

Dr. Paul C. Sutton

Service Statement

I provide an agenda based perspective on my service activities at the following levels: Department, Division, University, Academy, and Community. For a list of my specific service activities see the service section of my Curriculum Vita.

Department Service

There are less than 100 PhD granting Geography departments in United States universities. Geography departments are typically not “Central to the mission” of the Universities they exist in. For this reason I serve my department by working to insure that we are useful and relevant to the University of Denver by having vibrant enrollments which are created by providing a curriculum that is interesting, important, and useful for our students and results in our graduates obtaining rewarding and meaningful careers. As director of both the MS GIS program and director of Graduate Studies I pay attention to our curriculum and push for continuous evaluation and adaptation of our curriculum to changing academic, commercial, and governmental needs. This effort includes staying in touch with our alumni and maintaining a dialog with them that informs me as to what curriculum they feel is relevant for our students today. The American Association of Geographers has argued strongly that in order for Geography to retain its current strength in the Academy we need to produce graduates that find employment in not only the Academy but also in industry, government, and NGOs. DU Geography is best known for its strength in the area of Geographic Information Science. The AAG EDGE program has identified GIScience areas as some of the most significant reasons Geography is a vibrant discipline today (http://www.aag.org/cs/education/edge/edge_team). I am a strong advocate within our department for maintaining our strength in GIScience.

Divisional Service

As a member of the division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics I try to emphasize the importance of a mathematical and scientific perspective and literacy to those communities outside of our discipline. In addition I try to attract the best possible students (both graduate and undergraduate) to our division by supporting efforts to remove barriers to their enrolling in our programs (e.g. reducing the tuition cost shares we have to pay in proposals and relaxing the TOEFL standards for some foreign students). I have brought this perspective to my positions on the graduate and undergraduate councils and the executive council of the Academic Senate.

University Service

I serve on the Conduct Review Board that evaluates student conduct issues and violations of the Honor Code. In this position I hold very high expectations of our students with respect to the Honor Code for several reasons. 1) Students may be our customers; however, they are also our product. DU’s reputation is determined to a great extent by the

talent and integrity of our alumni. I do not want dishonest students to obtain degrees from our university. 2) I believe only a small fraction of those students who cheat actually get caught. I believe that students perceive that it is pretty easy to cheat and get away with it at DU and harsh penalties for those who do get caught will serve as a deterrent to those who are contemplating cheating. 3) If cheaters succeed some of the real victims are those students who did not cheat. Our honest students need someone to defend their interests.

I harbor a suspicion that many people involved in causing the financial collapse of 2008 probably got away with cheating in college. If we (University Faculty) were more diligent in our efforts at catching cheaters and removing them from our midst, perhaps they would not have graduated and found positions in which they could do so much damage. On the flip side I am very uncomfortable acting *in loco parentis* for undergraduate students involved in drinking beer and smoking marijuana and behaving badly. Significant fractions of our students have been sanctioned in some way or another by our Office of Citizenship and Community Standards; and, these behavior problems dramatically outnumber our Honor Code violations. As a CRB member I advocate for a reversal of this ratio.

I have also served on the Academic Senate as a Geography Department representative and will do so again in the next three years as one of the elected representatives at large. I am very concerned about self-governance at this institution and present my candidacy statement below as an example of how I will try to serve the University on the Academic Senate in the coming three years:

Faculty Senator at Large – Candidate Statement Paul Sutton

I am a tenured member of the faculty in the Geography Department. I am also a member of the AAUP. I am interested in serving as the Senator at large because I am very concerned about the state of shared governance here at DU. It is my belief that faculty participation in shared governance is going the way of collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin. Some of this is our own fault. We need to know our rights and responsibilities and be vigilant in exercising and defending our rights and responsibilities. Important issues that I will be paying attention to and fighting for as a senator are:

1) The growing fraction of our faculty that are some form of contingent faculty

Lecturers, adjuncts, and other kinds of contingent faculty are an integral and invaluable part of our University. Many are serving key administrative roles as directors of graduate and undergraduate programs. A contingent faculty member has recently served as chair of a department and even the president of the Academic Senate is a contingent faculty member. It is my understanding that all of these contingent faculty are technically on one-year contracts. Consequently they cannot participate in the self-governance of this institution in the same way our tenured faculty can. Established contingent faculty should be granted some form of “security of employment” that will enable them to “Speak Truth to Power” and participate more forcefully in the self-governance of this university. I will work for the establishment of some form of security of employment for those contingent faculty who have served our University for six or more years.

2) Defending and exercising the rights and responsibilities of the Faculty

The following is a list of many evolving issues that I believe warrant greater response from the Academic Senate: 1) Ensuring due process rights for faculty in grievance proceedings particularly in matters of intellectual freedom; 2) Participation of faculty in major decisions regarding matters that impact teaching and scholarship (the library redesign for example) ; 3) Seeing that the FRC has all the support it needs to offer frank opinions, remedy injustices, and conduct its business in a timely fashion; and 4) Clarifying and limiting the role that full-time Academic Administrators can play with respect to participating in the business of their home departments.

I stand for a strong independent faculty that works with the administration to build a great private university that serves the public good. But I also stand for a strong independent faculty that checks the administration when it moves too far towards a 'business model' of the university that treats our students solely as customers, and treats our faculty like employees.

Academy Service

I am surprised how much time I spend reviewing NSF proposals, EPA fellowship applications, and journal articles. I also spend a lot of time attending GIS in higher education workshops and workshops for things like “maintaining vibrant departments” at the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers. As I mature as an academic I see these kinds of activities becoming a larger and larger fraction of my working time. I welcome this. Geography has long been a “Red-Headed Stepchild” discipline that has suffered some serious setbacks when departments around the country were shut down. However, in the last 20 years Geography as a discipline has enjoyed a renaissance that many attribute to the increasing use and application of geo-technology. Nonetheless there remains a tension within the discipline about the role and relevance of geo-technology. I embrace the spatial analytic approach of geography and its related technology. In my teaching and research I try use geo-technology to bring a geographic perspective to bear on important interdisciplinary questions of sustainability. I believe that this is one of the best ways I can support the discipline of Geography within the academy. In addition, when our students graduate and find rewarding and meaningful careers that demand the knowledge, skills, and perspectives they obtained directly as a result of their education in Geography I feel confident that our department is supporting the Academy.

Community Service

I do my best to present the University of Denver in the best possible light with my service and integrity in all activities outside of the University. This includes serving as an election judge for Jefferson County, a census enumerator for the Census Bureau, a research associate at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a volunteer at my son's elementary school (Red Rocks Elementary), and as a volunteer YMCA basketball coach.