Program of Study
Geography is the study of places and the relationships between people and their environments. Geographers explore the physical properties of Earth’s surface, the human societies spread across it, and the global patterns that shape our lives. It bridges both the social sciences (human) and natural sciences (physical), is highly interdisciplinary, and the topics that can be studied include population, health, economics, transportation, location analysis, climates, landforms, vegetation, soils, water, and much more.

Geographic Information Science (GIScience) is a fast growing field that utilizes geospatial technology to process, analyze and represent geographic data in maps and images. Geography/GIScience students gain valuable technical skills working with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing tools, and they develop analytical abilities interpreting and using data effectively. The program is designed so each student will graduate with the technical proficiency of a GIS analyst-level professional.

In addition to the Geography/GIScience degree, the department offers minors in geography, GIS, and weather and climate. An integrated degree program is also available giving students an opportunity to earn both bachelor’s degree in geography/GIScience and a master’s degree in geography in five years.

Career Opportunities
Graduates with a bachelor’s degree in geography/GIScience have marketable skills and broad perspectives on the environment and society that enable them to pursue a wide variety of career paths. A growing number of industries and organizations are turning to geography and GIScience to predict flood paths, analyze crop planting sites, identify locations for retail expansion and much more. As a result the employment outlook for geographers -- especially those with training in GIS, remote sensing and other geospatial technologies -- is positive. The types of organizations hiring geography/GIScience graduates include disaster response companies, agribusinesses, transportation firms, land use planning agencies, natural resource management organizations, historic preservation firms, construction companies, real estate firms, and sustainable energy companies as well as local, regional, and federal governments.

Geography also provides a sound foundation for students who plan to enter graduate work in a variety of fields such as geography, business, land use planning, law, or conservation.

Faculty
All geography courses are taught by faculty members holding doctoral degrees from distinguished universities across the United States. The faculty members have a broad range of competencies which provides opportunities for students with different inclinations and talents. Geography and GIScience class sizes are small, which means that students receive one-on-one attention from faculty members who are actively engaged in students’ progress throughout their college experience. While the department’s primary focus is teaching, faculty members are also actively engaged in research and publishing. Since 2010, members of
the geography and meteorology faculty have been awarded $522,000 in highly competitive National Science Foundation grants. Grant funding gives students the chance to conduct hands-on scientific research under the guidance of department members. Faculty members have also been published in a wide range of peer-reviewed journals individually and jointly with students.

Scholarships
Detailed information on scholarships is available from the department advising office, (309) 298-2763, Western's Scholarship office, (309) 298-2001, or on the web at wiu.edu/cas/geography.

Honors in Geography/GIScience
To be eligible for the Centennial Honors College, entering freshmen must meet two of the following three criteria: Have an 1160 SAT (24 ACT), have a 3.4/4.0 GPA or higher, or be in the top 15 percent of their graduating class. Transfer and current WIU students who wish to join the Honors College (including the Quad Cities Honors Program) must have a 3.4 grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale based on 12 or more semester hours (sh). Honors credit is given for honors coursework completed at other accredited institutions. To find out more, visit wiu.edu/Honors.

General honors seminars in the humanities, sciences and social sciences provide students with the opportunity to explore key academic issues with distinguished faculty members.

Student Activities
Two departmental societies provide students with opportunities to engage in activities that support geographical knowledge and awareness. Gamma Theta Upsilon is the international honor society in geography open to students who have completed at least nine hours of geography courses with at least a 3.3 GPA. The Student Society of Geography is open to all students in good academic standing who are interested in geography, regardless of major. The societies sponsor a lecture series, numerous field trips, and other activities of interest.

Special Opportunities
The Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Geographic Information Sciences houses a GIS laboratory and a meteorology laboratory. The GIS laboratory has computer workstations with the latest GIS and mapping software. The meteorology laboratory includes a weather station, computer systems that produce maps and analyses of National Weather Service data, and a shared weather radar.

Additionally the department is home to the GIS Center which is a partnership between WIU, the city of Macomb and McDonough County. Paid internships at the center create opportunities for top students to work on real-world GIS projects related to agriculture, emergency management, land use and other industries while receiving training and oversight from the center's GIS professionals. GIS Center interns develop a strong professional portfolio and the center has a 100 percent job placement rate amongst graduates who have pursued GIScience careers.

For More Information
Feel free to contact the Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Geographic Information Sciences for further information about the geography/GIScience degree or to arrange a campus visit. The department phone number is (309) 298-1648 and our e-mail address is geography@wiu.edu. You can also learn more about the department by visiting our website at wiu.edu/cas/geography.

Campus Visits
The Admissions Reception Center (Sherman Hall 115) is open most weekdays from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. when the University is in session. Group information sessions are available on Mondays and Fridays at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., and individual appointments can be made on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Campus tours are conducted at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., Monday through Friday. Appointments with advisors, faculty or a financial aid advisor may be arranged separately during the week. The Admissions Reception Center is open from 9 a.m. -1 p.m. most Saturdays when the University is in session. A group information session is available at 10 a.m., and a campus tour is conducted at 11 a.m. Students may schedule a visit or tour online at wiu.edu/admissions by selecting “Visit Campus.” Students may also schedule a visit, tour or individual appointment by calling toll free (877) PICKWIU (742-5948) or (309) 298-3157, or by emailing admissions@wiu.edu.