

THE STATUS OF GEOGRAPHY IN
FLORIDA'S COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES

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Geography is visible, but not overly viable, in the community and junior colleges. It is healthier in Florida than in most other states in the Southeast, but has much room for improvement. Marked variation is evident in course offerings, credentials of faculty teaching geography, library holdings of geography publications, and role of support for the subject area within the institution.

This report on Florida results from a larger survey conducted in 1977 by the author in nine Southeastern States. Of the thirty-three two-year institutions listed for Florida in the 1976 *Community and Junior College Directory*, twenty-eight responded to a questionnaire, yielding a favorable return of 89%.

Of the twenty-eight institutions surveyed, geography is included in the curriculum of nineteen (68%). In all instances, the geography course or courses are placed within the area of Social Science. Annual enrollment statistics vary widely, with three schools reporting fewer than thirty geography students and two reporting 200 to 300 students. The median annual enrollment for all responding institutions is in the 100 to 200 category.

Variety abounds in course offerings. Because of similar course titles and the unavailability of course syllabi, assessment of course offerings is difficult. By far the most common course title is "World Regional Geography" with eleven schools represented. Other course titles and number of institutions offering that course are as follows: "Conservation of Natural Resources" (8), "World Geography" (5), "Introduction to Geography" (4), "Cultural Geography" (4), "Introduction to Physical Geography" (3), "Principles of Geography" (2), "Regional Geography" (2), "Latin America" (1), "Anglo-America" (1), "US & Canada" (1), and "USSR" (1). As many as five geography courses are offered at one institution, Florida Keys Community College, but more modest offerings prevail in other schools, with one or two selections common.

Geography is rarely required as part of a major program and when it is, it is usually in the field of Education. As an elective course, therefore, Geography must be a "drawing card" on its own merit.

Library holdings in geography periodicals are meager. As might be expected, *National Geographic* leads with representation in 84% of the reporting colleges. *The Journal of Geography* is second with 74% of the responding schools holding this publication. Next in frequency is the *Geographic Review* (42%), *Annals*, Association of American Geographers (26%), *Geographic Magazine* (London) (21%), *Economic Geography* (21%), *Professional Geographer* (16%), and *Focus* (16%). The range varies from the twenty plus publications at Miami-Dade Community College to none, which three institutions indicated by neglecting to complete the list of check-off publications.

As for the faculty who teach the geography courses, only two are employed full-time in geography. In all other cases, the geography instructor shares another field, usually history or political science. Most faculty hold a Master's degree with two having earned non-geography doctorates in their respective fields. At least half of the institutions responding supplied no data concerning the credentials of their faculty and their major course work areas. Of those that did, geography represented only half of the MA/MS degree holders. About half of the institutions employ part-time faculty adjuncts to teach geography courses.

Working liaisons with other educational institutions in the state are limited. In particular, informal or working arrangements with the secondary schools are most slighted. Where contact exists, it tends to be with other community colleges. In summary, the "state of geography" in Florida's junior and community colleges is generally one of neglect or indifference. In fairness, all is not gloom. Many well-qualified, dedicated instructors are struggling to improve their programs despite apathy, ignorance, and lack of financial and administrative support. A definite need exists to educate students, faculty peers, administrators and the general public as to the nature of the geography discipline and its applicability to today's rapidly changing complex society.