

Enrollment Trends in Regional Geography of Latin America

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ABSTRACT

Data on United States college level enrollment in all geography courses and in Latin America regional courses were extracted from *Schwendeman's Directory of College Geography of the United States*. A preliminary analysis indicated that, while total geography enrollment between 1977 and 1989 increased by 8.3 percent, the number of students in courses titled The Geography of "South America," "Middle America and/or Caribbean," or "Latin America" expanded by 39 percent. Most of the growth took place because of greater numbers at established programs. Of the observations included in the study, the number of schools offering courses on Latin America decreased from 101 in 1977 to 88 in 1989.

This report describes a project concerning enrollment in regional Latin American geography courses at colleges and universities in the United States. The primary purpose is to present the data, describe the criteria for inclusion, and point out the more salient trends in enrollment over the past decade. No attempt has yet been made to thoroughly evaluate the patterns or to explain why they exist. The Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers as an association and most of us as individuals are engaged in promoting an awareness of conditions in Latin America, so we have strong interests in measuring the rate of enrollment in such courses. Identifying departments where they have succeeded or failed as well as pinpointing some of the causes are important to us. The future of this organization depends to some degree on the continued popularity of the study of Latin America.

DATA SOURCE AND INCLUSION CRITERIA

The *Schwendeman's Directory*, compiled and published at the Geographical Studies and Research Center at Eastern Kentucky University, is the source of data for this study. Each year questionnaires are mailed to geography departments throughout the United States and the information for the *Directory* is assembled from the responses. Though any gathering of data through mailed questionnaires is flawed to a degree, the *Schwendeman's Directory* is the most comprehensive currently available source on enrollment in geography in the United States.

Data were extracted from issues of the *Directory* for five different years: 1977, 1981, 1984, 1987, and 1989. The two categories of interest were total enrollment in all geography courses and enrollment in regional courses on Latin America listed under the titles of The Geography of "Latin America," "Central America/Caribbean," and "South America."

Several criteria were used to determine if an entry should be included in the database:

- 1) The courses were taught in a unit identified as a Department of Geography, Geosciences, or Earth Sciences. Though the departmental name selection is somewhat arbitrary, these terms were thought to be representative of titles that most would associate with programs reflecting traditional geography. Separating enrollment in courses that included geographical content but taught in departments of geology, environmental science, ecological studies and so on, proved to

be difficult. If "geography" was part of a compound name, the data were included in the study.

2) Total geography enrollment in 1977 or either 1987 or 1989 equalled or exceeded 500 students per year. This restriction ensured that only departments of a significant current size or a significant size at the beginning of the period of interest were included. Incorporating data from all schools would have made the compilation task far more difficult and, it might be argued, reduced the effectiveness of the study.

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3) Only those schools that reported geography enrollment for all of the periods are included. A problem in collecting the data is that a department may fail to return the questionnaire during a given period, in which case the totals for the previous year are used. If the questionnaire is not returned during three successive years, the school entry is dropped completely from the directory. Where response to the questionnaire has lapsed, therefore, geography departments are not listed for one or more years, and the inclusion of these schools with a value of zero does not reflect reality. The data included with this report, therefore, omits all programs that failed to be listed for any of the years under consideration. Some comments on the more extensive database (including the schools with missing entries) will be made following a presentation of the more restricted grouping.

RESULTS

The data are presented in Table 1, sorted by decreasing enrollment in Latin America related courses in 1989. As indicated by the totals, overall growth in geography from 1977 to 1989 has been a moderate 8.3 percent for departments using traditional titles and returning data since 1977. The 39 percent increase in Latin America related courses is much greater. The increase in enrollment, however, has not been matched by a comparable increase in the number of schools offering Latin American geography. In 1977, 101 schools provided a regional course covering the area, but in 1989 the number had dropped to 88. The data may reflect a waning popularity of regional courses in general as well as waxing emphasis and expansion at a few universities. The growth in relation to the overall geography enrollment at the University of Minnesota, Arizona State University, Michigan State University and others is striking.

In the larger database (including all schools that satisfied criteria 1 and 2 but with missing entries), the totals were expectedly greater (shown in Table 2). The overall trend in enrollment in Latin America related courses, however, was similar to the data presented in Table 1.

IMPLICATIONS

Some questions raised by the findings include:

- 1) From which undergraduate programs do geography graduate students come?
- 2) Is Latin American regional geography correlated with certain systematic specialties?
- 3) Do the schools with expanding enrollment require Latin American geography as part of a core

curriculum or basic studies program, and if so, how did it come about?

- 4) Are high enrollment courses a product of a dynamic teacher or a particular type of course structure?
- 5) Are some areas of Latin America more popular? Central America has had substantial press exposure during the past decade.
- 6) Does increased enrollment reflect class consolidation and more "mega-sections?"
- 7) Has increased interest at the secondary level showed up at the university undergraduate level?
- 8) Do the trends in geography and Latin American geography reflect broader patterns in overall university enrollment?
- 9) How do Latin American regional courses compare to other regional courses?

The study indicates some interesting patterns over the past decade and suggests several possible follow up areas. Knowing more about the departments, teachers and students who are supporting Latin American regional courses can be useful to an organization whose function is to focus professional interest on the region. Current plans call for a yearly update of the database and a continued monitoring of the trends.

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Reference

Table 1: Enrollment in Geography

STATE	COLLEGE	Total Geography					Latin American Region				1989
		1977	1981	1984	1987	1989	1977	1981	1984	1987	
MN	U. Minnesota	4835	4324	5098	4450	5107	45	234	211	501	476
AZ	Arizona St.	4258	4174	2675	3538	4937	54	33	42	289	195
CA	Cal. St. Chic	2580	2184	1768	2693	3605	51	118	69	0	150
TX	SW. Texas St.	1387	2016	2592	3831	4556	28	12	19	0	147
CA	San Diego St.	3077	5337	4434	5081	5305	70	31	0	188	146
NC	UNC Chapel Hi	2288	2079	2101	2930	3465	22	11	10	35	141
CO	U. N. Colorad	2966	2736	2122	2192	3312	148	122	69	0	140
TX	U. Texas	2891	1659	3307	2575	4054	0	21	56	101	133
MI	Michigan St U	4417	3922	4465	4825	5372	0	86	48	57	117
WI	U. Wis., Milw	1101	1772	2026	3397	2125	0	20	16	15	100
KS	U. Kansas	3030	3454	3795	2882	5708	0	38	31	39	100
AZ	U. Arizona	1045	1788	1785	1941	3015	0	28	17	37	97
LA	U. New Orlean	2615	2547	2270	2099	2099	44	49	61	83	83
CA	Cal. St. Nort	5617	5372	5800	6467	5540	66	25	63	107	77
TN	U. Tenn. Knox	4342	4296	3489	3488	4675	29	25	10	60	72
MI	Central Michi	3402	4025	3082	2188	3029	19	23	62	0	68
OH	Miami U	3695	2413	2328	2920	2679	110	9	0	26	66
IL	Augustana Col	787	1204	648	572	636	0	0	0	49	66
MI	W. Michigan U	3064	2115	2171	2594	2631	167	280	325	285	65
CA	Humboldt St.U	1080	1170	1021	1265	1362	0	50	45	55	62
OH	Bowling Green	4913	4764	3439	3978	3617	105	84	0	29	61
CA	East L.A. Col	990	765	780	560	560	60	0	150	60	60
OR	Oregon St.	3522	2433	2334	2722	2371	36	15	20	33	59
PA	Ind. U. of Pa	2410	2034	2272	2352	3046	9	0	25	19	58
NE	U.Nebraska Om	2273	2321	2779	2631	4250	6	0	0	0	57
DC	G. Washington	626	810	860	1040	1036	25	40	45	95	56
UT	B.Y.U.	1737	1535	3719	3496	3935	25	26	21	34	55

CA	U.C.L.A.	7641	7151	9203	5203	3644	45	24	35	32	54
IL	Il. St. U.	3613	3508	3442	4352	4736	0	0	0	135	51
AL	Auburn U.	1104	1271	1108	1525	1770	12	23	45	45	50
OH	U. Cinn.	2815	3646	3420	3026	3205	25	27	76	61	49[end p. 315]
VA	V.P.I.	1569	1715	1848	1887	1874	0	24	33	35	44
SC	U.S.Car.	2148	2311	2217	2149	2289	36	0	15	50	43
FL	U. Miami	1500	2007	1356	536	1207	30	0	30	45	43
WV	Marshall	1250	1093	989	1356	1291	13	26	0	9	42
CA	U.C. Berkeley	900	3663	3633	2621	2615	50	57	34	97	42
OR	Portland St.	1590	3530	3326	2757	3330	0	28	43	88	41
CO	U. Colorado	3678	830	3505	3232	2992	99	0	12	0	39
WI	U. Wis., Eau	3665	3715	2403	2700	2700	10	145	29	35	35
NH	Dartmouth Col	714	579	632	632	960	0	9	0	18	35
MO	U Missouri KC	2286	2198	2048	1973	742	60	16	24	24	35
VA	Mary Washingt	942	845	1063	1228	1649	40	30	43	32	32
IL	S.I.U. Edwar	1776	1752	1458	2214	2554	29	0	0	16	31
VA	George Mason	900	449	1112	1482	1485	25	0	0	13	30
TN	U. Tenn. Chat	462	203	262	107	760	29	0	0	0	30
PA	Slippery Rock	2714	1149	842	2264	1997	0	0	0	0	30
MA	Framingham	1036	1171	930	961	1100	0	0	0	0	30
PA	The Penn Stat	2848	1291	3874	2278	2660	0	14	29	0	26
FL	F.S.U.	2562	2813	1757	1917	2050	56	40	0	33	26
KS	Kansas St. U.	1514	1380	1735	1782	2209	16	23	16	10	25
OH	Kent State	2325	2070	2248	2704	2929	84	17	24	32	24
KY	U. Kentucky	3395	2856	2710	1772	2952	31	21	0	25	24
PA	Cal. U. of PA	2994	1114	2113	1529	1777	0	0	0	21	23
MN	St Cloud St.	2343	1874	1877	2985	3245	15	9	19	18	23
CT	C. Conn. St.	1888	1287	1550	1586	1767	21	8	12	1	23
TX	Tex. Tech.	928	1246	1619	1830	1898	0	0	0	36	22
SD	S.Dak.St.U.	3079	3395	3003	2670	2713	0	12	35	14	22
MD	Salisbury St.	924	1186	1308	1534	1612	0	0	0	0	22
MA	Mount Holyoke	234	242	289	414	312	12	0	16	46	22
WI	U. Wis., LaCr	2477	2506	2253	2619	2827	38	0	21	23	20
VA	Old Dominion	480	1020	1094	1037	1023	4	0	0	14	20
OK	Oklahoma St.	2476	2700	3200	3316	3368	0	0	0	18	20
OH	Ohio U.	1779	1830	1683	1859	2319	67	20	18	20	20
OR	U. Oregon	2700	3525	2611	3102	2670	0	75	0	100	19
ND	N. Dakota St.	103	240	205	372	428	0	0	24	24	19
DE	U. Delaware	2615	2978	1734	1846	2338	26	0	0	0	19
SC	Francis Mario	747	616	532	764	632	0	15	25	21	18[end p. 316]
CA	U.C. Davis	1634	1530	1496	1156	1881	0	9	25	0	18
AR	U. Arkansas	1499	1564	1755	1483	1345	12	0	0	8	18
WI	U. Wis., Madi	2681	3710	4816	4073	6007	12	23	110	24	16
OH	U. Akron	1438	1143	1886	1184	1480	10	11	7	0	16
NH	Keene St. Col	933	699	793	886	1156	15	0	0	20	16
WI	U. Wis., Rive	1182	1430	1300	1259	1098	18	20	20	0	15
UT	Weber State	1101	1208	1106	1109	1422	20	0	5	0	15
IN	Taylor U.	212	163	160	247	241	13	12	6	14	15
IN	Indiana U.	1313	1233	2341	2785	3922	0	0	0	7	15
CA	Loyola Marymo	250	217	245	197	197	0	0	20	15	15
IL	U. Il. Chicag	2382	2360	2395	1922	1922	0	0	0	14	14
IL	N.E. Ill.	4155	1577	1647	1562	1633	35	60	12	12	14
WY	U. Wyoming	496	1028	1028	582	984	0	0	0	0	13
IL	U. Illinois U	2316	1691	2243	3038	2518	0	6	4	7	13
CO	U. Denver	1281	1078	1124	844	796	21	0	0	8	12
FL	Florida Atlan	824	596	658	1192	1312	11	28	75	0	9
WA	Central Wash.	800	1109	1213	1327	1144	25	0	0	0	8
KY	W. Kentucky U	2399	2836	2670	2846	3509	6	6	7	16	5
DC	U.D.C.	445	956	666	470	532	37	10	11	10	4

PA	E. Stroudsb.	1392	1446	1567	1508	1526	23	36	37	0	2
WV	U.W. Virginia	897	1386	1806	1290	2150	5	0	0	0	0
WI	U. Wis., Whit	2434	1619	1957	2064	2379	0	10	0	0	0
WI	U. Wis., Stev	1778	1224	1177	1477	1701	0	0	13	14	0
WI	U. Wis., Plat	907	978	1383	881	1155	13	0	19	0	0
WI	U. Wis., Oshk	2197	2328	3014	3746	2650	0	38	0	18	0
WI	U. Wis., Gree	526	793	940	698	698	0	0	0	0	0
WA	Western Wash.	1885	1732	2068	2117	2293	0	30	40	1	0
WA	Bellevue CC	400	480	516	800	960	0	0	0	0	0
VT	The U. Vt.	1457	1728	1540	1468	1524	14	34	0	30	0
UT	Utah St.	1365	1359	1400	1028	1116	0	0	31	0	0
TX	Tex. A.M.	1415	1572	1852	1556	1556	0	0	19	0	0
TX	Sam Houston S	1492	1534	1361	1389	1616	13	0	21	0	0
TN	Middle T. St.	1357	953	879	1043	1380	21	0	19	24	0
TN	Memphis St.	2193	1804	1786	1821	1898	22	3	5	7	0
TN	E. Tenn.St.	870	1429	729	847	635	35	5	0	0	0
TN	Austin Peay	998	835	910	1078	1078	56	23	17	0	0
RI	Rhode Isl.Col	635	605	360	550	436	0	0	0	0	0
PA	Villanova	459	399	355	510	507	0	0	0	0	0
PA	U. Pitt., Joh	614	553	787	659	1030	0	0	0	0	0
PA	Millersville	1221	1227	1449	1220	1542	20	25	0	15	0
PA	Mansfield	812	862	906	790	787	0	0	0	0	0
PA	Bucknell	259	634	532	695	686	0	0	0	15	0
OH	Youngstown St	2448	2662	2360	2099	2102	20	0	0	7	0
OH	Wright St.	1810	840	1107	1201	1195	17	0	0	0	0
OH	The Ohio St.	6216	6328	5185	5699	4909	11	16	34	25	0
NY	St Lawrence U	575	515	280	566	376	0	0	0	0	0
NV	U. Nevada, Re	665	685	1100	1291	1899	0	0	0	0	0
NM	New Mexico St	739	611	881	197	1659	0	0	18	0	0
NH	U. New Hamp.	547	1055	885	833	797	0	0	0	0	0
NH	Plymouth St C	467	938	1375	658	850	0	0	0	0	0
ND	U. N. Dakota	1568	1837	2068	2049	1636	8	0	0	0	0
ND	Dickinson St.	341	344	384	594	299	0	0	0	0	0
NC	UNC Wilmington	388	415	357	510	641	0	0	0	0	0
NC	UNC Greensbor	829	1171	1333	1316	1316	0	12	25	0	0
NC	Pembroke St.	379	554	481	625	730	0	0	0	0	0
NC	Appalachian S	2240	1038	838	1223	1208	0	4	0	0	0
MT	U. Montana	2071	1450	1450	1991	1396	29	50	50	28	0
MT	Montana St U	2226	2135	2449	2209	2325	0	0	0	0	0
MS	U.S. Mississi	1473	1166	1245	1553	1246	0	8	0	0	0
MO	U.Missouri Co	2286	2198	2048	1973	2178	60	16	24	24	0
MO	NW. Missouri	670	584	819	1198	1985	9	19	30	22	0
MO	NE. Missouri	351	538	802	628	633	19	15	15	7	0
MN	U. Minn. Dulu	2130	1868	1711	1117	1454	45	9	13	371	0
MN	Mankato St U.	3479	3935	2437	2805	2811	7	5	9	0	0
MN	Bemidji St U.	629	1105	1303	1023	1743	3	0	0	11	0
MI	Wayne St. U.	1927	790	402	510	650	26	0	0	0	0
MI	Ferris St. C.	686	593	579	512	693	0	0	0	0	0
MD	U.Maryland(Ba	2228	1509	1511	1506	880	0	36	55	0	0
MD	Frostburg	1538	1127	1211	1207	1449	0	0	0	0	0
MA	Worcester St.	1216	2054	3032	1558	940	0	50	57	67	0
MA	U. Mass.	1475	1066	680	1026	1244	0	20	6	24	0
MA	Salem St. Col	2014	2476	2377	2494	2868	0	28	0	14	0
LA	Nicholls St.	1094	1117	1117	1169	1116	16	0	0	0	0
LA	L.S.U.	3059	3479	2569	2903	3994	54	60	42	20	0
KY	U. Louisville	1356	1847	1847	1867	1867	0	0	0	0	0
KY	E. Kentucky	1657	1307	1435	1425	1691	10	16	18	0	0
IN	Vincennes C.	839	736	1530	1190	1090	0	0	0	0	0
IN	Valparaiso	1205	1101	1066	898	1275	15	0	0	20	0

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IN	U. Evansville	905	1060	835	558	269	0	0	0	0	0
IN	Indiana U. In	1313	1233	2341	2785	1808	0	0	0	7	0
IN	Indiana St. U	3235	2576	2740	2227	2834	10	7	0	7	0
IN	Butler U.	785	220	227	71	150	0	0	0	0	0
IN	Ball State U.	3987	2414	1937	2472	1970	10	60	0	8	0
IL	W. Il. U.	3558	1911	1894	1733	1690	30	0	0	0	0
IL	S.I.U. Carbo	1776	1752	1458	2214	1923	29	0	0	16	0
IL	Northwestern	672	878	807	1026	1026	0	0	0	0	0
IL	E. Il. U.	1367	1150	1150	1146	910	18	15	15	0	0
ID	U. Idaho	805	695	2368	1655	1655	0	0	0	0	0
ID	Boise St. U.	800	684	805	802	956	40	0	0	0	0
HI	U. Hawaii, Ma	3245	2627	3559	3275	3682	0	0	0	0	0
HI	U. Hawaii, Hi	3245	2627	3559	3275	1055	0	0	0	0	0
GA	U. Georgia	4119	4077	4712	5053	6453	7	19	27	35	0
GA	Georgia St. U	1308	1410	831	1115	1275	0	9	6	0	0
CT	U. Conn.	1872	1710	1464	2082	2512	34	0	8	0	0
CT	S. Conn. St.	1835	1468	1598	1512	1963	0	33	32	0	0
CO	U.S.Colorado	814	476	550	800	185	5	0	0	0	0
CO	Metropolitan	1258	1913	1060	989	2343	0	0	0	0	0
CA	U.S. Cal.	877	804	856	1109	1395	0	0	10	0	0
CA	U.C. Santa Ba	2023	3392	1639	2403	1969	0	0	0	0	0
CA	San Jose St.	1126	902	664	812	1285	15	14	29	0	0
CA	San Bernardin	1580	1460	1100	597	510	0	0	0	0	0
CA	Riverside	340	400	630	610	800	0	0	0	0	0
CA	Orange Coast	400	200	305	560	1530	0	0	0	0	0
CA	Grossmont Col	1705	1890	1760	1425	1425	0	0	0	0	0
CA	Consumnes Riv	575	575	485	635	620	0	28	17	37	0
CA	Col. Sequoias	417	392	390	235	50	0	0	0	0	0
CA	Cal. St. Stan	1704	1448	1617	2096	565	0	22	11	33	0
CA	Cal. St. Sacr	1704	1448	1617	2096	2151	0	22	11	33	0
CA	Cal. St. Hayw	1912	1778	1169	1603	1556	0	46	46	7	0
CA	Cal. St. Domi	1018	2661	2244	1795	752	18	0	0	0	0
CA	Cabrillo Col.	490	760	1100	725	725	0	0	0	0	0
AZ	N. Arizona U.	1045	1420	1165	914	1322	0	0	0	0	0
AR	U. Central Ar	775	1609	1745	745	1117	2	0	9	0	0
AL	U. S. Alabama	684	949	1014	1058	1671	13	8	0	25	0
AL	U. N. Alabama	809	772	589	700	746	6	0	9	0	0
AL	U. Alabama	2051	2359	906	887	1622	50	40	9	11	0
AL	Jacksonville	1283	576	487	794	1036	27	11	16	26	0
AK	U. Alaska Fai	329	79	315	521	625	0	0	0	0	0

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TOTALS:

Total Geography Latin American Region

1977 1981 1984 1987 1989 1977 1981 1984 1987 1989
329288 317318 323761 326520 356667 3157 3190 3272 4564 4397

Complete returns; see text for inclusion criteria

Source: 1977 - 1989 *Schwendeman's Directory*.

Table 2: Enrollment in Geography (Totals only)

Total Geography

Latin American Region

1977	1981	1984	1987	1989	1977	1981	1984	1987	1989
459541	391782	440001	434090	480365	4311	3787	4160	4160	5516

Missing returns; see text for inclusion criteria

Source: 1977 - 1989 *Schwendeman's Directory*

The Geographical Studies and Research Center. 1977-1989. *Schwendeman's directory of college geography of the United States*. Richmond, KY: Department of Geography and Planning, Eastern Kentucky University.

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