Florida's role in the education of geographers dates to well before World War II. Nevertheless, only since 1945 has its position in that area of education become nationally well established. Presently seven of the state's thirty-four degree granting colleges and universities award bachelor's degrees in the discipline, and four grant graduate degrees. A number of other institutions of higher learning offer courses in the field, but not the degree.

**FIGURE 1**

Bachelor's Degrees in Geography

(four year moving average)

Date University Graduated
First Geography Bachelor

U.S.

FLORIDA

JACKSONVILLE

STETSON

FAU

USE

U.S. 100
FLA. 10

ACADEMIC YEAR
This study attempts to assess the vitality of geographical education within Florida using data on degrees awarded by U.S. institutions of higher education collected by the Federal Government since the academic year ending 1948. This data, which is presently being gathered by the National Center for Educational Statistics, is available for over 225 disciplines. Each institution which awards a degree in a discipline is cited, as is the number of degrees awarded by level (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral).

Undergraduate Degrees

Immediately following World War II the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in geography within Florida was low, more a reflection of the small college population of the state than to a lack of student interest in geography. In the academic years ending 1948 and 1949 two bachelor's degrees in geography were awarded annually, one each year at both the University of Florida and Florida State University. Thereafter, for a brief period, the annual rate of growth in bachelor's degrees earned in geography within the state actually exceeded that for the nation (Fig. 1). This was mainly the result of the introduction of a program in geography at the University of Miami. The first class of geographers at that institution (1950), numbered fourteen. For a first graduating class, that of the University of Miami was large. Yet, the first class proved to be one of the largest the university graduated, and it was not until 1970 that it began to produce larger graduating classes.

Although between 1954 and 1965 there was a gradual growth in the number of geography bachelor's degrees nationwide, this was a period of stability or actual decline in Florida. The beginning of a degree program in the discipline at Stetson University in 1954 did little to help the situation, since that university has never graduated appreciable numbers of geographers. Whereas the nation began a period of sustained rapid growth in bachelor's degrees awarded in geography in 1959, it was not until 1966 that a high growth rate began in Florida.

Once the state began its period of sustained growth it's rate was considerably more rapid than that for the nation, and its duration has been longer. The state has not experienced a year in which there was a numerical decline in the number of bachelor's degrees awarded from the previous year, while recently this has been the case nationally. Florida's rapid growth in bachelor's degrees awarded in geography reflects both greatly expanded programs in the older state universities and the opening of departments in two of its new ones. In addition, Jacksonville University awards first level degrees in geography. The impressive increase in the rate of annual growth of bachelor's degrees in the field within Florida has brought the state an increased share of the national output of geographers. Whereas in 1963 only one percent of the graduates were from Florida institutions, in the most recent year data is available (1975) the share had risen to 2.7 percent.

The relative percentages of geography undergraduate degrees by institutions within Florida have changed significantly in twenty-five years (Fig. 2). Noteworthy is the steady decline in the relative importance of degrees produced at the University of Miami. Also, the vitality of the programs in the newer departments is impressive. Today the geography degrees awarded by
Jacksonville University, Florida Atlantic University and the University of South Florida account for nearly half those conferred within the state. The latter institution has, since 1973, awarded more bachelor's degrees in geography than any other department in Florida.

Graduate Degrees

Florida's graduate education in geography has been almost entirely dominated by the University of Florida and Florida State University. The former has usually produced the greater number of degrees, partially because it is the only state university authorized to award a doctoral degree. Florida State University, however, dominated graduate education in the state throughout most of the 1950s and the early 1960s. In 1970 the University of South Florida began graduating master's level geographers, as did Florida Atlantic University in 1973. The number of graduates from these institutions continues to be low compared to that from the older institutions.

Since Florida began graduating advanced level geographers, the growth rate of degrees conferred has approximated that for the nation (Fig. 3). Actually, during the period when the state was barely able to maintain the same level of output of geography bachelor's degrees each year, there were a number of years in which graduate degree output increased sharply. The temporary emphasis on graduate geographical education within the state during the 1950s, whether by administrative policy or because of the popularity of the discipline among students, is reflected in the state's contribution to the national output of graduate degrees. In the year 1959 Florida produced 3.7 percent of all the nation's advanced geography degrees, but by 1975 that share had fallen to 2.6 percent.

Geography Among the Social Sciences

To ascertain the importance of geography among the social sciences in Florida, its percentage share of the total output of bachelor's degrees earned within the seven social sciences was calculated. This was then compared with the figures for the nation (Fig. 4). The social sciences used for comparison are Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. It can be seen that in the 1950s geography in Florida was a much more popular subject among students seeking to major in a social science than it was nationally. This may largely be attributed to its popularity at the University of Miami. In time, however, other social science departments increased their output of bachelors, both at Miami as well as at other institutions. This resulted in a decline in geography's popularity to a level where it closely approximated that for the nation. Since 1962 the Florida and the national figures have rarely been far apart.

Approximately 3.5 percent of the nation's social science graduate degrees have been awarded in geography since 1951, the percentage having fluctuated little in 24 years (Fig. 5). The share for Florida, even though smoothed by using a four-year moving average, has shown great fluctuation. Around the beginning of the 1960s, geography's share of social science graduate degrees rose above seven percent, but since then the share has fallen to a figure that more nearly equals that for the nation. Nevertheless, it continues to be above the national percentage. In several Florida universities
graduate education in geography was emphasized earlier than some social sciences. During the 1960s, however, graduate programs in several disciplines were either initiated or greatly accelerated, particularly at Florida State University and the University of Miami.

There is considerable variation among Florida universities in the way geography has fared in competing for students with the other social sciences. Furthermore, at an individual institution, its position may change greatly over time. Figure 6 illustrates geography bachelor's degrees awarded as a percentage of all bachelor's degrees conferred for the three institutions which have produced geography bachelor's for the longest period. Of the three, the department at Florida State University has been most successful in winning a high share of the total earned bachelor's degrees conferred in the seven social sciences at that institution. Nevertheless, since 1971, the share has been
falling at a startling rate. The University of Miami in 1966 ended a long period of decline in the geography department's contribution of bachelor graduates relative to the total number of social science graduates. From that year the discipline's percentage share has steadily increased and by 1975 both the University of Miami and Florida State University had the same share. The University of Florida's department normally has produced less than two percent of all the social science bachelor's degrees awarded by that institution, but since 1968 it has begun to increase its share slightly.

The institution whose geography department makes the biggest contribution to its undergraduate social science degree output is Jacksonville University. In recent years the geography program at this school has produced approximately six percent of all social science bachelor's degrees awarded by the institution. The share of geography bachelors in the social science bachelor output at both the University of South Florida and Florida Atlantic University has been approximately four percent throughout the 1970s. At Stetson University undergraduate degree output has fared worse than at any other institution in the state. In 1957 geography had a 6.5 percent share of all social science bachelor's degrees conferred by the university, but by 1972 it had fallen to less than two percent, where it remains today.

Overall, the role of geography in the social science graduate programs of Florida's universities has declined in relative importance over time. This is particularly true of Florida State University. During the early 1960s there were years when twelve percent of all graduate social science degrees were awarded in geography, but during the 1970s it seldom has risen above four percent. At the University of Florida the situation is healthier and there actually has been an improvement in geography's share of graduate degrees conferred within the social sciences. In the 1950s it usually was around four percent, but in the 1970s it often has risen above seven percent. At the University of South Florida the share has been above ten percent several years during the 1970s, while at Florida Atlantic University it has run slightly under five percent.

It would be wrong to attach too great importance to these figures on the share of geography degrees among all social sciences at these institutions. Some universities have opened new, nontraditional social science programs, for example Urban and Regional Planning. This could have a direct or indirect effect upon the share of geography bachelor's degrees among the seven traditional social sciences. Nevertheless, geography appears to be in an excellent position at Jacksonville University and it is doing well at the University of South Florida and Florida Atlantic University. It is now undergoing a considerable change in popularity at Florida State University, but despite a serious drop in the share of bachelor's degrees produced relative to the total social science bachelor's degrees conferred, the percentage still is high. Stetson University's program appears to be in the most serious difficulty, and from the figures it appears as if it could disappear entirely.

Conclusion

The data generally portrays geography in Florida to be in a healthy condition. Florida departments are still increasing the number of bachelor's and advanced degrees conferred more rapidly than is the nation. In addition,
the share of geography degrees in the total degrees granted in the seven social sciences is greater in Florida than for the nation. This has been true both for graduate degrees since 1951 and for bachelor's degrees between 1951 and 1963, and since 1967. In most individual universities the discipline continues to show greater vitality than the other social sciences, since it has succeeded in increasing its share of degrees produced.

Lest members of those institutions where geography is in a particularly healthy position become sanguine about the future, a cautionary note must be added. The state continues to receive a net immigration of people in the productive age groups. Nevertheless, though later than some states, it will soon experience a drop in the size of the age cohort 18-24. It is from this group that we draw the majority of our students. Even using the most optimistic data on deaths and migration, the age cohort 18-24 in 1985 will be approximately the same size as it was in 1967. As university enrollments begin to stabilize, and in some cases actually decline, the competition among departments for students will intensify. The question which we must confront today is how will the departments respond. The answer will greatly affect the future importance of geography in Florida higher education.