

# INTRODUCTION

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*Applied Geography and the Entrepreneurial University* focuses on geography's potential to increase its profile in the university enterprise and the accommodations that are needed to encourage the acceptance of entrepreneurial faculty who move the work of academic geography into the world of commercial application in the government, industry, and NGO (non-governmental organization) sectors. Not too many years ago it was assumed that public universities received most of their funding from governmental sources whereas private universities received their funds from endowments, gifts, and from tuition. Those universities not discouraging faculty consulting frequently had a one-day-a-week consulting rule to limit outside work. The environment has changed! In the United States for example, public universities are hard at work soliciting gifts and building endowments; the "state supported" university has become the "state assisted" university and in some cases universities receive 25% or less of their annual budgets from state appropriated funds. Further, both public and private universities have become quite aggressive when it comes to becoming financial partners in initiatives commercializing the work of faculty. This practice is not universally accepted and the debate about the propriety of this practice is often vigorous. But even the most out-spoken critics acknowledge that every year there is more evidence that it is a growing trend and that the best universities are often the ones leading the charge.

Where does geography fit in this new model and where might it fit? At best the answer to this question will be speculative and it will always depend on how geography is practiced. To this point the best examples of the entrepreneurial university are associated with the natural sciences and with the applied sciences such as engineering and medicine. And it is easiest to find examples in research universities in the industrialized nations. Whereas there are no systematic data that we are aware of to document this observation it does seem as though North America and Western Europe are especially rich in examples. Perhaps the answer to the question of geography's position in the "new order" depends in part on a department's philosophical inclinations and partly on the energy of the faculty. In the former case we might suspect that a geography department that sees itself as a natural or social science might be a better candidate for the entrepreneurial model than one that sees itself as focused in humanity. And similarly, a faculty that sees itself as more entrepreneurial than "reflective" might be a more likely candidate too. It is also interesting to speculate as to whether the entrepreneurial university is part of an evolutionary process that starts with a teaching department which develops into a department first known for curiosity driven research and subsequently for funded research and finally for commercialization of research. Could it be that departments achieve an elevated sense of awareness once they embrace the world of funded research that makes them susceptible to the seductive charms of research commercialization? What is clear is that there are numerous examples of geography departments participating in funded research but examples of those that have moved to the next level are few and far between. It might be that GMAP Ltd (Geographical Modeling and Planning at Leeds University in the UK) and MICROGIS/Geomatics in

Switzerland (founded by faculty at Lausanne Polytechnic, University of Lausanne, and the University of Geneva) are still the best examples.

Why the entrepreneurial university and why the emphasis on commercialization of research? One of the most obvious reasons is operations support. Universities and university departments are increasingly finding themselves constrained by reduced funding. Worse yet, there are few reasons to believe that this situation will be reversed any time soon. Increasing income from gifts and sponsored research are two potential responses. A third response benefits from the “demonstration effect” provided by commercialization of university-based high tech/bio tech activities; we suspect that aggressive geography departments will increasingly explore this option given the examples of the natural sciences, engineering, and medicine. The potential benefits are many... additional and enhanced income streams for the department, retention of faculty, financial support for students, especially graduate students, and opportunities to engage students in challenging activities that offer new insights into the worlds of industry, government and higher education... are all positive outcomes. Critics point to conflicts of interest that might actually retard the process of moving ideas to market and a tendency to diminish the attractiveness of basic or curiosity driven research as two of the several negative outcomes. A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* examines these issues from several perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

Our purpose here is not to promote the entrepreneurial enterprise in the university or to expand the focus on commercialization of research but rather to point out that this approach is becoming better understood by industry, more widely known and appreciated, and better understood within university communities, and better served by support networks such as AURP, The Association of University Research Parks, AUTM (the Association of University Technology Managers) and university patent offices.

It is also worth pointing out that the cost of simply ignoring this trend can be substantial. For example, by ignoring the growing acceptance of commercialization, departments of geography will be increasing the distance that separates them from the prestigious natural and social sciences that have embraced it, they will be foregoing income that might otherwise be invested in the department’s mission, and they may be driving talented faculty who appreciate the opportunity cost of their time away from the academy.

Whereas we do see this move toward the entrepreneurial model as an important emerging trend we suspect that it will be years before large numbers of research universities become fully comfortable with this model and even longer for departments of geography to become important “players.” In the meantime we think that most geography departments will be well served by considering incremental moves along the path that takes a department from a mission largely defined by teaching to one that incorporates at least elements of the new enterprise model. The content of this book was certainly assembled with this more modest (and probably realistic) strategy in mind. We are enthusiastic in our support for applied research in geography but we are fully accepting of models that fall short of the fully articulated entrepreneurial approach.

*Applied Geography and the Entrepreneurial University* is organized around two themes – 1) Applied Geography as an Explicit and Implicit Element in the Geography Curriculum and 2) The

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<sup>1</sup> Anders, George. “An Economists Courtroom Bonanza,” *The Wall Street Journal*. March 19, 2007.

Practice of Applied Geography. As we went through the process of recruiting authors we were a bit surprised to find that the interest in applied geography in the curriculum was as wide spread as it is. After reviewing a number of candidate papers the answer became obvious... we (the editors) are not the only ones concerned about preparing the next generation of geographers (and geography departments) to be competitive by assuring that both the content of the curriculum and the “corporate culture” of the academic institutions that offer geography reflect the realities of the new marketplace. Indeed, there seems to be the feeling in some circles that if academic geography does not respond to the best practices of the new marketplace our students will not be well served and the discipline of geography will suffer as the result of declining market share and acceptance in the worlds of practice and policy and eventually in the university itself.

The second section, The Practice of Applied Geography, was designed to complement the discussion on curriculum. We assume that most of those who read this book will be college and university faculty or students - probably graduate students - who love geography but realize that if geography is to realize the full potential of its wide appeal it must be obvious that geography does offer something to those who want to do something besides teaching and training those who want to teach. Whereas the first section offers ideas on how to position and deliver applied geography in the curriculum, the second section provides a look at “geographers at work,” i.e., geographers dealing with substantive problems including some that are not always assumed to be within the realm of geography.

The first section includes six papers. The first two, Making Geographic Findings Matter: Implications for Applied Research and Teaching by Haynes and Stimson and Client-Driven Education? Issues for an Applied Geography Curriculum by Montz focus on critical externalities - concerns that are tied to the operating environment within which applied programs find themselves. In the case of the Haynes and Stimson paper the emphasis is on the ethical and scientific issues that are imbedded in the business of taking what is initially and fundamentally an academic enterprise and effectively re-deploy it in an industrial or governmental setting. These issues are very appropriate to applied geography and to the other social sciences that cross the sometimes fine line that separates theory from practice. Montz, on the other hand, recognizes that the applied program must still operate in a more traditional and inward-looking institutional environment and it must strike a balance with the university's and department's mission and goals.

The second two papers, An Epistemology of Applied Geography by Bailly and Stough and Towards a Rhizomatic Econphilosophy for Economic Development by Rowe are more abstract and in some respects conceptual and theoretical than the first two. Bailly and Stough draw upon the work of philosophers and epistemologists to help explain how geography as a fundamental (basic) research discipline can make the leap to geography as a useful foundation for professional practice. Rowe, on the other hand, takes the understandings that he first developed as a traditional applied geographer working on market-based solutions in socioeconomic environments which prize efficiency. But the alternative framework that is his primary focus is “culture theory” or “critical theory” and these perspectives are, at the end of the day, driven by concerns with equity and social justice--not efficiency and market-based solutions.

The final two papers in the first section are relatively straight-forward and hard-core discussions on the content of the applied curriculum. The paper by Boehm and Mohan establishes a theoretical framework for applied geography and then goes on to discuss ways that Texas State University has actually implemented a comprehensive applied program and then supported the program by tracking graduates and building an effective network of graduates. The network serves as a demonstration of what has happened to those who have gone into the job market with geography degrees and it provides points of contact for those who are nearing graduation and facing the prospects of going to work. The sixth and final paper in this section explores the use of the competency model approach to tie curricular elements to workplace demands. Gibson, Brand, Hollier, and Rutherford first suggest a research path to identify critical elements for marketing applied geography and then a product development phase to produce an applied geography curriculum.

The second section of the book includes five papers which fall into two categories. The first three deal with “the geographer at work” whereas the final two are significant because they are curiosity driven on the one hand, but were written to meet the real needs of a consuming public on the other hand - these papers offer critical perspectives for the applied geographer but do not fit nicely into either the curiosity driven research category or the client driven category.

In the first group of three papers we have those by Lombard, Beer and Thomas, and Stough, Jackson, Song, and Sutter. The first of these, John Lombard's *The Business of Business Relocation* is the one most obviously about applied geography inasmuch as geography is the discipline that deals with location... and relocation.

Whereas the Lombard essay is *ABOUT* the work of the applied geographer, the paper by Beer and Thomas *IS* the work of two applied geographers. It is both a case study on the economic geography of a plant closure and a more theoretical analysis of the dark side of cluster based economic development and the significance of globalization to a regional economy. The final paper by Stough, Jackson, Song, and Sutter “Measuring Entrepreneurship Capital and its Role in Economic Growth” puts a new economy spin on the familiar topic of factors of production. Further, it moves economic geography into the realms of policy and regional development.

The last two papers are authored by Reg Golledge, Sarah Battersby and Meredith Marsh. They are important to readers of *Applied Geography and the Entrepreneurial University* because they point to the importance of valuing a sort of middle ground that lies in a vital no-mans land between curiosity driven research that is proudly oblivious of potential applications and project-specific client oriented applied work. It is funded work and in a sense this makes it applied research even though grants are often given without an obligation for actually applying research findings. This is certainly not the case here where this work is part of a larger body of research that is clearly aimed at meeting the very real needs of society in general.

