Geographers perform a wide variety of jobs in geographic subfields such as cartography, geographic information systems, remote sensing, urban and regional planning, housing and community development, retail site location, computer mapping, environmental analysis, climatology and resource conservation. Most geographers work in four basic career fields: business, government, planning, or teaching. Geographers collect and analyze data to search for solutions to a variety of spatial problems related to each subfield. Students may study Geography or Mapping Sciences. Geography is a field that uses an interdisciplinary approach to understand patterns of human activity and natural processes on the surface of the earth. Geographers are often called upon to analyze and solve problems that deal with interactions between people and the environment.

Geography appeals to students who have a wide range of interests that involve human activities and their impacts on the natural environment. Mapping Sciences are a set of techniques that include Cartography (the art and science of map making), GIS - Geographic Information Systems (the analysis of spatial patterns), and Remote Sensing (the analysis of satellite imagery). These techniques are useful in displaying, understanding, and analyzing spatial relationships. Many other disciplines, such as biology, business, marketing, criminal justice, land use planning, and urban studies utilize mapping techniques.

Studying geography and mapping sciences at UW-River Falls provides the skills to engage in a variety of careers. Students gain a combination of coursework and internships students gain first-hand experience in geographic analysis. The use of computer technologies, through GIS and mapping, are areas where students may develop additional expertise.

The department serves as the center for Geographic Information Science education on campus which has broad-based multidisciplinary application. The department directly supports key aspects of the University mission in the areas of global and international education, multidisciplinary education, and sustainability through education; research, scholarly, and creative activity; and, service.


The Student Geography Organization (SGO) provides an avenue for all students interested in geography to interact and participate in group activities and field trips while expanding their geographic knowledge and building friendships with fellow students. Afternoon field trips are planned during fall semester and a longer weekend trip takes place the end of spring semester. SGO groups have visited The Badlands and Black Hill of South Dakota, landforms of the Wisconsin Dells & Devil’s Lake State Park area, the prairie grasslands and pipestone quarries of southwest Minnesota, Chicago, and Milwaukee and Old World Wisconsin.

Service Projects
SGO also undertakes a community service project annually. In recent years, this has involved painting large playground maps of the United States and the world at local elementary schools. These playground maps help educate students and raise interest in Geography. The map also provides teachers with a useful learning tool and adds color to the school surroundings. Projects have been done at the following schools in western Wisconsin: St. Croix Elementary School, Roberts; Houlton Elementary School, Houlton; E.P. Rock Elementary School, Hudson; Greenwood Elementary, River Falls, St. Bridget’s, River Falls, and most recently at the Montessori School, River Falls.

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