

## UCC Program Review Committee - Summary of Review

### **Program** – Department of Geography

This program includes the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

- Geography (M.A.)
- Geography (M.S.)
- Geography Major (B.A.)
- Geography Major (B.S.)
- Geography—Geographic Information Science Major (B.S.)
- Geography—Globalization and Development Major (B.A.)
- Geography—Environmental Geography Major (B.S.)
- Geography—Meteorology Major (B.S.)
- Geography—Urban Planning and Sustainability Major (B.S.)
- Geography—Environmental Prelaw Major (B.S.)
- Geography Minor
- Geography—Meteorology Minor

### **Recommendation**

This program is found to be viable. See report for commendations, concerns, and recommendations.

**Date of last review** – AY 2007

**Date of this review** – AY 2018

This review has been sent to school director and the dean, their joint response is attached.

Graduate Council reviewed the report and had no additional comment.

**Ohio University Department of Geography**  
**Report on 7-year Review from Review Committee**  
**Submitted April 3, 2018**

**Committee Members**

David H. Kaplan, Professor of Geography, Kent State University  
Mary Jane Kelley, Professor of Spanish, Ohio University  
Robin Muhammad, Chair, African American Studies, Ohio University  
Herta Rodina, Associate Professor of French, Ohio University

**Introduction**

The committee visited the Department of Geography on March 22 and 23, 2018. After carefully reading the department's clearly organized, well written 7-year review report and interviewing faculty, students, and departmental staff, we deem all department programs viable. The Department of Geography consists of an energetic and creative group of teacher/scholars who are heavily involved in service to Ohio University and the profession.

The following report follows the structure suggested in the document "Questions for reviewers".

**The Program as a Whole:**

*a. Faculty resources*

The number and distribution of faculty seems adequate with two exceptions: 1) there is a critical need to replace the tenured professor in GIS, who will retire in 2019 and 2) the meteorology program has grown considerably in recent years and the current staffing level (two full-time faculty) stretches the department's ability to offer courses required for the major on a predictable basis. Difficulties arise when professors take Faculty Fellowship Leave, for example. An additional major in Broadcast Meteorology, currently in the final stages of preparation with Scripps School of Journalism, could potentially further increase the number of majors and thus create increased difficulties with scheduling necessary offerings.

*b. Research, scholarship, and creative activity (RSCA) levels*

RSCA level is high for both faculty and students. External funding is appropriate to the discipline and to a department that offers the BA, BS, MA, and MS degrees. Faculty attend and present at professional conferences and publish articles, book chapters, and books. All graduate students write a thesis under the supervision of a faculty member starting in 2019, and undergraduate students either complete an honors thesis or a research paper in the capstone class. The department distributes student projects among faculty. Thus, research engagement is high at all levels in the department.

*c. Service mission*

The department fulfills its service mission admirably. Within the department, faculty are highly engaged in assessment, curriculum revision, and advising. In addition, a large number of faculty

participate in interdisciplinary programs as directors and participants (HTC, Environmental Studies, Global Studies, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, the A&S Themes program). More broadly, faculty serve the profession by reviewing manuscripts for publication and act as officers in national and international organizations. The department values and encourages community engagement through informal talks and consultation services to local organizations, schools, advisory panels, and advocacy groups.

*d. Financial and human resources*

There are two areas of concern regarding financial resources:

1. Professional travel support will most likely decline considerably in coming years due to the current OHIO budget climate. Attendance at professional meetings is critical to continued RSCA.

2. The department lacks funds for student excursions for hands-on geography experience. Faculty need funds, for example, to rent a van to transport students to sites for experimental research.

In terms of human resources, the department is fortunate to have an efficient, diplomatic, caring Administrative Specialist. This position is crucial to the identity and cohesion of a department, and Patti Malloy does an outstanding job supporting and communicating with faculty. For IT support, the department shares Tim Grubb with other departments in Clippinger and recently with Math in Morton. Although the recent assignment of an additional department has strained Mr. Grubb's ability to respond to IT problems in a timely fashion, he has accepted and adjusted to the new need to prioritize. Grubb is competent and upbeat; two qualities that encourage faculty to engage and take advantage of his services.

*e. Physical facilities*

The physical facilities in Clippinger are cramped and show serious signs of age. Although the Department of Geography welcomes the prospect of building renovation, it will be important in the next few years for those making decisions about the new building to keep Geography in the communication loop. The Dean's Office must communicate with Geography, as well as the building's other departments, to alleviate the high level of concern that decision makers may not take departmental needs into consideration.

The preliminary plan that Geography has seen reduces their current laboratory space to an unviable level. To effectively teach their geospatial classes, Geography needs an exclusive laboratory space. The growing Planning Studies major also needs studio space in order to train their students effectively. In addition, faculty and staff are strongly opposed to the prospect of moving the Chair and Administrative Specialist to a site removed from the rest of the department. It is unclear when and by what means the department will get to participate in the process in the future. As the timeline for decision making evolves, it will be important to keep Geography informed. In our conversation with Dean Robert Frank, he implied that other Clippinger departments are also concerned about the renovation plans; it may help for Geography to compare concerns with these other units either to present a unified voice as renovation plans move forward or to strengthen their voice if preliminary plans favor other departments at the expense of Geography.

Hardware and software in the department's dedicated labs are currently sufficient, but it will be important, moving into the future, that Geography maintain the current ratio of technological resources to majors as well as up-to-date computers and applications. As the department continues to grow in numbers of majors, labs will require additional as well as updated technological resources.

### **Undergraduate Program:**

#### *a. Preparation of non-majors*

The Department of Geography is fulfilling its service role to the university and is meeting the needs for general education. Geography regularly offers Tier II courses that satisfy the Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Applied Science and Math, or Cross-Cultural Perspectives requirements. These courses, most with more than one section per year, include: GEOG 1100 (Physical Geography), GEOG 1200 (Human Geography), GEOG 1310 (Globalization and the Developing World), GEOG 2400 (Environmental Geography), GEOG 2500 (Planning and the City, a new course), GEOG 2680 (Introduction to GIS and Mapping Sciences). GEOG 1100, 1310, and 2680 are also offered online during the summer. In the 2016-2017 AY, for instance, Geography's 14 sections of General Education courses served 1,572 students or 63.5% of all students enrolled in Geography courses. During the review period, General Education courses represent, annually, between 63% and 68% of the department's total Weighted Student Credit Hours.

By its very nature, Geography is an interdisciplinary field, bridging the natural and social sciences and including elements from the humanities. Consequently, it is well placed to prepare a diverse group of non-majors for future coursework. For instance, students enroll in Geography courses to fulfill requirements for the environmental studies certificate or College themes certificates such as wealth and poverty or food studies. Several faculty have strong affiliations with the Center for International Studies, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and Environmental Studies.

#### *b. Major recruitment*

The number of Geography majors has increased significantly since the last seven-year review, from 168 in 2010 to 214 currently. As of fall 2017, they are distributed in the following way:

Environmental Geography: 40 (BS)

Environmental Pre-Law: 11 (BS)

Geography: 18 (BA, BS)

Geographic Information Science: 18 (BS)

Globalization and Development: 10 (BA)

Meteorology: 55 (BS)

Urban Planning and Sustainability: 33 (BS)

Honors Tutorial College Geography: 7

Honors Tutorial College Environmental Studies: 22

Several recent changes have produced this growth:

1) The creation of two new major tracks – a) globalization and development and b) urban planning and sustainability. Several of the students who met with the review team said that they decided to add a Geography major or change their major to Geography because a general education course in these areas sparked their interest in the subject.

Offering the variety of seven possible major tracks for Geography majors has worked in the department's favor: additional major tracks require minimal curricular change since much of student course work is the same across majors (foundations, regional, methods). Enrollments in the upper-level specialized courses for each major are healthy, which indicates that each of the majors is working to attract students to Geography and retain them.

2) The addition of two Group I faculty members, one to the meteorology major and another to the urban planning and sustainability major. These two tracks have produced the greatest increase in majors since the last review.

3) The expansion of the department's recruiting efforts since the switch from quarters to semesters. To counterbalance the drop in overall semester enrollment, faculty met with advisors in Admissions, University College, Arts and Sciences, and the Allen Student Help Center. They have also created brochures for high school students outlining the department's seven majors; in addition to hard-copy distribution, this information is featured on the department's website and social media pages. Promotion such as this is key, since geography is not part of the required curriculum in Ohio and most high school students have little or no exposure to the subject. A couple of the undergraduates we interviewed said that they chose geography as incoming students because it was something completely new for them. Faculty regularly highlight the Geography majors, minor, and certificates in their introductory classes.

Trends in retention suggest that Geography majors are very likely to succeed. According to a 2016 report from the Office of Institutional Research, the Department of Geography's average retention rate of 89% since AY 2008-09 is the highest in the College. This is significantly higher than the 76% College average and the 80% overall university average for the same time frame.

Regular, in-depth advising is one of the factors responsible for this success. Data from College advising surveys confirm that Geography majors are consistently very satisfied with the quality of the advising they receive. The 20 or so undergraduates we met underscored this high level of satisfaction with all types of advising, from formal pre-registration meetings with their assigned advisor to informal discussion with faculty whose courses they're taking. Without exception they felt very comfortable interacting with all faculty members and repeatedly cited the caring, supportive nature of the entire department. "I can talk to my advisor about anything" and "My geography professors really care about how I'm doing in their courses" were frequent refrains in our meeting with the students.

By broadening its appeal since the last review, Geography is reaching a broader, more diverse undergraduate population. The percentage of female majors has increased since 2010 as has the percentage of non-white majors for both genders:

2010 – 35% female, 65% male; 90% white (male and female), 10% minority (male and female).

2016 – 41% female, 59% male; 84% white (male and female), 16% minority (male and female).

*c. Efficacy of undergraduate curriculum*

The undergraduate curriculum provides graduating majors with the necessary background to pursue discipline-related careers or graduate work. The seven major tracks serve a broad range of student interests and underscore the variety inherent in the discipline. Since the last review, faculty have added several new courses to the curriculum and have created new study-away options. A large part of this curricular revision has occurred in the meteorology, globalization and development, and urban planning and sustainability tracks. Overall, the students we spoke with were pleased with their majors. Several cited the learning advantages of being with graduate students in the dual-listed upper-level courses. They did, however, have some suggestions for improving the undergraduate curriculum:

1) While the department listserv keeps them informed of internship opportunities, meaningful placements are hard to get. Students would appreciate more help in identifying internships that would provide the most experience and dovetail best with their interests.

2) Students recognize the importance of field work, but not all study-away options are related to their field. As a result, some choose programs with other universities. Students in the new globalization and development track voiced the need for a study-abroad option in the developing world, although they recognize the difficulties of creating one.

3) Several students, especially those in GIS, expressed frustration at the lack of a discipline-specific computer programming class.

*d. Resource capabilities*

Clippinger Labs, Geography's home building, is old and slated for renovation. Classrooms have poor lighting and acoustics and are rarely suited to student-centered teaching or project-based courses, such as the required capstone course. Faculty offices are small and, with the exception of meteorology students who can use the common area in Scalia Lab to study between classes, undergraduates have no gathering space in the building. Faculty are concerned that the department may have even less space in the renovated building and that they may have to share already full labs with other departments.

While faculty are currently able to support the undergraduate curriculum, high enrollments in meteorology courses and an imminent Group I retirement in the Geographic Information Science (GIS) track have implications for continuing coverage. Because there are only two meteorology faculty, they teach a lot of classes on a rotating schedule, which creates logistical challenges for students. These classes should be offered more frequently. In addition, the current number of faculty does not meet the American Meteorological Society's recommendation for a minimum of three positions. Plans for a new major in broadcast meteorology will increase enrollment and advising needs even more and place additional strain on the faculty in this track.

GIS is essential to the Geography department and provides majors with highly desirable skill sets. However, the GIS track, already down a Group I position due to previous budget cuts, will not be able to operate with just one faculty member. The position about to be vacated requires a

Group I hire because of the complexity of the field. The new online GIS and cartography certificate clearly cannot be sustained by only one faculty member.

*e. Teaching assessment*

Meetings with faculty indicated that they are committed to high-quality, challenging teaching; meetings with students confirmed enthusiastic engagement in their studies and strong admiration for their professors. Faculty have engaged in roundtable discussions on current pedagogical issues in the discipline and have incorporated a variety of new technologies into their courses. Some have adopted the flipped classroom method, others have developed online versions of existing courses. In-person or virtual guest lectures are common. Geography faculty have participated in the Bruning Teaching Academy, an intensive, year-long program that pairs junior faculty with senior faculty known for their excellence in teaching. During the period under review, 11 out of 15 faculty members have received teaching awards and 2 have been named University Professor. TAs in geography, who serve as lab instructors, have also been recognized for the quality of their teaching.

Geography assesses teaching in two main ways. In addition to Class Climate evaluations at the end of every course, all instructors are invited to submit annual self-evaluations for the courses they teach as well as descriptions of new teaching methods and revisions to courses. Geography also conducts peer observations of untenured faculty, although the number of these could be increased and the timing made more explicit.

The department has established clearly-defined learning outcomes for all their tracks and is making changes to aspects of the curriculum based on assessment data. For instance, GEOG 4800, the capstone course required of all majors, assesses student achievement of program learning outcomes through students' final projects. Through assessment, it has become evident that students need more work earlier in the curriculum on certain skills (designing posters, creating maps, conducting research, creating tables and graphs). Consequently, the assessment committee has recommended changes to lower-level classes to remedy the shortcomings identified in the assessment process, thereby improving the quality of student learning in future offerings of the capstone.

*f. Career placement*

The majority of students graduate within four years; the ones who change their major to Geography in their third or fourth year need extra time. Many students who choose to pursue a master's or law degree receive financial aid from highly-ranked programs. During the period under review, several undergraduates received nationally-competitive research awards. Meteorology majors have been very successful in finding entry-level jobs in their fields without additional formal education. Majors in other tracks have found employment with local, state, and federal agencies, with planning companies, and with the banking industry. The department maintains a listserv for job opportunities and undergraduates are invited to connect with Geography alumni via LinkedIn and through on-site colloquia. The undergraduates we spoke with did not seem particularly worried about finding a job in their field.

## Graduate Program

### *a. Student recruitment*

Ohio University's Geography Department is a terminal Master's Program. They offer an M.A. and an M.S., with the M.S. degree involving a greater focus in physical geography courses. For the most part, the students have conducted a final Master's thesis. While there has been a non-thesis option, that involves more coursework and a comprehensive exam, this is being eliminated and so will be discussed less here.

The standard length of time for a Master's is two years, and funding is provided for two years. For those on the thesis track, students take most of their courses the first two semesters. In the second year they take an additional course or two but work mainly on their thesis with an advisor and a committee.

In recent years, the department has been able to offer six to seven teaching assistantships. This is often supplemented with one or two research assistantships for faculty that acquire external funding. All assistantships come with tuition remission. There are also a small number of students awarded a tuition waiver only. The number of applicants has mostly centered around 29, with an even distribution of men and women but also a fair degree of variation from year to year. About one out of six students in the program are non-white, although one or two students felt that there should be more diversity in this regard.

The admissions requirements are that the applicant has over a 3.0 GPA, provides three letters of reference, a goal statement, GRE scores, and TOEFL scores if coming from a non-English background. Relation to faculty interest and having a diversity of specialties is also considered. The graduate coordinator indicated that the transcript was the most important criteria for admission, followed by the letters of reference and the goal statement. GREs are weighted less heavily but are still considered. In recent years, the department has admitted most students who pass the minimum thresholds, leading to an acceptance rate of 90%. Funding is more difficult to obtain, and approximately 57 to 80 percent of applicants have been awarded funding since 2012. Since then, the department changed its philosophy and decided to admit many students without funding; whereas in previous years, they were inclined to only admit students with funding. Despite this, virtually no unfunded students enroll in the Master's programs.

The applicant pool is fairly strong with an average GPA of between 3.3 and 3.5 and GRE scores mainly in the middle percentiles. While many graduate programs in Geography will accept students who have not majored in Geography, they often require some background, whether several courses, the equivalent of a minor, or experience in a close cognate such as urban planning. The last three years of applications to the Geography Department show that well more than half of students come into the program with a major in geography and most of the rest have interests close to geography, such as environmental studies or planning.

The Geography Department empanels a committee of three faculty members who make the admissions and funding decisions for new graduate applicants. There is input from other members of the faculty, especially if an applicant seems particularly promising and has contacted that professor. The graduate coordinator assigns each admitted student to an interim advisor



with the understanding that a student is free to switch to another permanent advisor without repercussions. The graduate students we spoke to indicated that this is a fairly seamless process and nobody had experienced any problem in making a switch from one faculty member to another. They also all indicated that they felt well prepared from the graduate program, based on the curriculum at hand and their interactions with their advisor.

*b. Graduate curriculum*

The graduate curriculum is quite flexible. Thesis students are expected to take at least seven courses (28 credits) with the remainder of their 40 required credits based on research or a possible additional course. The only required course is Research and Writing which combines geographic thought and proposal writing. Other courses are structured in terms of a methods course, at least two seminars, and the rest electives at 5000 level. Most such courses are expected to be in the Geography Department, but students can take courses outside the Department with the permission of their advisor. We did not sense any problem of students who wished to take outside courses being denied that opportunity.

The Geographical Research and Writing course is offered in the Fall, during the first semester of a student's program. Reviewer concerns regarded the scope and timing of this course. Many other geography programs offer a geographic thought and a proposal writing course separately, and in fact that was the situation when Ohio University was on the quarter system. Having the two courses merged into one seems problematic. Most students we spoke to did not mind this, however, grateful not to have to spend more time on geographic thought. Still offering a required stand-alone history and thought course may be a consideration given that this provides a solid and general overview of the discipline. Another concern was in the timing as many students may not know what they want to do their thesis on during their first semester and so proposal work during that time may be less effective than during the spring semester. Again, most students did not seem perturbed about the timing and, when asked, only a small minority expressed the opinion that the course should be moved to the spring semester.

Looking at the remainder of the graduate curriculum, some additional issues arose. Students raised a concern over a relative paucity of seminars. They are required to take two of these and seem to enjoy them. Unfortunately, it is difficult for the department to offer a large number of seminars in a student's chosen specialty. The remainder of the coursework is taken up with dual-listed courses, shared with undergraduate students. Some of the graduate students believed these courses are less helpful because the material is not presented at a high enough level. The review committee realizes that more graduate only courses may be unrealistic given the department size, but there could be potential strategies for making these dual-listed courses more interesting for graduate students, including additional course work, calling out graduate students during the class itself, giving more credit to discussion, and some other tactics. One option, albeit one requiring additional time on the part of the instructor, would be to add an additional graduate only hour during the week. Finally, one student raised the concern of not having Quantitative Methods offered more regularly (Qualitative Methods is offered every Spring). While the Review Committee understands that this may be a difficult course to staff and may have enrollment issues should it be offered, such a course is fairly vital for some specialties and so we urge the Geography Department to explore whether a solution may be possible. Finally, there was some confusion of whether a two year list of graduate courses in the department is available

to help in curricular planning. Since such a list is developed, we would encourage the Department to make it more visible to incoming and current graduate students.

We saw a great degree of diversity in the Masters' Theses produced by the students. Just in the last two years, they covered topics in remote sensing of quaternary sediments, tornado intensity, Antarctic pressure variability, local food systems, racial justice and street art, historical production of space, urban land cover change, immigrant maternal health, experiences of pregnant graduate students, soil moisture, and amusement park landscapes. We also counted seven non-thesis options among the 20 degrees granted. While popular among some students, the non-thesis option is being discontinued. The faculty has become disappointed with the quality of the non-thesis education and that the thesis research experience provides a far more robust intellectual experience than the non-thesis experience.

#### *c. Mentoring and advising*

The Master's students all follow a committee structure that involves the selection of an academic advisor, followed by the addition of two committee members from Geography. For students pursuing the thesis, it is possible to include a fourth committee member from outside the Geography Department. Depending on the graduate faculty status of this outside member, they can either be accorded full voting rights on the thesis or advisory, non-voting rights. In our discussions with faculty and graduate students, the Review Committee sensed that the Department follows a strong advising model, where the key relationship is between the student and her advisor. They may or may not consult frequently with other committee members but it is critical that they maintain continuous contact with the advisor. In this respect, we heard very positive things. In no case, did a student indicate a problem, and most offered high praise for their advising. Many advisors met with their students on a regular weekly schedule and shepherded them through the thesis development and also aspects of professional development. The proof of good advising is that 75 percent of students completed their Master's degree by the summer after their fourth semester, and 89 percent completed the Master's within 5 semesters.

#### *d. Faculty sufficiency and resources*

In reviewing the faculty specializations, we can say that the program has enough resources to support a Masters only program. There are 15 group one faculty, all of whom have graduate faculty standing and thus the ability to supervise Master's students. The specializations in the department are also fairly divers, covering Human Geography, Human-Environment, Physical Geography, and Geospatial Analysis. As stated elsewhere, it is critical that the Geospatial Analysis faculty retain a position after Dr. Lein retires. Yet it seems that there is enough faculty to advise students in many different areas of geography, especially at the Master's level. In our discussions with graduate students, not one complained about the lack of faculty expertise in their subject area and we believe that the use of faculty fit as one criterion in the admissions and funding process can ensure that both students and faculty are satisfied. What is more, the graduate coordinator does a nice job of distributing graduate students equitably – a point brought out by several of the other faculty – and this maintains a good balance. In fact, we would argue that the department could probably accommodate several more graduate students and would encourage the administration to increase the graduate budget to allow for five more graduate assistants. This would not only bolster the graduate program but also help with the expanding

undergraduate enrollment within the department and the initiation of new on-line GIS certificates and the development of an undergraduate broadcast meteorology concentration.

Some other resources – such as computers and travel money – seem adequate for students. But space did appear to be a problem. Almost all of the graduate assistants are tucked into a single windowless room subdivided by desks and dividers. The space appeared cramped and did not lend itself to privacy, especially if they needed to consult with undergraduates. While this comes under the generalized space concerns, we hope that a way can be found to improve the privacy and quiet in whatever spaces are occupied by graduate students during Clippinger’s remodel.

*e. Financial support*

Graduate Assistants in the Geography Department receive a stipend of \$13,100 per 9-month academic year plus tuition. While this is hardly lavish, we believe that it compares favorably with other Master’s stipends. We did not ask the graduate students specifically about this issue, but it never came up unbidden. So we feel that any additional money on the graduate budget is better spent on new GA lines.

*f. Teaching assessment*

Many of the funded graduate students conduct labs for Physical Geography. Others help out in GIS courses and some help with grading. None of these courses are discussion or recital courses, and the most important element is that the GA possesses the necessary knowledge. The question came up as to whether graduate students are adequately prepared to teach. The department promotes regular contact between the course instructor and the GAs – often in the form of a weekly meeting. Occasionally, instructors may sit in on a lab to see how it is going. In all cases, students with some instructional duties are evaluated by the students in their sections, and this information is available to the GA and to the Chair. The Review Committee believes that, while the amount of teacher training is largely consonant with other successful programs in Geography and a heavy burden of teacher training would detract from the time graduate students spend on their other tasks, we would suggest that the Department provide a workshop every year to highlight certain challenges in teaching undergraduates and ways to deal with particularly difficult cases. In cases where the graduate student is unfamiliar with the subject matter, he should be required to attend the relevant lecture course and learn the material as much as possible. In truly difficult cases, the graduate coordinator should reassign the GA as soon as possible.

*g. Career placement*

The most important aspect of the graduate program is the extent to which it prepares students for their chosen careers. The record looks quite positive. About one third of students we spoke to were planning to pursue a PhD degree, and they felt as if their preparation was quite positive. In the past, Ohio University MA and MS students have been successful in gaining funded admission at a large number of doctoral institutions and many of these have been eventually successful in gaining academic jobs. Of the other two-thirds or so, the department should be proud of its efforts to place their students in a variety of occupations. The department indicates that at least 85 percent of their Master’s students either go on for further education (28%) or find a job relevant to their degree (57%). Only eleven percent of graduates do not hold related positions.

## **Commendations**

*a. Department atmosphere.* The faculty, students, and staff have cultivated a positive academic environment conducive to research and other creative activity. Faculty members communicate well and work together towards achieving common goals.

*b. Advising.* Faculty across sub-disciplines are dedicated to quality advising at both the graduate and undergraduate level.

*c. Inter-disciplinary endeavors.* Many Geography faculty participate actively in inter-disciplinary teaching across campus.

*d. Quality teaching.* In large part, success of Geography graduates is due to outstanding experiences in Clippinger classrooms.

*e. Program promotion.* Since the last program review the department has expanded its strategies for reaching students and promoting study of Geography. Electronic and hard copy communications are updated regularly, keeping students abreast of departmental news and developments.

*f. Assessment.* Geography has developed an effective plan for assessment that “closes the loop” (i.e., institutes changes in curricula based on findings from assessment practices).

## **Areas of Concern and Recommendations**

### *a. Faculty hiring*

1) Upon the 2019 retirement of a tenured faculty member specializing in GIS, the department will need a Group I replacement. GIS is already a critical area in the curriculum, and faculty have proposed an additional program in this area: the on-line graduate certificate in GIScience.

2) Meteorology enrollments have soared in recent years, straining the ability of the current faculty to offer sufficient sections of needed classes. The department should hire a geographer with a specialization in meteorology to help alleviate this need.

### *b. Space*

As plans move forward on the Clippinger renovation, decision makers must take into account Geography’s needs, both for during the transition and for the new building. Clear and open lines of communication between Geography and the Dean’s office will be critical to minimizing anxiety and uncertainty during the process. Currently, Geography is concerned because their already cramped space has been reduced in preliminary plans for the new building. The suggestion that their current dedicated GIS lab be shared among all departments in the new building is untenable. Decision makers must understand Geography’s needs as they move forward.

*c. Pre-tenure mentoring*

As part of preparation for going up for tenure, the department might recommend that pre-tenure faculty get as early a start as possible on compilation of the dossier, according to the Arts and Sciences guidelines. This would involve attending the annual A&S meetings for pre-tenure faculty as well as starting on sections that require lists of activities and initiatives.

Department of Geography

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August 15, 2018

Dr. David Ingram  
Program Review Committee Chair, UCC  
Ohio University  
Athens, OH 45701

Dear David,

The Department of Geography appreciates the diligent and responsible manner in which the committee conducted our program's seven-year review last semester. We are pleased with the informative report, which recognizes our hard work and accomplishments in teaching, research, and service, and our commitment to continue these efforts into the future to the best of our ability. We feel the committee understood and expressed well in the report our critical need for additional space, given the department's growth over the last several years, and our need for continued appropriate space, given the nature of our discipline and its grounding in the geospatial techniques. The report also underscores the necessity to support key geography faculty positions in the future as we face retirements, launch new programs, and educate a growing number of students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dorothy Sack".

Dorothy Sack, Professor and Chair  
Department of Geography  
Ohio University  
Athens OH 45701



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Date: April 12, 2018  
TO: David Ingram, Program Review Committee  
FROM: Robert Frank, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences  
RE: Seven-year review of Geography

I am responding to the 2018 reviewer's report for the Department of Geography seven-year program review.

The very thorough review identifies the many strengths of the Geography Department and its programs including a very strong faculty. As stated in the report, the future health of the program will depend on replacing any critical faculty retirements and developing a plan to cover the expanding meteorology program, particularly if a new broadcast meteorology program is developed. It is also important to be vigilant regarding the space needs of the department as the planning for the Clippinger renovation project continues. I have no concerns about the viability of the department and its programs.