity, and gender, and rural geography.

iii) Evaluate for their future implementation external reviewers’ proposed undergraduate core and elective courses and new courses.

iv) Be responsive to the needs of other units in the redesign of the GIS courses. These courses could easily be made useful to a broader audience, including Marketing, Geology and ENVS. New measures should be taken to keep the GIS lab open by hiring part-time students.

v) Interface with faculty in other units such as Journalism, Telecommunications, Physics, and Chemistry to explore programs leading to a certificate in meteorology and broadcast meteorology, if such a program is consistent with the focus of the Department.

b) **Research.** The identification of a programmatic focus will guide the development of hiring priorities, such that the faculty can interact on overlapping interests or different aspects of a problem of general interest. As part of the discussion on programmatic focus, the Department should develop a departmental research plan to be reviewed and approved by the Dean of Arts & Sciences and the Vice Provost for Research. The development of a departmental research plan has the potential for improving scholarly collaborations within the Department. There are also opportunities for developing collaboration outside the Department. The Department should aggressively pursue one or more of the following collaborations:

i) applied research and service units on campus, such as the Center for Policy Analysis and Public Service;

ii) graduate students and regional teachers in northwestern Ohio;

iii) geography faculty at the University of Toledo;

iv) East Lake Division of the Association of American Geographers; and

v) National Geographic Society’s Geography Alliance for Ohio.
3) During the fall semester, 1999, the Dean should suspend the current merit system and help the Department revise and implement a new merit system to promote scholarly achievements of the faculty, including collaborative efforts and active engagement with other units. The new system should be implemented in the spring, 2000.

4) During the fall semester, 1999, the Chair in consultation with the Dean should devise a differential teaching load system for the Department. This system should be designed to foster a climate of research and increased faculty productivity. The new system should be implemented beginning in the spring semester, 2000. Faculty not actively engaged in research, as evidenced by their recent publication record, should have assignments that concentrate on teaching, as recommended by the external team.

5) The Department should continue to develop its procedures for assessment of student learning. Assessments should be updated to keep pace with changes in the curriculum. The Department should submit an annual assessment report to the Student Achievement Assessment Committee. The “assessment cycle” includes strengthening the curriculum in areas where student outcome assessment finds weaknesses. Assessment is an ongoing process, and so should be a recurring, annual recommendation.

6) During the Spring semester, 2002, the Department should complete a viability report to the Dean of Arts and Sciences to justify its continuation.
   a) If the Dean is not satisfied with the progress made, he/she should discontinue the Department and place the faculty in other units that are interested in having them. The Dean should take into account the individual faculty’s expertise and preference in placing them in appropriate units within the College.
   b) If the Dean decides that the Department has made sufficient progress, then the College should provide additional support to the Department, including a possible national search for an external chair, as under no scenario could Geography operate effectively without additional resources. These might include:
      i) approving a new position, being sensitive to gender diversity issues of the Department and the University;
      ii) increasing operating budget for upgrading and maintaining technology;
      iii) reconsidering the Department’s needs for space in light of its needs as they develop in the context of their programmatic focus.

The Department of Geography should report annually to the Dean of Arts & Sciences, with a copy to the Provost, on the implementation of these recommendations.