

FACULTY NEEDS ASSESSMENT APPLICATION

Name of Person Submitting Request:		Vanessa Engstrom
Program or Service Area:		Geography and GIS
Division:		Science
Date of Last Program Efficacy:		Fall 2011
What rating was given?		Continuation
# of FT faculty 2	# of Adjuncts 8	Faculty Load: 5.75/year (GEOG) and 1.95(GIS)
Position Requested:		Classified Staff
Strategic Initiatives Addressed:		Access, Student Success, Institutional Effectiveness

Replacement

Growth

1. Provide a rationale for your request.

Our department is requesting a half-time GIS lab specialist that could maintain the GIS computer lab, hold “open lab” hours and provide educational support for GIS students. Presently, the computer lab is only open during regularly scheduled class hours, thus denying students access to computers with a knowledge staff member present to answer questions and provide support. Non-existent funding sources for future tutors, coupled with a program comprised primarily of adjunct instructors with limited on campus presence, makes access to the lab problematic, which will ultimately hamper student success. Although all GIS students are provided a one-year software DVD, many do not own a computer onto which they can load the software. Therefore, access to campus computer labs that host this software is a must. In addition, many GIS lab exercises are hosted on campus network servers. Therefore, the only means to access these files is to use on-campus computers (the file size often precludes hosting on the *Blackboard* online course management system). Lastly, there are issues of safety, security, and integrity that can only be addressed and guaranteed through a professional classified staff member. For example, if a student is working alone in a lab, then there is no one available to provide academic assistance, as well as assistance in the event of a life-threatening emergency.

If the classification accommodates, then the GIS lab specialist could also assist with setting up various Geography labs. This is especially important when a variety of laboratory equipment is required for specific labs. At this time, full- and part-time prepare and clean up all Geography and GIS laboratory classes. Depending on the laboratory activity, these endeavors can consume an inordinate amount of time and energy.

2. Indicate how the content of the latest Program Efficacy Report and current EMP data support this request How is the request tied to program planning? (*Reference the page number(s) where the information can be found on Program Efficacy.*)

The EMP for this academic year states the following GIS departmental challenge “raise funds for GIS tutors to extend lab hours via grants, Perkins Funds, etc.” Providing a half-time classified staff would directly fund this critical support component of our GIS certificate program. In addition, extending the lab hours would provide students with access to computers hosting

geospatial technologies. Page ten of the Program Efficacy document lists the patterns of service and notes that in general, GIS courses are offered during limited day time hours and in the evenings. Extending the lab in the afternoon would allow daytime and evening students to access computers outside of class time.

The Geography EMP includes a program goal of maintaining laboratory supplies and equipment, and an action plan that includes additional course and curriculum development. A classified GIS specialist staff member has the potential to facilitate lab supply and equipment maintenance, as well as work with faculty to better implement curricular changes within the classroom environment.

3. Provide updated or additional information you wish the committee to consider (*for example: regulatory information, compliance, updated efficiency, student success data, or planning, etc.*).

The Department of Labor indicated that the geospatial technology industry is a growing sector of our economy. As such, providing our students with quality instruction, in addition to access and technical support will better prepare them to enter the workforce. As the GIS program expands into the realm of distributed education (DE), a GIS lab specialist could also assist students taking online and hybrid courses. As long as a student is able to physically visit a GIS lab, then a GIS lab specialist could assist them.

Because laboratory classes are notoriously inefficient, a dedicated GIS and Geography lab specialist has the potential to increase persistence, retention, and success. Therefore, this classified position has the potential to increase laboratory efficiency.

Student safety is a perennial issue, so a dedicated lab specialist can better ensure safety for all, especially if faculty member is not always available and present.

4. What are the consequences of not filling this position?

Without dedicated tutor hours and with limited access to the software, our GIS and Geography students will not be prepared to enter the workforce or adequately prepared for internship opportunities. GIS and Geography faculty instruction time, especially for new courses and curriculum, could be impacted, as laboratory preparation and cleanup have the potential to infringe upon instructional time. Expensive GIS and Geography laboratory supplies and equipment risk damage without the additional care that a dedicated classified staff member can provide. Finally, GIS and Geography student access, success, and safety are at risk when no one is available after normal class time hours within the laboratory environment.