

Board Meeting  
December 2, 2011

RENAME THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
AND SCIENCES, URBANA

**Action:** Rename the Department of Geography, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Funding:** No New Funding Required

The Vice President, University of Illinois and Chancellor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with the advice of the Urbana-Champaign Senate recommends approval of a proposal from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to rename the Department of Geography as the Department of Geography and Geographic Information Science.

Paired with the companion proposal to rename the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences in Geography, the proposed name recognizes changes and advancements in the field. The discipline of geography has changed dramatically over the past few decades through the development of revolutionary new technologies for managing, processing, and analyzing geographically distributed information. These technologies have fuelled the development of a new field of knowledge--Geographic Information Science (GIScience). The focus of GIScience includes several knowledge domains, including spatial analytical methods, conceptual (cognitive and social) foundations of spatial information processing, geovisualization and mapping, data modeling and manipulation, geocomputational modeling, and geospatial technology and

society. Moreover, GIScience is becoming a critical component of global cyberinfrastructure, leading to the rise of CyberGIS.

The renaming achieves several goals for the unit: (1) it will explicitly identify the department in national and international contexts as an academic program with research and pedagogic strengths in GIScience; (2) it will help attract undergraduate and graduate students seeking to specialize in GIScience; (3) it will provide the campus with a clear leading unit in this important new area of knowledge; (4) by linking this renaming to a corresponding renaming for the undergraduate major, it will provide graduating students with a degree that by title clearly reflects their training; and, (5) it reflects the commitment of the faculty to sustaining and possibly growing this aspect of the program. Moreover, by retaining Geography in the title, the faculty clearly indicate to other scholars in the geographic community and beyond that the focus is not solely GIScience. The faculty continues to actively pursue research and teaching in several vital areas of scholarship encompassing geographical knowledge.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes*, *The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs concurs with this recommendation. The University Senates Conference has indicated that no further Senate jurisdiction is involved.

The President of the University recommends approval. This action is subject to further review and approval by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

