

THE PUBLIC TWO-YEAR COLLEGES OF KANSAS:
A CHALLENGE FOR GEOGRAPHY

by

MARVIN WILLIAM WEIGAND, Jr.

B. S., Kansas State University, 1970

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Approved by:


Major Professor

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

One of the more important developments in education in the past half century has been the dynamic growth and evolution of the uniquely American two-year college.¹ No longer is it referred to as simply an extension of high school or the place where students, not acceptable to a four-year institution, can continue their education. The two-year colleges of today offer quality education and a wide range of programs to meet the needs of the people of their communities.

The acceptance of the junior college by the American public is reflected in enrollment and growth figures. In 1950 there were 500,000 students in two-year colleges; the number reached one million in 1964 and exceeded two million in 1970. According to some predictions, enrollments will reach three million in 1972. The two-year colleges now attract a third of all the students entering college. There are presently 1,150 two-year colleges compared with 656 a decade ago, an increase of about one new junior college per week since 1963.²

¹The term "two-year college" is intended to correspond to the "lower division" at a college or university and includes all types of junior colleges not offering the baccalaureate degree. In this report, the terms "two-year college" and "junior college" will be used interchangeably.

²Geography in the Two-Year Colleges, (Washington: Association of American Geographers, 1970), p. 3.

It has become quite evident that any academic discipline which does not play an active role in the two-year colleges is failing to participate in the education of millions of Americans. The rapid expansion in the number and size of enrollments in the two-year colleges underscores the importance of up-to-date information on the status of geography in the curriculum and the qualifications of geography instructors. Geographers, as well as those in other disciplines, must meet the challenge of providing meaningful programs and qualified instructors for the junior college curriculum. The two-year college is an established part of the American educational system and can no longer be overlooked or ignored.

A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

The writer was graduated from a two-year college in Kansas which did not offer any geographical training. As a graduate student in geography, he has become increasingly aware of the importance and value of geographic education at the undergraduate level. Because of the increasing importance of the two-year colleges in undergraduate education, this author has become interested and quite concerned with the actual participation of geography in the two-year college curriculum and the contribution which it is capable of giving to the educational experiences of the junior college student.

Many geographers concerned with geographic education at the college level have realized the importance of, and need for the discipline in the two-year college curriculum. Richason,³