

GROGRAPHY UNDERGRADUATE, ASSESSMENT REPORT FY2012

Program name: Geography (Undergrad) **Department:** Geog, Soc, Econ, and Anth

This assessment report is based on results from *Student Self-Assessment* and performance of students in *Geography Proficiency Test I* and *Geography Proficiency Test II*. The first instrument, *Student Self-Assessment*, is for indirect assessment of learning, while the proficiency tests are for direct assessment of learning.

Descriptions of Assessment Instruments and Outcomes Being Measured

The *student self-assessment* survey consists of open-ended questions and closed-ended Likert-style student survey questions adopted from *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2002. In the open-ended questions, students were asked to state what they had learned in the last one year and give their opinion about their program and the progress they were making toward the completion of their program. In the closed-ended Likert-style questions, students were asked to evaluate their level of agreement about their educational experience at Chicago State University on a three ordered-response-levels (**Some, Much, Most**).

Geography Proficiency Test I is one of two assessment instruments used for direct assessment of student learning. The test instrument assesses geographic skills and concepts students are expected to learn and critical thinking skills they are expected to develop upon completion of 2000-level courses in their major.

The *Geography Proficiency Test II* is the second instrument used for direct assessment of student learning. The test instrument assesses geographic skills and concepts students are expected to learn and grasp and critical thinking skills they are expected to develop upon completion of all 3000-level and some 4000-level courses in their major.

While the *student self-assessment* survey measures student opinions about how much and what specific things they have learned, the two instruments for direct assessment of learning measure the following learning outcomes:

1. Explain physical and human characteristics of places.
2. Evaluate human-environment interaction and spatial interaction.
3. Apply geographic information systems (GIS) and quantitative techniques in geographic analysis.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with the professional literature in geography, cartography, remote sensing, and geographic information systems.
5. Write a thesis to address a significant geographic research question(s)
6. Organize information into a coherent written and oral presentation.

Methods of Assessment

The *student self-assessment* survey was distributed to students by course instructors and students were asked to complete and return them to their instructors. Although some of the questions in this test

instrument are open-ended, a judgment is made by the assessment coordinator whether responses by a particular student would indicate *satisfaction* or *dissatisfaction*. If responses to the questions by the majority of the self-assessing students indicate *satisfaction*, the program gets a *satisfactory* grade. If responses to the questions by the majority of the self-assessing students indicate *dissatisfaction*, the program gets *unsatisfactory* grade.

Geography Proficiency Test I consists of fifteen short-answer map-reading and multiple-choice questions. The questions relate to (a) place identification and latitude-longitude determination of locations on a map, (b) aspects of weather and climate/physical geography, (c) aspects of and concepts in human geography, (d) concept of geographic region, and (e) map scale and symbolization/technical aspects of geography. The test is administered by faculty during regularly scheduled class time. Students are given 20-25 minutes to complete the test. A score of **70%** or better in the test is considered a **PASS**.

Geography Proficiency Test II is designed to assess geographic skills and concepts that students are expected to learn and critical thinking skills that they are expected to develop upon completion of 3000- and a number of 4000-level courses in their major. The test consists of nine major open-ended questions. Each question needs to be answered in few words or sentences. To answer some of these questions, students have to read and interpret maps, diagrams, or tabular data. To answer some of the questions, students have to recall concepts learned in some 2000- and 3000-level courses. The test is administered by instructors during regularly scheduled class time; students are given 20-25 minutes to complete the test. A score of **70%** or better in the test is considered a **PASS**.

Assessment Findings & Student Learning

One geography major and four geography minors completed the student self-assessment survey. Student responses indicated that (a) they were making satisfactory progress toward completing their studies, (b) they had a much better understanding of the world around them and the environment than a year ago, (c) they were better researchers and writers, more computer/internet-literate, and more confident and assertive than a year ago, and (d) they could relate topics in geography to issues in their communities. Overall, the responses indicate **satisfaction** with the program and students didn't identify any area that needed improvement.

One geography major and four geography minors took ***Geography Proficiency Test I***. The geography major scored 47%, much lower than the 70% or better set for a satisfactory performance. Among the four geography minors who took the test, one student scored 79%, three scored in the 53-58 range, and one student scored 37%. Among the geography minors, one student scored better than the minimum required for satisfactory performance. While the test scores suggested improvements of student learning were needed in all areas of geography (physical geography, human geography, and the technique areas), the question-by-question analysis of the test results indicated specific topic areas of student strengths and weaknesses. As in the past, students had more difficulties with questions relating to concepts in physical geography and the technique areas.

Four geography minors took ***Geography Proficiency Test II***. The scores were 57%, 57%, 48%, and 46%. The scores are lower than criterion ($\geq 70\%$) set for satisfactory performance. Considering that the

criterion ($\geq 70\%$) for satisfactory performance was set for the geography majors, these performances by the geography minors are not that bad, but they could do better than this.

Decisions Based on Assessment Findings

There will be a program assessment meeting in the first three weeks of the fall 2012 semester to discuss the results and to make the decisions regarding specific improvements that need to be made.

Demonstrating Improved Learning

Comparisons of results for both *Geography Proficiency Test I* and *Geography Proficiency Test II* with corresponding results for the previous academic year showed results for this assessment period are lower than those in the previous semester. Faculty need to have a very serious discussion about the results in fall 2012.

Publicizing Student Learning

The assessment plan and assessment results for this assessment period will be posted at the geography page of the departmental web site before the beginning of the fall 2012 semester.

Accomplishments and Challenges

Among the major accomplishments related to assessment in our department is that we have managed to keep up with new technologies and developments in the continually changing and evolving technologies and sciences of GIS, remote sensing, and GPS by upgrading existing hardware and software and by acquiring new ones through various sources of funding, including grants. Our GIS lab has become a tremendous asset for teaching not only GIS and remote sensing courses but also for enhancing the teaching of other graduate and undergraduate courses in geography, sociology, economics, and anthropology and for enhancing the activities of the Neighborhood Assistance Center. Another major accomplishment is the full participation of faculty in assessment activities; it appears that the faculty has accepted assessment as an important component of the teaching and learning process.

A major challenge of our program is soliciting funds for maintaining GIS and remote sensing software licenses and for continually upgrading software and hardware to keep with new developments. While software and hardware upgrading may be required at least every two years, the kind of money required to do the upgrading may be hard to come by every two years.

Another major challenge is increasing the number of majors. The department is trying to strengthen existing partnerships with area high schools and community colleges and create new partnerships for recruiting quality students and increasing enrollment.