

**Annual Report on the Status of Geography in the Commonwealth of Virginia
Submitted to the Steering Committee of the Southeastern Division of the Association of American
Geographers
Chapel Hill, NC**

November 19, 2000

The following data was tabulated from the information contained in the Annual Survey of Geography Departments that were mailed to the 43 institutions, that according to the State Council of Higher Education, offered at least one geography course. I received reports from eight private schools, eight two-years schools, and ten26four-year schools. In all, 60% of the surveys were returned.

Part I: Quantitative Data on the Status of Geography in the Commonwealth of Virginia

Table 1: Private Institutions

Institution	# of Classes offered	Approx. Enroll- ment	# of Majors	# of Faculty (FT & PT)	# of Female Faculty
Averett College	6	44	No major	4PT	
Bridgewater College	1	25	No major	1PT	
Emory and Henry College	16	315	31	2FT	
Liberty University	6	300	No major	1PT	
Roanoke College	2	56	No major	1PT	
University of Richmond	6	143	No major	1FT	
Virginia Intermont College	2	3	No major	1PT	
Virginia Union University	2	30	No major	1FT	
TOTALS:	41	916	31	4FT/8PT	none

Of the private institutions, only Emory & Henry has a Geography Major. At the remaining private schools, students are generally offered only a few Geography courses. Geography is taught by adjunct instructors, and is oriented toward meeting General Education requirements and for students in education programs. Exceptions to this overall trend are Liberty University, and the University of Richmond where enrollments fall in the 100 to 300 category. At these institutions, however, Geography is simply a support course for the Education major, or an elective in the General Education requirements.

Table 2: Two-year Institutions

Institution	Number of Classes offered	Approx. Enrollment	Number of Faculty (FT & PT)	# of Female Faculty
<u>Community Colleges</u>				
Blue Ridge	2	45	1PT	
Danville	2	20	2PT	
Germanna	2	60	1PT	
Piedmont Virginia	4	61	1PT	
Southwest Virginia	1	30	1FT	
Tidewater	21	200	2FT/2PT	1FT
Virginia Highlands	2	30	1PT	
<u>Two Year Colleges</u>				
Richard Bland College	7	200	1FT	1FT
TOTALS:	41	746	4FT/9PT	2FT

At most two-year institutions, the few geography courses that are offered are designed specifically to meet Social Science elective requirements. Relatively few students take Geography despite the fact that many such classes do satisfy General Education requirements. The one exception is Richard Bland College, which offers multiple courses that enroll close to 200 students annually.

Table 3: Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities

Institution*	# of Classes Offered	Approx. Enrollment	# of Majors	# of Graduate Students	# of Faculty (FT & PT)	# of Female Faculty
CNU	7	180	N/A	N/A	4PT	
College at Wise	2	20	N/A	N/A	2PT	
JMU	?	?	?	N/A	6FT	1FT
Longwood	12	300	N/A	N/A	3FT	
MWC	42	1523	79	N/A	6FT/2PT	2FT/1PT
NSU	3	100	N/A	N/A	1FT	
Old Dominion	53	1000	40	N/A	4FT/3PT	1FT
Radford	22	1285	58	N/A	6FT/1PT	2FT
VCU	34	731	N/A	26	1FT/11PT	1FT/2PT
Virginia Tech	45	1549	37	14	8FT/1PT	1FT
William & Mary	10	315	N/A	N/A	1FT/2PT	
TOTALS:	230	7003	214	40	36FT/26PT	8FT/2PT

The Graduate Program is in Planning.

*CNU-Christopher Newport University

JMU-James Madison University

VCU-Virginia Commonwealth University

MWC-Mary Washington College

NSU-Norfolk State University

Geography is strongest at the state's four-year public institutions. Six schools offer a major, and two, Longwood and VCU, offer minors. Nearly all four-year institutions have strong, and often growing, enrollments. The three largest programs in the state (MWC, VA Tech, & Radford) each teach 1200 or more students a year. It is obvious that Geography is strongest at the public four-year institutions, with some programs having greater visibility than others

Part II: Qualitative Assessments on the Status of Geography in the Commonwealth of Virginia

While the total number of students enrolled in Geography courses at **Christopher Newport University** has risen, those students are taught by four part-time faculty. "The administration concluded that a full-time geographer could not be justified by course demand."

At **Emory and Henry College**, John Morgan reports that Geography remains strong. The number of Geography majors has remained stable over the last decade.

At **Mary Washington College**, Geography courses continue to be very popular among the General Education offerings, and are consistently full. The Department is currently conducting a search to replace Marshall Bowen, who is retiring after 36 years of teaching.

Tom Allen, Director of Geography, at **Old Dominion University** reports that "a long-held hope of a 'Fifth Geographer' will soon come to fruition with a new full-time faculty line to expand our GIS courses and research. Foremost in our success has been capitalizing on GIS, its relevance to students and boosting its adoption as a multidisciplinary tool. GIS certainly has improved our geography degree marketability. Since developing a GIS track in the major, we see a larger number of majors and quite an increase in dual-majors."

The **University of Richmond** is conducting a search for a full-time geographer. The position will be in the Political Science/International Studies Department. The impetus for the new hire came as a result of the creation of a new Environmental Studies major. Brad Hunter (Penn State) is at UR for the 2000-01 academic year.

Geography at the **University of Virginia's College at Wise** has improved. The College offers introductory physical and cultural courses with part-time faculty from both the Natural and Social Sciences Departments.

Robert Rugg at **Virginia Commonwealth University** reports that once again a decision on the proposed geography major has been postponed. The University did convert one position in urban studies into a full-time Geography position, so that there are now two full-time Geographers in the Department. He believes that the status of Geography has improved at VCU, and that enrollments are increasing as Geography courses become more popular.

Virginia Tech is pleased to announce that Bonham Richardson received the Carl O. Sauer Distinguished Scholarship Award from the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers. The award recognizes a sustained record in interconnected research contributions to Caribbean scholarship. Larry Grossman also received a CHOICE award for "Outstanding Academic Book" for his book, *The Political Ecology of Bananas*, published in 1998.

In summary, the state of Geography in the Commonwealth appears to be about the same. Greater visibility is occurring at the University of Richmond with its new position, and the long-standing, stable programs at MWC and Emory & Henry continue to prosper. These must be taken as positive signs. Most of Virginia's Community College's contribute very little to the promotion of Geography. Once again, there is much room for improvement in the teaching of Geography statewide, but it is unlikely that funding from the State will increase in the foreseeable future.

Respectfully submitted
by Dawn S. Bowen

Virginia State Representative
November 12, 2000