

PROGRAM REVIEW 2008-2011

Division: Social Science and Humanities

Department or Program: Geography

Name and Title of Preparer(s): Purba Fernandez, Dept. Chair, in consultation with department faculty

I. Description and Mission of the Program

Which area(s) does this program considerably address (check all that apply):

Basic Skills Transfer Career/Technical Other (describe)

- A. The Geography department offers lower division introductory college courses in Physical Geography (GEO 1), Cultural Geography (GEO 4) and World Regional Geography (GEO 10). Starting next year, we will be offering a new course entitled "A Geography of California." All of our courses fulfill De Anza G.E. requirements and are CSU and UC transferable. Students are able to hone their basic skills, they also develop critical thinking and analytical skills; they learn to synthesize knowledge from many disciplines as they become more geographically informed.
- B. It offers a course in the Physical Sciences and it offers 2 courses in the Social Sciences; all 3 courses meet De Anza G.E. requirements and CSU and UC transfer needs. For De Anza's diverse student body, the Geography department is critical towards developing and expanding student awareness and understanding about local, regional and global cultures. As the U.S. economic focus shifts increasingly to environmental issues, Geography is uniquely positioned to educate students about the linkages and interdependencies between the physical and cultural landscapes. A geographically informed student has a deeper understanding of the web of relationships between people, places and the environment at local, regional and global scales. Our courses train students to be responsible world citizens.
- C. • The Geography department would like to be able to offer additional lower division courses in the discipline so that students have a wider range of choices.
 • We would like to narrow the gap in student success rates between targeted and non-targeted student groups
 • We would like to improve our retention rates further
- D. We expect that students upon completing Geography courses would have benefited from the learning outcomes listed below. Some of these students after completing their AA degree will go on to 4 year institutions.
- Learning outcomes:
 - basic skills such as reading, comprehension and writing
 - critical thinking, analytical reasoning, synthesizing
 - understand and appreciate the diversity of human cultures
 - understand and appreciate the natural process that define and shape our physical world
 - develop understanding of the interconnectedness of the physical and cultural landscapes

- Transfer: All Geography courses currently offered meet De Anza G.E. requirements and transfer to CSU and UC campuses.
- AA degree: Students have the opportunity to major in the subject at a four year institution; their AA degree at De Anza College is in Liberal Arts.

II. Retention and Growth

- A. **Performance summary:** enrollment and success 2005-'06, 2006-'07 to 2007-'08:
- a) Recorded an **increase in enrollment** from 901 to 914 to 978 which is an increase in 8.54% over the 3 year period, while the number of sections offered remained at 23 for all 3 years.
 - b) **Enrollment for Winter quarter'09** shows an increase when compared to Winter '08, the count rose from 328 to 365, which is an increase of 37 or 11.2% while the section count remained unchanged. Though the data shows a section count of 9 for Winter '08 and '09, 2 of those sections, during each quarter, are Honors sections of the same classes, so in reality there are 7 distinct sections offered.
 - c) **Retention** has showed significant improvement from 81% to 84% to 87%
 - d) **Success rate** improved from 69% to 71%, so we are inching towards the goal of a minimum of 75% success rate set in the equity plan
 - e) **Productivity** improved from 594 to 634 to 656, which is a 10.43% increase in the 3 year period
 - f) **WSCH** increased from 3,742 to 3,801 to 4,130 which is a 10.37% increase in a 3 year period.
- B. While the enrollment from 2005-08 has increased, the proportion of targeted to non-targeted population has remained more or less the same for Geography. In 2005-06, the targeted group accounted for 23% of enrollment, while the non-targeted group was 77%. In '06-'07, the respective percentages were 25% and 75% while in '07-'08, they were 24% and 76%.

The success rate gap between the non-targeted and the targeted student groups has narrowed marginally from 12% in '05-'06 to 11% in '07-08.

The retention figures for the targeted and non-targeted student groups are more of a success story for our department. While retention in general has gone up, from 81% to 87%, the retention rates for targeted groups was 78% in '05-06 while for non-targeted groups the number was 82%, but in '07-'08, the retention for the respective groups had increased to 84% and 87% respectively. Most likely this success is linked to increased faculty efforts in retention, such as Early Alert, Tutorial Program, and division-wide efforts for Cultural Competency such as the Conversation, Application and Reflection project (C.A.R.).

In summary, our retention efforts have been fairly successful, but our success rates have hovered around the same. The success rate gap between the targeted and non-targeted groups has shown little improvement.

- C. The Statewide Basic Skills Initiative defines "basic skills" as English, mathematics, reading, writing and ESL skills. In what ways does your program address the basic skills needs of students? For programs that do not directly address basic skills, how does the lack of basic skills impact student success rates for your program?

All the Geography courses we offer at De Anza College (GEO 1, Physical Geography, Geo 4, Cultural Geography and Geo 10, World Regional Geography) are G.E. courses. Each of the courses involves reading, comprehension, analysis and

discussion of college level texts and readers, and completing writing assignments and taking exams. There are extensive content-based writing assignments associated with each course. In addition, students learn to read and interpret data, understand basic mathematical operations with data (for example, census data, weather and climate data). Students also work with visual representations of data through maps and mapping. These enhance the basic skills of students and prepare them for upper division course-work which is necessary for transfer students.

III. Student Equity

- A. For the fiscal year 2007-08, the targeted population recorded a **success rate** of 63% while the non-targeted population registered a 74% success rate. That reveals a gap of 11% in the success rates between the targeted and non-targeted student groups. The success gap for the two groups was 14% in '06-'07, and 12% for '05-'06. We clearly have work to do in this area, because the student equity plan target is to narrow the success rates between ethnic groups to less than 5%.

Currently, in geography, the widest gap in **success rates** for '07-'08 is between White (77%) and Filipino (62%) populations, not including the Native American and Pacific Islander groups. The Native American (8 students) and the Pacific Islander (14 students) groups are numerically small, hence success rate percentages for comparisons amongst groups are not really meaningful, since slight count changes result in disproportionate effects on the percentage count. The widest gap in non-success rates is between Filipino and Hispanic groups (each 23%), and Blacks (12%).

In summary, our department's efforts to narrow the success and retention gaps show nominal gains, i.e. we have not been very successful in this area and we need to step up our efforts.

- As faculty, we will continue our efforts with our Division's **CAR project, tutorial program, early alert and careful attention** to students in our classes.
 - We will continue our efforts at being more effective as teaching professionals through **staff development/professional growth activities**.
 - For highly talented and gifted students, we will continue to offer students the opportunity to take some of our classes for **Honors** credit.
 - We will continue our **collaborative efforts** with other programs and events on campus to provide students a broad range of opportunities to succeed in our classes.
- B. Between 2005-'08, the full-time FTEF has decreased from 1.30 to 1.00; the percent full time faculty has reduced from 65% to 50%. The Department now has only 1 full-time faculty member who functions as the department chair, while the rest of the faculty are adjunct faculty. While all the adjunct faculty are fine professionals, fully dedicated to serving student needs; the burden of responsibilities of updating and expanding curricula, participating in campus activities, serving as department chair, participating in cultural competency projects, outreach events, student retention efforts and taking part in collaborative projects in addition to regular teaching responsibilities is taxing for the one full time faculty member. We need to expand our curricular offerings, but such expansion is not feasible unless we have more full-time faculty members in our department.

IV. Budget Limitations

- a.
 - i. Our department has only 1 full-time faculty member. (See III C above).
 - ii. Limited sections. We would be able to improve on our enrollments if we were allowed additional sections.
 - iii. Our classroom: Currently we use L 23 for all of our geography classes because all the wall maps are mounted in that room. However L 23 has stadium-style tiered seating with fixed tables which makes small group activity challenging. Obviously, the learning environment impacts student success and retention rates. We would like to equip a 2nd classroom with wall maps as an alternate venue for additional geography classes. A classroom with movable chairs and desks would be more conducive to small group activity to foster co-operative learning and hands on activity by students.
 - iv. Need for storage space in classroom:
 - o display case/s to store rock samples
 - o a storage cabinet with drawers for large topographic maps
 - v. A **physical geography lab**, with movable desks and chairs so groups of 4-6 students could sit around tables large enough to hold topographic maps. This needs to be a multimedia “smart” classroom with an internet connection.

- B. The Academic Senate is in the process of creating a document to define our **institutional core competencies**. The draft document includes the following:

“Global, Cultural, Social & Environmental Awareness
 Students will recognize their role as local, national, and global citizens. They will participate in a democratic process, respect social and cultural diversity, appreciate the complexity of the physical world, and understand the significance of both environmental sustainability and social justice.”

Academically, the Geography department’s mission is to instill each student with the above mentioned abilities. Students who lack the above competencies will not be able to function effectively in our globalized economy; De Anza’s mission is to challenge students “to serve their community in a diverse and changing world.” The first step is to prepare and inform students about the world in which they live. The students will be shortchanged and the college will fail to live up to its promises if the Geography department were to be eliminated or significantly reduced.

V. Additional Comments (optional):

1. Strategic Planning Initiatives (Community Collaborations, Cultural Competency, Outreach, and Individualized Attention for Retention):

- i. Cultural Competency: For the past 3 years, we have participated in the **C.A.R. (Conversation, Application and Reflection project)**, which allows us to think deeply about our teaching philosophies and methodologies. As a department we meet at the beginning and at the end of the quarter to come up with more diversified and effective teaching strategies geared towards our students’ needs. During the course of the quarter, we get to implement these strategies and evaluate their successes (or lack thereof) and discuss the outcomes.

- ii. Individualized Attention for Retention:
 - a. The Geography Department continues to work with the Student Tutorial Center to offer tutorial help to students through the **Adjunct Skills Program**. Students get to work collaboratively with a supplemental instructor (SI) who leads the group in discussions and helps with test preparation and assignments. The labs and the group discussions prepare students for greater success in college courses.
 - b. We use the **Early Alert** program to pinpoint students who may need extra help or guidance. We meet with the students early on in the quarter and refer them for counseling help if needed.
 - iii. Outreach:
 - a. The Department has a **web site** with course listings and with Resource links and information about careers in the discipline. For transfer students, we have links to Geography department web sites for major California and out of state Universities across the nation.
 - b. **Parent Night:** The department has diligently participated in outreach efforts such as Parent Night where we have had a presence at the Social Sciences and Humanities Division Desk. We have an information flier for prospective students and families and the department chair is present to answer questions about the discipline.
- **Relationships with Other Programs:**
 - i. The Geography department has worked with the **California History Center** on particular exhibitions such as the 2006 Centennial for the San Francisco Earthquake. Students had the opportunity to synthesize and analyze information from this exhibition and to learn about problem-solving through an interdisciplinary approach.
 - ii. In Winter 2009, the Geography department is working collaboratively on a mapping project in the **new Euphrat Museum**. The exhibit is entitled "Come on down" and is an interactive project in which viewers (including Geography students) describe a special place in Silicon Valley where something very significant happened and connect it to a map. It is an opportunity for students to feel connected to 'place' and is one more way of including their voices.

These collaborative efforts reach across disciplines and students get a real sense of the interconnectedness between disciplines. This is crucial in the modern world. Too often students are made to focus on the compartmentalized, disciplinary specialty area but our focus as educators should be to draw their attention to the nuanced, big-picture, real world complexities that require an interdisciplinary approach. These collaborative projects offer those kinds of effective learning opportunities.