Name Change: Department of Geography to

Department of Geography and Spatial Sciences

The core of Geography is the study of spatial relationships, especially the spatial patterning of people, plants, and animals over the Earth. Inherent to this spatial dimension of the discipline are the coupled human-environment interactions that governs how living beings respond and adapt to change. With the ever-increasing use of spatial data within the discipline (and society writ large), we have voted to change the name of our Department to Geography and Spatial Sciences. The new name best represents the research and expertise of the faculty and favorably positions the Department both internally and externally to attract students and extramural funding.

WHEREAS, Geography inherently involves the study of spatial relationships and a name change that includes “spatial sciences” better aligns the Department with the future of the discipline; and

WHEREAS, the inclusion of “spatial sciences” in the departmental name more aptly conveys the spatial dimension of the discipline which is likely to attract more students (both undergraduate and graduate) to the Department; and

 WHEREAS, it is advantageous to market the “spatial sciences” dimension for future students given that the US Department of Labor and Statistics forecasts a higher than average job growth for geospatial scientists, with O•Net, a website that aggregates US Department of Labor information, reporting that geospatial information scientists and technologists have a median annual wage (2016) of $86,510, and

WHEREAS, the addition of “spatial sciences” to the departmental name is synchronized with increased funding opportunities at federal agencies in big data and represents a growth area for the Department regarding new faculty hires and degree programs; and

WHEREAS, the proposed program would contribute to a strategic initiative in data science at the university and be aligned with the Data Science Institute; be it therefore

  RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate approves the name change of the Department of Geography to the Department of Geography and Spatial Sciences.