

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

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background and purpose of study.....	2
Geography in the two-year colleges of the United States.....	4
Geography programs of selected states.....	14
II. GEOGRAPHY IN THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGES OF KANSAS.....	21
Previous investigations.....	24
Results of present investigation.....	27
III. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY.....	36
Recommendations.....	36
Summary.....	42
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	45
APPENDIX I.....	47
APPENDIX II.....	49

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Comparative Data on Geography in Two-Year Colleges in Kansas Based on Previous and Present Surveys.....	25
II. Approximate Number of Students Enrolled in Two-Year College Geography Courses in 1950 and 1968, by State.....	26
III. Breakdown of Geography Courses by Subject in Two-Year Colleges of Kansas.....	29
IV. List of Geography Enrollments and Courses Offered in Two-Year Colleges of Kansas: 1971-72.....	30
V. Degree, Major, and Number of Credit Hours in Geography of Instructors Teaching Geography in Kansas Two-Year Colleges.....	32
FIGURE	
I. The Public Two-Year Colleges of Kansas.....	22

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

Senninger,⁴ Kramer,⁵ Kock,⁶ and others have done valuable research in the past twenty years concerning geographic education in the two-year colleges of California, Michigan, Alabama, and other states. In 1968-69 the Commission on College Geography of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) selected a panel of professional geographers to examine the position of their discipline in these schools. It was the Commission's conclusion that any group concerned with geographic education at the undergraduate level should give special attention to the nation's increasingly important two-year colleges.⁷ In 1970 Newlin⁸ conducted a follow-up study based on the AAG report to ascertain whether any changes in geography offerings or enrollment had taken place in New York State since the AAG survey two years previously. Additional periodic research of each state's geography programs in the two-year colleges is needed in order to evaluate and improve the quality of geographic education in these schools.

³B. F. Richason, "Geography in the Junior Colleges of the United States," Journal of Geography, 50: 246-55, 1951.

⁴E. S. Senninger, "Status of Geography in the Public Junior Colleges of Michigan---1957-58," Journal of Geography, 59: 66-72, 1960.

⁵F. L. Kramer, "Geography in California Junior Colleges, 1955-56," Journal of Geography, 55: 344-9, 1956.

⁶Walter F. Kock, "Geography Programs in the Junior Colleges," Journal of Geography, 67: 155-6, 1969.

⁷Geography in the Two-Year Colleges, op. cit., p. i.

⁸H. H. Newlin, "Geography and the Two-Year College in New York State: An Image Problem?", Journal of Geography, 70: 391-2, 1971.

Purpose of study. The primary purpose of this report will be to determine the status of geography in the curriculum and the qualifications of the geography instructors in the public two-year colleges of Kansas in 1971-72. Closely related questions to be examined include how many two-year schools offer geography, the total number of courses offered, the total number of students enrolled in geography courses, and type of geography courses offered. This report will also consider how Kansas compares with other states and whether any improvement has been made in the geography programs of Kansas' two-year colleges in the last twenty years. Following this evaluation of the present conditions, suggestions are made for improving the status of geography in the public two-year colleges of Kansas.

A brief review of geography as found in the two-year colleges of the United States, with emphasis on three states that have strong and active geography programs in their two-year colleges, will enable the reader to gain a broader perspective from which to evaluate the role of geography in the two-year college curriculum. More specifically, it provides a basis from which to evaluate the geography programs of the public two-year colleges of Kansas.

B. GEOGRAPHY IN THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGES OF THE UNITED STATES

As a subject of instruction, geography's place varies in the nation's two-year colleges. In some instances, geography is omitted from the curriculum altogether, and in other cases, it

is offered by persons with limited training in the subject. Considering also the outmoded themes and procedures often employed, geography occupies a relatively weak position in the nation's two-year colleges.

Too often students examining the social, political, historical, and other dimensions of a problem, fail to recognize the spatial and environmental aspects. The popular conception of geography is generally confused and inconsistent, resulting in students and many college administrators being uncertain about the content and scope of the field. The image of quaint foreign lands and capital cities tends to obscure the discipline's real educational function. Nearly half of the two-year colleges offered geography in the United States in 1968, but of these, about half offered only one course. Many of these courses were taught by persons with limited formal training or interest in geography. This reflects in part the unfortunate notion held by some junior college administrators that geography is something that can be taught by any social science teacher, and only helps to perpetuate the image problem.⁹

Geography in general education. Geography has an important place in any general education curriculum. A general education should be relevant to life as it is lived and will be lived by the student. According to White, it should free the student's mind from shackling preconceptions and lure it in new directions. It should shake habitual thought patterns and puzzle the mind

⁹Geography in the Two-Year Colleges, op. cit., p. 6.

through the introduction of new ideas and problems. One of the greatest potential contributions of a general education is to provide knowledge and understanding of the magnificent diversity and the high cultural attainments of the peoples of the world, and thus to immunize citizens against the viruses of hate, suspicion, and misunderstanding. A liberal education is an education which cultivates reason and analysis, and deals with the aims and modes of human life.¹⁰ It should develop in each individual the realization that his own country, region, and ethnic, religious, or linguistic group is but one among many, each with differing characteristics, and that other countries or social groups are not necessarily queer, or irrational, or inferior. Geography, as a broad synthesizing discipline is especially equipped to do this. Man is innately curious about places different (or similar) and distant from his local surroundings; but man has no inborn understanding of area or region, much less of how natural and cultural phenomena are geographically distributed and associated. Geography, as the principal discipline concerned with the orderly recognition, analysis and interpretation of spatial patterns on the surface of the earth, assumes the major responsibility for providing such knowledge.¹¹

A report on general education sets for the social sciences no less a task than "the production of individuals who understand

¹⁰Gilbert F. White, "Geography in Liberal Education," Geography in Undergraduate Liberal Education, (Washington: Association of American Geographers, 1965), p. 13.

¹¹Ibid., p. 2.

modern society and are able to act effectively in response to the problem of public policy which will confront them."¹² In this context, geography has a considerable role to play along the lines of relevant knowledge.

According to Weinberg, geography in general education aims primarily at:¹³

1. Developing an understanding of the interplay between man and nature. It deals with the strivings of man within and against the limitations of his physical environment, and his successes in changing these limitations. This understanding is indispensable to a realistic understanding of modern society.
2. Cultivating the ability to conceive of international problems in concrete terms of differing values, societies, economies, and histories. The first requirements for intelligent thought about public policy is to shed all one's stereotypes. No field is more heavily populated with these than foreign policy. How many students still approach China with a mental picture of tongs and gongs?

Geography is concerned with the study of spatial distributions and associations and with area interrelationships. Resulting patterns on the earth's surface have differing meanings for human society, an outgrowth of the techniques and value systems of different cultures. This appears, for example in the way in which different groups of men have managed the same physical environment and in how any one group has utilized different environments. The study of spatial distributions, associations and area interrelationships is a basic way of analyzing human society because it casts

¹²Albert Levi, General Education in the Social Studies, (Washington: American Council on Education, 1948), p. 219.

¹³M. Weinberg, "Geography and General Education: A Junior College View," Junior College Journal, 21: 341, 1951.

the fundamental processes which govern men's life on earth in a spatial framework, thereby giving uniqueness to these processes.¹⁴

Modern geography also is increasingly concerned with problem solving in an effort to substantiate the notion assumed by all scientists that an order prevails in the world in which we live, and that a proper role for science is to discover that order. Classroom students are increasingly asked to assemble and work with raw data, to develop hypotheses about these data, and to search diligently for supporting evidence of the hypotheses just as professional geographers do. No longer are students being required to memorize a body of textual information. Rather they are being led to ask probing questions about the location and arrangement of man-made and natural phenomena, and to seek answers to these questions by means of map comparison, research in the library, statistical, and mathematical analysis, field work, and reflective thinking.¹⁵

Geographic education in the two-year college. Geography courses in general education programs should be designed to broaden the student's sphere of interest by adding the spatial and environmental dimension to his studies of features and processes to help prepare him for responsible citizenship and to instill a desire for continued learning about the world around him. Geography should develop an understanding of the interplay

¹⁴Geography in Undergraduate Liberal Education, op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁵James R. Anderson, "Geography in the Two-Year College," Junior College Journal, 41: 12, February, 1971.

between man and nature, and the strivings of man within and against the limitations of his physical environment and his success in changing these limitations. Courses in geography should also provide the student with a conceptual framework within which he can appraise facts and theories from related disciplines.

Geography courses at the two-year college level should be designed to fulfill general education objectives. If geography is not available at a two-year college, it should be introduced as a separate course, or where this is not feasible, relevant material could be integrated into existing courses. It is important that the two-year colleges of the United States incorporate within their curricula those courses that will lead to an intelligent citizenship in this dynamic world. The kind of education that will produce the requisite understanding of other peoples and other environments of the world must include geography. The importance of the discipline is stressed by Renner and Griffin when they state: "Geography...should expectably be the basis of all education on earth, and certainly should be highly regarded as an educational instrument in cultivating world peace."¹⁶

The 1968 survey of the two-year colleges conducted by the AAG indicated that introductory courses in geography generally correspond to the trends encountered in four-year institutions. In some large-city institutions as many as 90% of the entering students plan to transfer to a four-year school, necessitating a close articulation between the two institutions. However, in

¹⁶George T. Renner and Paul F. Griffin, "Geographic Education for Survival," School and Society, Vol. 70, No. 1807, p. 82, 1949.

many cases the majority of the two-year college students are terminal students, and as a result, the geography that they receive in these institutions will serve as an introductory as well as a concluding course.

Many geographical themes could be developed for the general education of the terminal student which might be included in a more generalized version of existing transfer courses, or in a separate course designed to provide material relevant for him. Generalized and informative courses in world resources, ecological relationships of earth environments, geography and world affairs, or political patterns in urban systems are possible examples which would greatly benefit the terminal student.

One area of wide concern in both research and teaching is urbanism and the urban environment. This theme could, for example, be combined with political geography to produce a course of great general educational value, especially for the majority of students who do or will make their future homes in metropolitan America. With the increasingly urban character of our society, city environments rate a high priority as objects of research with theoretical and practical applications. This urban focus would be relevant for the transfer student as well as for those majoring in such terminal areas as auto mechanics, architectural drawing, and cosmetology. All future citizens of our expanding metropolitan complexes need to understand better the various approaches to problems of slum and ghetto conditions, air and noise pollution, zoning ordinances, commuter and rapid transit facilities, and similar issues with which they will be confronted as citizens. These are

problems of increasing magnitude, and geographers are making significant contributions toward their resolution. If one accepts the idea that our survival depends upon an enlightened and literate citizenry, then such courses might be most appropriate at the freshman level where maximum exposure is obtained. It could provide an exciting, contemporary, pragmatic approach to geography.¹⁷

Considering the increasing individual concern for the environment and leisure time activity, other appropriate themes in introductory geography courses for the professional education of the terminal student could include materials pertaining to recreation, travel planning, and conservation. Two-year colleges can and should make a greater endeavor to serve the needs of both the transfer and terminal student by incorporating current geographical themes into the geography courses of their curriculum.

Geography's representation. The AAG report on geography in the two-year colleges indicated that 407 of the 855 schools contacted offered one or more geography courses during the 1968-69 school year. The distribution of geography's representation is closely correlated to the areas where the junior college movement is strongest. Regionally, geography is best represented in the two-year colleges of the West and Southwest (136 of 243 schools) and Southeast (114 of 195). It has somewhat above average representation in the Great Lakes and Plains (109 of 205), and fares

¹⁷Anderson, op. cit., p. 15.

most poorly in the North Atlantic area (48 of 209).¹⁸

Four courses---Physical, World Regional, Cultural, and Economic geography---accounted for 82 per cent of the total geography enrollments in the nation's junior colleges and represented 73 per cent of all courses taught. Other geography courses offered by the junior colleges included regional courses of the United States and those of individual states. Courses in weather and climate were taught in some California schools, and four courses in conservation were given in Florida. Michigan offered four "travel" courses, and a few states included cartography and other "technique" courses in their curricula.¹⁹

The profile of courses taught in the nation's junior colleges is generally similar to that found on the lower division level in four-year colleges, with a strong emphasis on such traditional introductory themes as physical, cultural, world regional, and economic geography. It is expected that growth and improvement will take place within this framework of courses which currently occupy commanding positions within the curricula.

Another observation clearly pointed out by the AAG survey was the unrealized potential of geography in a great many areas of the country. In numerous states, including some of those where geography is well-developed in the junior colleges, certain courses are poorly represented in the curricula. In other states, where junior colleges exist but comparatively little geography is

¹⁸Geography in the Two-Year Colleges, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 22.

offered, the challenge and the unfulfilled potential are even greater.

Profile of instructors. According to the AAG report, nearly all geography instructors employed by two-year colleges are working on a full-time basis. However, only 29 per cent of these instructors had 80 per cent or more their teaching load in geography. Therefore, many geography instructors spend half or more of their time teaching other courses. The state of Michigan had the highest percentage of the instructors teaching geography more than 80 per cent of the time. In Michigan 73 per cent were so employed as compared with 28 per cent in Illinois and 14 per cent in Florida. The states with the largest number of junior college geography teachers were California (104), Illinois (44), Michigan (41), Texas (31), and Florida (30). There were seven states with no such instructors, and 26 with three or fewer teachers.

Nearly all instructors of geography in the two-year colleges were found to have been awarded a master's degree, but only two-fifths of these have their graduate degree in geography. Another one-tenth have a minor in the discipline. Although a third of those teaching geography have taken graduate work beyond the master's degree, less than a tenth have received the doctorate.²⁰

Therefore, many of those now teaching geography in the two-year colleges are doing so without the advantage of adequate professional training. Less than a major at the bachelor's degree

²⁰Ibid., p. 22.

level not only leaves the instructor of geography with a lack of depth but also a lack of breadth in the subject. In some instances, instructors have been able through related work, travel, and other experience to enhance their background for effective geography instruction. Yet another common problem faced by many geography instructors has been the inadequate opportunity to keep abreast of new developments in geography. Many dedicated instructors regularly return to the university to learn about new ideas in the discipline, but the courses available during the summer session usually do not fully meet the specific needs of the instructor of introductory courses.

C. GEOGRAPHY PROGRAMS OF SELECTED STATES

While geography is underdeveloped in the curriculum of the junior colleges of many states, there are instances of highly successful geography programs which provide grounds for optimism and a basis for recognizing geography's greater potential at the two-year college level. A brief review of the successful geography programs of the junior colleges of California, Illinois, and Michigan will enable the reader to gain a broader perspective from which to evaluate the role of geography in the two-year colleges. More specifically, it provides a basis from which to evaluate the geography programs of the junior colleges of Kansas.

California. California's two-year colleges attract more geography students in terms of total enrollment than the next four leading states combined. In the 1968-69 school year over 20,000

students enrolled in geography courses. Physical geography leads, followed by cultural geography, economic geography and world regional geography. The geography programs of California's two-year colleges have experienced rapid growth since Kramer²¹ did his study in 1956. In a span of thirteen years the enrollment in geography courses increased from 5,520 in 1955 to 20,590 in 1968. One major factor in this increase was the addition of 28 new two-year institutions to the state system.²² The demand from these new schools for qualified geography instructors was met by a close cooperation with the geography departments of the four-year schools who offered the training necessary for students interested in teaching geography at the two-year colleges.

One of the four-year schools which met this need was San Fernando Valley State, which, like most California four-year colleges, enjoys close ties with the state's two-year colleges. Not only has San Fernando Valley State supplied many geography instructors for the junior colleges, but is itself highly dependent on the junior colleges to provide adequate introductory offerings in geography. Geography has always been a part of San Fernando's curriculum, but very few students have entered the college as freshmen with a declared geography major. Upper division students become majors as the result of taking a general education course. Most geography majors transfer into the institution from two-year colleges with a declared geography under-

²¹Kramer, op. cit., p. 344.

²²Geography in the Two-Year Colleges, op. cit., p. 21.

graduate major. This is possible in part because of the vast junior college segment in higher education in the state of California. Even more responsible is the presence of an efficient, highly trained, and strongly motivated geography faculty in the junior colleges which provides a strong base for the four-year institutions. San Fernando's geography department makes a strong and concerted effort to maintain contact with faculty members in the two-year colleges. Former graduate students in the department, who accepted junior college teaching positions upon receipt of their M.A. Degrees, regularly return to the campus to attend the departmental lecture series, and they often bring their classes to look over such facilities as the map library and cartographic laboratory.²³

The success of geography in the two-year colleges of California can largely be attributed to this high degree of articulation²⁴ between the two-year schools and the four-year colleges and universities. However, this is not the traditional articulation that is common to most other states. In California the two-year colleges can create their own requirements for the transferable general education, rather than accept the plans adopted by the four-year institutions. This reversal of the usual pattern came

²³ Stanley H. Ross, "Undergraduate Geography at San Fernando Valley State College: A Large, Rapidly Growing Institution with a Large Intake of Junior College Students," Undergraduate Major Programs in American Geography, (Washington: Association of American Geographers, 1968), p. 34-5.

²⁴ The term articulation is used to refer to the interrelation of different levels of education for ensuring continuous advancement in learning.

about after the public commitment became one in which the two-year college was to play the major role for the first two years of the four-year publicly supported programs.²⁵ For the transfer student in geography this has proven especially advantageous.

But the needs of terminal students are also being met in many two-year schools in California. One two-year school requires a "world patterns" general education course as a part of a terminal program for potential stewardesses and other airline employees. Another program includes a dual purpose course in urban political patterns, suitable for both the transfer and the terminal student. One of the more elaborate geography programs in a two-year school is the one at San Bernadino Valley College which includes separate certificate programs in urban redevelopment-public housing and urban-regional planning, as well as programs in both geography and cartography fully capable of placing terminal students as well as transfer.²⁶ This two-year college provides an encouraging example of a well developed geographic program that is relevant to the needs of both the transfer and terminal student.

Illinois. The state of Illinois ranked second with over 7,000 students enrolled in 80 geography courses offered by the two-year colleges in 1968-69.²⁷ A 1968 study of 38 junior colleges con-

²⁵Geography in the Two-Year Colleges, op. cit., p. 32.

²⁶Anderson, op. cit., p. 16.

²⁷Geography in the Two-Year Colleges, op. cit., p. 28.

ducted by a subcommittee of the Illinois Geographical Society indicated that 31 offered geography. All of those which did not were small in size or had only been recently organized. The most popular course offered was World Regional geography, a course into which much that is new in content, methodology, and technique can easily be initiated. The Illinois study of two-year colleges revealed that 85 per cent of the institutions teaching geography offered some form of world geography, 50 per cent offered a course in economic geography, and 47 per cent offered physical geography. Furthermore, there were practically no problems of transferability or articulation in geography when students moved from the two-year college to senior institutions.²⁸

The 1968 AAG survey of two-year colleges, which included both public and private schools, showed that 35 of the 40 Illinois colleges which responded offered geography in their curriculum. Five colleges did not respond. Geography seems to be well established in the majority of two-year colleges of Illinois and is generally recognized as an integral part of the two-year college curriculum in that state.

Michigan. The third leading state in terms of enrollment in geography courses in the two-year colleges is Michigan. In 1965 Michigan had nineteen two-year colleges. Three of these schools offered one course in geography, three offered four courses, and two schools offered five courses in geography. One school in

²⁸Robert E. Gabler, "New Wine in Old Bottles," Journal of Geography, 69: 4-5, 1970.