Change of Degree Program

Geography, MA

Rationale for the changes:

1. Increase credit hours required from 30 to 32 for the MA. We feel that students need additional subject matter exposure, knowledge of the discipline, and critical thinking, writing, and research skills. Requiring two more credits and the change to GEO679 (see below) will mean one additional Geography course per student.
2. Change the credits for GEO679 to one credits. We use GEO679 to assign MA students written projects followed by an oral defense. This serves as their comprehensive exam. We feel additional coursework is more valuable than 3 credits for the comprehensive exams for MA students. Students will still receive one credit for GEO679 for their comprehensive exams. (MS students who switch to the MA because they no longer wish to writing a thesis will still retain 3 credits for GEO679, which they take as part of a thesis proposal defense for the MS.)
3. Delete the language in our admission requirements referencing the old GRE scoring system. The scores are only valid for five years and the new GRE scoring system began in 2011.
4. Among the options for the required statistics course, list our GEO540 Spatial Statistics and GIS as the first course with other courses acceptable with permission of the graduate adviser. We feel students should take the department’s statistics course where possible because it covers discipline-specific material. We will continue to allow (with permission) another statistics course to substitute to prevent delays in graduation.
5. Change the language about required 600-level courses to more simply reflect the Graduate College requirements.
6. Change the language about the minimum number of hours that must be GEO. The current language permitting electives outside the department exists because sometimes students would delay graduation if they couldn’t get enough Geography courses. However, we also believe that students should take Geography courses where possible. By changing the language, students would seek Geography courses first, although we will still allow an elective or two when necessary to avoid delays in graduation or where appropriate for a student’s interests or research.
7. Change list of courses based on what has been added or deleted since the last catalog update.