

## Geography Instruction in Florida's Community Colleges

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Community colleges, sometimes still called junior colleges in Florida, are important components of the State of Florida's higher educational program. Actually the combined enrollment of these 28 colleges is approximately 85% of the total head count of students in the state supported institutions of higher education. Except for a few individuals who have been active for many years in the Florida Society of Geographers, those who teach geography in these community colleges remain anonymous to the membership, and undoubtedly most are unaware of the Society. The majority who teach geography in community colleges majored in other subjects, and some perhaps have never had a course in our discipline.

In the interest of forging a closer connections between those who are involved already with other geographers (members of the Society, the Geographic Alliance, or geography departments) with these anonymous teachers of geography in community colleges I offer this brief summary of geography in these institutions. Since I am the geography coordinator for the Florida Department of Education's common course numbering program, and must approve numbers for all geography courses taught in the state's higher educational institutions, I am in an excellent position to gather information on this subject. Enrollment data were obtained from the Florida Division of Community Colleges, whose offices are in Tallahassee.

Table 1 identifies all the courses that are in the catalogs of Florida's community colleges as of April 1998, and the year when the Statewide Course Numbering System office was informed they were first taught. The first date was 1985, but geography had a presence in community colleges long before that year. 1985 was the year the system of common course numbers was introduced. The courses for which there are no dates are those that have yet to be taught. I can not vouch for the accuracy of the data. Communications between

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**Table 1**  
**Courses in Catalog of Community and Junior College**

Name	Prefix	Number	Title	Date Introduced
Brevard CC	GEO	2000	Introduction	88
	GEO	1101	Intro to GIS, GPS Remote Sensing	96
	GEO	1130	Fundamentals of Remote Sensing	97
	GEO	1141	Survey of GIS and GPS	95
	GEO	1150	Intro to GIS	96
	GEO	1153	Survey of GIS and GPS	95
	GEO	2154	Applications of GIS	97
Broward CC	GEO	1000	Introduction	96
	GEA	2000	World Regional	97
	GEO	2370	Natural Resources	91
Central Florida CC	GEA	2955	Israel	
	GEO	2000	World Regional	96
Chipola JC	GEO	1000	Introduction	85
	GEA	2001	World Regional I	96
Daytona Beach CC	GEA	2002	World Regional II	96
	GEO	2000	Introduction	96
Edison CC	GEA	2010	Eastern Hemisphere	96
	GEA	2041	Western Hemisphere	96
	GEO	2370	Natural Resources	96
	GEO	1000	World Regional	96
Florida CC Jax	GEA	2200	North America	95
	GEA	2327	Florida	95
	GEA	2400	Latin America	94
	GEA	2630	Middle East	95
	GEO	2074	Geography for teachers	92
	GEO	2200	Physical	94
	GEO	2370	Natural Resources	96
	GEO	2420	Cultural Geography	95
Florida Keys CC	GEA	1000	World Regional	96
	GEA	1211	United States and Canada	96
	GEO	1276	Culture and Env. of Florida Keys	90
	GEO	2370	Natural Resources	96
Gulf Coast CC	GEO	1010	Principles	
Hillsborough CC	GEO	1153	Survey of GIS and GPS	
	GEO	2150	Intro to GIS	97
	GEO	1153	Survey of GIS and GPS	
Indian River CC	GEA	2000	World Regional	94
	GEA	1327	Florida	95
	GEO	2142	AutoCad and Mapping	97
	GEO	1144	GIS Creation with AutoCad	97
	GEO	1150	Intro to GIS	97
Lake-Sumter CC	GEO	1154	GIS and ArcView	96
	GEA	2900	Regional Independent Study	
Manatee CC	GEO	2000	Introduction	
	GEA	2000	World Regional	88
	GEO	1200	Physical	

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**Table 1 (continued)**

Name	Date		Title	Introduced
	Prefix	Number		
Miami-Dade CC	GEO	2000	Introduction	
	GEA	2560	Europe and Mediterranean II	85
	GEO	2370	Natural Resources	
	GEA	2041	Western World	85
	GEA	2031	Nonwestern World	85
	GEA	2530	Europe and Mediterranean I	85
	GEO	2420	Cultural Geography	96
North Florida JC	GEO	2200	Physical	91
	GEA	2021	New World	96
	GEA	2010	Old World	96
Okaloosa-Walton CC	GEA	1000	World Regional	93
Palm Beach CC	GEO	1010	Principles	
	GEO	1200	Physical	
	GEO	1420	Cultural Geography	
Pasco-Hernando CC	GEA	2000	World Regional	96
	GEA	2200	North America	96
Pensacola JC	GEA	2200	North America	
	GEA	2000	World Regional	87
Seminole CC	GEA	1000	World Regional	87
	GEO	2370	Natural Resources	85
	GEA	2950	Travel study	96
	GEO	2200	Physical	97
Santa Fe CC	GEO	2930	Selected Studies	85
	GEO	2420	Cultural Geography	96
	GEA	2000	World Regional	88
	GEO	2200	Physical	
	GEO	2905	Individual Studies	
South Florida CC	GEO	1920	Specialized Group Studies	
	GEO	2420	Cultural Geography	
	GEA	2000	World Regional	88
St. Petersburg CC	GEO	2950	Cultures of Northern Europe	85
	GEA	2174	Developed World	85
Tallahassee CC	GEA	2172	Developing World	85
	GEO	1400	Human Geography	95
Valencia CC	GEA	2000	World Regional	88
	GEA	1000	World Regional	

state supported colleges and universities and the Statewide Course Numbering System office sometimes is poor.

Note that almost half (48%) of all courses that are dated were introduced since 1995. Clearly the variety of geography courses taught in community colleges has undergone a rapid expansion. As of April 1998 a total of 11 Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing courses were being offered, all of them having been first taught since 1995. Brevard Community College has been the

leader in introducing these courses, but Indian River and Hillsborough are not far behind. Brevard and Indian River colleges recently requested numbering approval for several more GIS courses, but with much more narrow application; including water management, recreation and real estate. As more community colleges reorient their programs toward the vocational I anticipate that I shall be receiving many more applications for the approval of GIS and Remote Sensing courses.

Table 2 identifies the total enrollment in geography courses between the academic year 1993/94 and that of 1996/97. There was a 13% increase in enrollment during that period, the majority coming in the last two years. Whether that leap is an anomaly or is the beginning of a period of rapid growth has yet to be determined. By far the most geography is presently being taught in Broward Community College, but fairly large numbers of students are being exposed to geography in the community colleges in Alachua County (Santa Fe), Duval (Florida), Palm Beach (Palm Beach) and Volusia (Daytona Beach). Given that community colleges vary enormously in size, it is appropriate to identify those where the share of students who take courses in geography as a percentage of total enrollment is high. These include Santa Fe, the highest, followed closely by Broward and Central Florida (Marion County).

Geography has either no or virtually no presence in the following community colleges: Brevard, Hillsborough, Lake City, Lake-Sumter, Miami-Dade, Pasco-Hernando, Polk, St. Johns, and St. Petersburg. Perhaps most alarming to me is its almost complete absence from Hillsborough, Miami-Dade and St. Petersburg, colleges within the state's largest urban areas. The recent introduction of two GIS courses at Hillsborough has caused only a modest growth in its geography enrollment, since GIS courses only attract small numbers of students.

The largest enrollment of most community colleges is in introductory courses such as World Regional and some form of introductory systematic geography. Nonetheless, there are several that offer an amazing variety, though the frequency they are offered is not known. Besides the aforementioned Brevard and Indian River, where a number of GIS and Remote Sensing courses are now taught, there is Florida Community College in Jacksonville, which offers courses in three geographical regions as well as cultural geography. A surprise to me was to note that Miami-Dade, which has a small enrollment in geography compared to its size, offers such a wide variety of courses. Unfortunately no course in Latin American geography is offered,

**Table 2**  
**Geography Enrollment in Community Colleges**

Name	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97
Brevard CC	44	9	65	93
Broward CC	756	846	959	1175
Central Florida CC	105	147	226	179
Chipola JC	45	67	43	70
Daytona Beach CC	325	335	253	416
Edison CC	120	154	149	44
Florida CC at Jax	515	288	289	312
Florida Keys CC	90	20	21	56
Gulf Coast CC	183	202	161	175
Hillsborough CC	0	0	0	0
Indian River CC	282	264	331	374
Lake City CC	2	0	0	20
Lake-Sumter CC	3	3	6	3
Manatee CC	181	148	194	211
Miami-Dade CC	169	208	157	134
North Florida JC	35	24	61	40
Okaloosa-Walton JC	0	30	49	56
Palm Beach CC	292	327	315	364
Pasco-Hernando CC	0	0	0	0
Pensacola JC	152	123	81	108
Polk CC	0	11	0	0
St. Johns River CC	0	0	0	0
St. Petersburg JC	95	27	77	30
Santa Fe CC	429	428	415	432
Seminole CC	127	92	103	63
South Florida CC	1	13	12	33
Tallahassee CC	233	259	225	259
Valencia CC	85	135	181	181
Total	4269	4151	4373	4828

despite a large proportion of its students being Hispanic. Although Hillsborough has not offered a course in introductory geography for many years, to meet requirements for an Associate of Science degree, hundreds of students take Earth Sciences and Meteorology courses which are not listed under geography. No doubt the same is true in other community colleges.

Just what can be done to draw into our discipline those who teach geography in community colleges but have no contact with other geographers I do not know. Perhaps individuals should first initiate contact by offering support and/or invite them to the Society's annual meeting. We already have a reasonably good start, since each

year we see geographers from Broward, Hillsborough and Manatee community colleges at our annual meeting. Friends have told me of the dedication of the person who teaches geography at Santa Fe Community College, and I have the names of the people who have applied for course numbers for their new courses. I certainly will send each a reprint of this article and an invitation to connect with other geographers.