

Geography & Planning Department History

Geography was established as a department at the State Normal School (now SUNY Buffalo State) in the 1920s and between 1925 and 1962, Dr. Katheryne Thomas Whittemore (National Council of Geographic Education Distinguished Service Award) was an active proponent of geographic education at the College. In response to faculty interests, community support, and Buffalo State's growing awareness of its urban mission, a BS in Urban and Regional Planning was introduced (1975) and community professionals were added to the faculty on a part time basis. During an institution-wide reorganization of faculties and departments (1976), Geography became part of a Department of Geography and Sociology, but the department was subsequently separated from Sociology in 1982. The current configuration of the Department of Geography and Planning was established in 1983.

In the late 1990s, the department consisted of seven full time, tenured/tenure track faculty and several (typically, six) part time faculty. Expertise and coursework offered in the department were heavily oriented towards Human/Cultural Geography and Urban Planning. New faculty replaced retired faculty starting in the early 2000s, with expertise and coursework becoming more oriented towards physical geography and urban planning.

The Geography and Planning Department is a small, but highly active department that strives to provide its undergraduate and graduate students with close individual attention and innovative hands-on experience in the classroom and in the field. We offer three different undergraduate degrees, a B.S. in [Environmental Geography](#) (added in Fall 2018), a B.A. in [Geography](#), and a B.S. in [Urban and Regional Planning](#). We also have minors in Geography, Planning, Meteorology and Climatology, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), as well as a new GIS Certificate, which is a SUNY Registered Program. This new certificate will provide students with a background in spatial thinking, analysis, and mapping skills that will allow them to understand the application of geospatial technology to their discipline or career path. The department does not have its own Master's program, but faculty regularly advise students through the master's programs in [Great Lakes Environmental Science \(GLES\)](#).

Our department has been extremely active in developing new courses, maintaining existing courses, and pursuing research. We have clear strengths in the areas of:

- GIS
- Watershed science and management
- Atmospheric sciences and global change
- Biogeography and conservation

- Geographic education
- Industrial and economic geography
- Asia
- Data analytics
- Land use and transportation planning
- Housing policy
- Planning for sustainable communities
- Urban and neighborhood change
- Local government planning

Our distinguished faculty teaches a variety of courses that benefit from our ongoing research activities. Faculty regularly receive grants to support their research and engage students in all aspects of their projects, from field and lab work to analyses and writing. In addition, our faculty have been awarded the Buffalo State President's Award for Distinguished Teaching (Stephen Vermette), the Buffalo State President's Award for Excellence in Service (Kelly Frothingham), and the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Adjunct Teaching (James Bensley).

Our alumni work in a variety of consulting, local, state, and federal government agencies, and in transportation and planning services. They have taken positions throughout the country and abroad. Explore more of what our alumni are doing: [Geography & Planning Alumni Job Map](#).