

APPENDIX A: UNIT MISSION STATEMENT

As one of the departments in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Geography and Planning promotes: (1) the understanding of spatial patterns within the physical and cultural systems of the earth and (2) the role of planning in achieving a better life for people within those systems. The department provides strong and diverse undergraduate and graduate curricula that aid its clientele in finding productive and meaningful places in society. In addition to providing instruction of the highest quality, the department maintains a faculty dedicated to scholarship and service. The Department generally divides its effort as follows: 60% teaching, 20% research, and 20% service.

The Department will maintain and enhance its service course offerings to the Basic Education curricula, and to the extra-departmental majors where geography/planning complements existing educational objectives. During this planning period the Department intends to maintain its position as a social and physical science. Widespread recognition of geographic ignorance will increase the demand for geography courses over the next five years. The Department will support the University's increasing involvement in international studies by expanding its international course offerings and faculty and student involvement at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. The Department will also encourage its faculty to continue a scholarly commitment that has it ranking among the leading Appalachian State University per capita contributors of professional work published and presented.

At the same time, the Department intends to increase its utilization of geographic information systems (GIS) and image processing (IP) systems in research and service contracts in both geographic analysis and planning applications. These applications will also be used to enhance student training in these geographic techniques by involving graduates and undergraduates in the contracts.

The Department intends to continue to be recognized regionally and nationally as a center of excellence in geographic education, applied planning education, graduate training in geography, geographic and planning research, and geographic and planning service outreach.

The Department has prioritized the following activities:

(1) Expand the faculty and staff to include additional full-time academic positions in planning and in cultural/regional geography; 2) strengthen the international component in both the undergraduate and graduate curricula of the department; (3) expand the research and service components of the GIS and IP lab through grants and contracts; (4) maintain current high level of faculty scholarly activity; (5) increase the involvement of students in research and outreach; and (6) maintain and further develop as needed new course offerings to serve cognate programs.

Strong efforts will continue to be exerted toward identifying and serving new clientele, while maintaining the effort to further enhance the image of the geography and planning disciplines, to build a faculty that contains enough mass and diversity to uphold and expand its excellent reputation, and to provide an environment conducive to faculty growth and development.