

DR. RICHARD D. WRIGHT (2002 WINNER)



Dr. Richard D. Wright, Professor of Geography at San Diego State University, has made extraordinary contributions as an applied geographer in his 38+ years of service. His distinguished career demonstrates the synergism that results when innovative teaching, applied research, and significant professional and public service are integrated in a coherent fashion.

As an educator, Dr. Wright is one of the pioneers in GIS education dating from the late 1960s. Among his many accomplishments, he is responsible for two GIS certificate programs, one for undergraduates and one for working professionals. The former was one of the first certificate programs in the U.S. and has since been revised as a joint certificate in GIScience by the departments of Geography and Computer Science. This program received an award for outstanding achievement from the California Geographic Information Association. He has educated hundreds of cartography and GIS specialists who are employed in significant positions in the private, government, and education sectors.

Over the years, Dr. Wright has been engaged in significant research. His work on geospatial data integration across the United States-Mexico border has contributed to improvements in binational problem solving in the border region. A classic example is his work on the internationally-funded Tijuana River Watershed (TRW) project. In 1998, the TRW was one of six projects nationwide selected by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) to demonstrate how the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) and geospatial technologies can be used to help address local problems such as crime, pollution, and flooding. In recognition of his accomplishments, he has received significant awards from the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars, the San Diego County Clean Water Program, and the President of San Diego State University.

Dr. Wright's service to the profession has involved work from the local to international levels. For example, he is the past chair of the California Geographic Information Association (CGIA), which was formed to encourage the implementation of GIS technologies across the fabric of California government and society. He is a founding delegate of the University Consortium for Geographic Information Science (UCGIS) and was the chair of its Education Committee for several years. He was a leader in the successful efforts of UCGIS to identify and characterize the nation's challenges in GIScience education and priority applications in GIS. His service also includes memberships on the AAG Council and the Board of Trustees of the International Geographic Information Foundation.

Finally, Dr. Wright has taken his expertise to the arena of public service. For example, he was chair of the San Diego County Planning Commission for two years and served a total of eight years. This was followed by his election as president of the California County Planning Commissioners Association. He was elected to the Otay Water District Board and served as vice-President and president during his tenure. He also served as president of the San Diego Area Wastewater Management District, which was formed to develop a regional solution to San Diego County's sewage treatment problems. More recently, Dr. Wright was appointed to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board by the Governor of the State.