

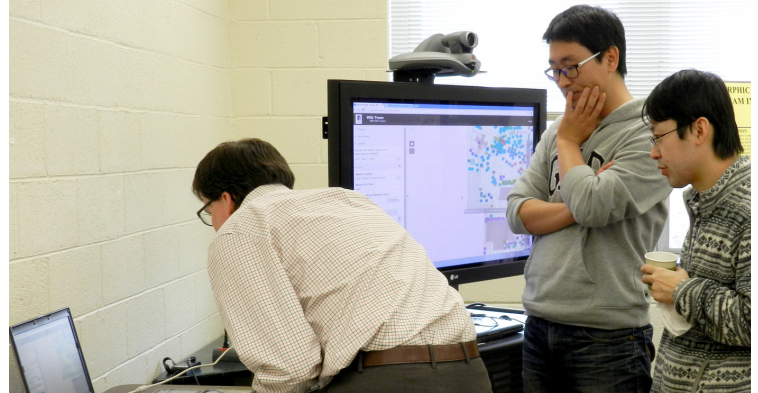


WESTERN  
ILLINOIS  
UNIVERSITY

# MASTER OF ARTS IN GEOGRAPHY

*Higher Values in Higher Education*  
Academic Excellence • Educational Opportunity  
Personal Growth • Social Responsibility

*The Department of Geography offers the Master of Arts degree oriented on a core of balanced training in four areas: (1) theory and methodology, (2) physical geography, (3) cultural geography, and (4) regional planning. The requirements are highly flexible, allowing a student to arrange programs of study that will serve as a basis for further graduate study or to prepare for positions in industry, business, or government. It is possible for students, through internship experiences and/or specific course combinations, to enhance their career opportunities in areas such as regional and rural planning or Geographic Information Systems (GIS).*



**Program Location:** Macomb

## Admission Requirements

Applicants must meet regular admission requirements of the School of Graduate Studies and have at least a cumulative grade point average of 2.75 for all undergraduate coursework or a GPA of 3.0 or higher for the last two years of undergraduate coursework. Students must have completed 24 semester hours (SH) in Geography. The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is not required for admission to the program but is highly recommended for students seeking assistantships.

Students completing the Master of Arts (MA) degree in Geography must have a working knowledge of the fundamentals of geography as a discipline. Students must take additional coursework if they enter the program without prior coursework in the following: Introductory Human (Cultural) Geography, Introductory Physical Geography, Statistics, and Cartography. Students must complete deficiency coursework prior to starting the MA program or during the first semester of coursework.

The MA in Geography is one of the Integrated Baccalaureate and Master's Degree Programs on campus.

## Degree Requirements

A minimum of 32 SH of graduate credit is required for the MA degree, 9 SH of which may be electives from outside the department.

Completion of the MA in Geography program is contingent upon the fulfillment of specific course requirements and the completion of one of three degree options: (1) thesis, (2) applied project, or (3) professional plan. The thesis option (3 SH) seeks to answer a question that is relevant to an area of geographic inquiry. The applied project option (3 SH) is intended for students whose career aspirations are best served by gaining practical experience in the design and solution of a geographical or planning problem and presentation of the results. Both options require a research proposal to be presented and the completed thesis/applied project to be defended to faculty and students. The professional plan requires students to complete an internship and extended courses.

## Career Opportunities

The MA in Geography program reflects an attempt to prepare students to be professionals in the private or public sector or to become future educators. For over 50 years, the Department of Geography has had a proud tradition of producing quality graduates who hold positions in education, industry, business, and government. Many of our graduates go on to pursue advanced degrees. In fact, among non-PhD granting institutions, Western's Geography department ranks in the top 20 in the U.S. in the number of graduates going on to earn a PhD.

Some of the positions in which graduates are employed are urban planning/community development, tourism development, economic development specialist, GIS specialist, remote sensing specialist, cartographer, weather forecaster, health services planner, environmental/natural resources conservation, teaching/faculty member, geographer, and transportation planner.

## Faculty Expertise

Of all of the full-time faculty members, six are trained as human geographers while another six are trained in physical geography or meteorology. Within human geography, three faculty members have expertise in urban and rural development and planning, which is an emphasis of the graduate program in Geography. Within physical geography, three faculty members have expertise in weather and climate. Given the global nature of geography, the department prides itself in diversity. Faculty members have been actively engaged in research that has been published and presented in venues of national and international significance, and they have also been published in a wide range of refereed journal articles.

## Graduate Assistantships

All Geography graduate students are eligible to apply for a competitive number of departmental graduate assistantships. Graduate students with full-time assistantships are required to work 20 hours per week and be enrolled for at least 9 SH per semester. Additional assistantships may be available in the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Center, but

*“The Geography graduate program at WIU was a great experience. It allowed me to have an opportunity to further learn GIS, while being empowered to apply this knowledge to real scenarios in the local community through an internship with the GIS Center. This, along with the mentorship from my advisor and committee members, prepared me for the challenges that exist in a professional career. This allowed me to obtain, and excel in, a GIS position upon graduation.”*

*—Richard D. Ostrowski, 2014, GIS Technical Specialist*

*National Information Systems Cooperative, Lake Saint Louis, Missouri*

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*Richard D. Ostrowski*

knowledge and skills necessary to prepare for a career in the field of community development. The certificate is earmarked for returned Peace Corps Fellows (PCF) who form an integral part of the PCF program in Community Development, a unit of the IIRA at Western Illinois University. Similarly, the Geography and Biological Sciences departments administer the 18-SH post-baccalaureate GIS Analysis Certificate program, which is designed to train students to become qualified GIS analysts in their specialty fields or disciplines. For *Gainful Employment Disclosure*, visit [wiu.edu/grad/gainfulemployment](http://wiu.edu/grad/gainfulemployment).

### **Featured Alumni**

Mr. Richard D. Ostrowski is a GIS technical specialist with National Information Systems Cooperative in Lake Saint Louis, Missouri. The company develops and supports software and hardware solutions for its member-owners who are primarily utility cooperatives and telecommunications companies across the nation. Mr. Ostrowski provides GIS support for the company. He received his MA in Geography in Summer 2014.

### **Contact Information**

For admissions process and general program information, contact the School of Graduate Studies, Western Illinois University, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455, (309) 298-1806, (877) WIU GRAD toll-free, [Grad-Office@wiu.edu](mailto:Grad-Office@wiu.edu), [wiu.edu/grad](http://wiu.edu/grad).

For specific program questions, contact the Graduate Coordinator, Department of Geography, Western Illinois University, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455, (309) 298-1648, [geography@wiu.edu](mailto:geography@wiu.edu), [wiu.edu/cas/geography](http://wiu.edu/cas/geography).

applicants must be familiar with GIS applications. Graduate Assistants receive a tuition waiver and a monthly stipend.

*Western Illinois University is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity employer with a strong commitment to diversity. In that spirit, we are particularly interested in receiving applications from a broad spectrum of people, including, but not limited to, minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities. WIU has a non-discrimination policy that includes sex, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, and veteran status.*

### **Facilities**

The department maintains the Atmospheric Science and Climatology Laboratory and two Geographic Information and Spatial Science Laboratories. The department also houses a GIS Center, which serves as the GIS management center (spatial data creation and repository) for McDonough County, the City of Macomb, and Western Illinois University. The Leslie F. Malpass Library contains a repository of geographical data in paper and digital formats and is thus a vital resource to the department.

### **Distinctive Features**

Approximately half of the graduate students in the program have interests in the area of community development and rural or urban regional planning. Other students pursue careers in GIS, and the remaining students are interested in environmental issues. The employment outlook for geographers with GIS training is very high. The employment outlook for rural planners is highest for those with diverse training.

### **Post-Baccalaureate Certificates**

The Department of Geography administers the post-baccalaureate Community Development and Planning Certificate in consultation with the Department of Economics and the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA). The mission of this 18-SH certificate is to instill in students the