

Geog 696: Seminar in Geographical Research Methods

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Working both Sides of the Street: Academic and Business

I think it is safe to assume that all of the current graduate students in the geography master program, before joining it, have browsed the department's website in search for answers for the question: what can you do with a degree in geography? The present article and the presence of its author during our seminar have offered some insight of how to become a successful geographer whether you pursue an academic carrier or a business one.

Firstly, three concepts are discussed in the article and they should be kept in mind, applied geography, academic geography and business geography. **Applied geography** is the field which uses geographical techniques and technology, such as geographical information system or remote sensing, for answering spatial queries. Applied geography seems to be more academic, conducted as a research grant and looking to resolve a "major practical question." **Academic geography** offers the opportunities to remain on the campus, to teach and carry on research. Through this continuous research one can gain specific knowledge on the topic; therefore he/she can be called to provide academic consulting outside the campus. In the academia, **business geography** is the field of geography that combines geographical analysis with technology in order to improve the business decisions. But in the real work, the author

argues that business geography needs to find specific solutions for the clients' problems that might not always have any spatial dimension/ interpretation. Business geography is paid by the client and focused on resolving the client's specific problem. In academic consulting normally standard methodologies are followed in order to produce solutions, while in business geography there is no standard recipe for creating solutions.

Secondly, the author emphasized both in his article and in person that the graduate program is not meant to produce teachers, but to offer geographic knowledge and critical thinking. One must possess the innate ability to teach in order to become a professor. Our class is split between those who want to pursue an academic carrier and those drawn by business geography. During our discussion the question was raised if the CSULB geography department could offer pedagogy classes in order to supplement the training for those who want to pursue an academic carrier.

Lastly, the author stressed that mastering geographical techniques is not the strongest skill and will not give the graduates the edge on the job hunt, but having common knowledge and common sense will. The geography graduate program should strengthen the students' analytical and communication skills. Writing proficiently is another very important skill for earning and keeping a job both in academia and business geography.