The **Department of Geography** promotes broad-based geographic awareness, global understanding, and proficiency in spatial analysis for all students. The inculcation of a global perspective among members of the R.U. community is cited in RU 7-17 as both a core value and a specific value under Goal 1.1. The Department further contributes to RU 7-17 goals:

- by teaching courses that help create in students “an awareness of and appreciation for cultural differences and an understanding of relationships among peoples and nations” (RU 7-17 Goal 1.2);
- by teaching courses that foster “cross-cultural awareness among all students” (RU 7-17 Goal 3.1);
- through scholarship (RU 7-17 Goal 1.2). Geography faculty are among the University’s most productive, as measured by professional contributions;
- through faculty research that expands “study abroad, [and]…international faculty research and scholarship collaboration…” (RU 7-17 Goal 3.1). Several faculty collaborate actively with colleagues abroad as exemplified by Dr. Ioffe’s numerous external grants to facilitate his work on the former Soviet Union; and
- by teaching and modeling civic engagement (RU 7-17 Goal 1.1: “Inspiring in all students a strong sense of values, ethics, and civic engagement”). *E.g.*, Dr. Roth has taken a leadership role in environmental problem-solving at local, regional, and state levels.

Elimination of the program would impoverish R.U.’s aspiration to be an outstanding liberal arts university, its ability to provide a rich core curriculum, its ability to offer students access to cutting-edge technologies and skills, and its ability to be an active partner in the development of Southwest Virginia.

Geographic understanding is foundational for a liberal education. Lack of geographic literacy among U.S. citizens of all ages, and especially the young, has been amply demonstrated and its effects are all too obvious, from misguided foreign policy decisions to flawed environmental policies.

Geography has a long-standing and regionally prominent program in geospatial techniques. Increasingly, other departments are making use of our expertise and course offerings in GIS and field research methods. Eliminating the program would decentralize technical education and likely lead to the duplication of efforts in several programs across the campus. Furthermore, Geography has a long-standing program in environmental studies, an area of increasing concern both among students and in the larger society.

Geography is unique as a discipline with its two inter-related subject areas, one a social science (human or cultural geography) and the other a physical/environmental science (physical geography). It is the holistic, integrative nature of geography that explains why geographic education resonates so much with the goals and objectives of RU 7-17 and why geography has more courses in general education than any other program. At a time when Geography’s value is growing across the country, the program should be enhanced rather than eliminated.