

**UNT Geography: MS in Geography**  
**Expectations for Graduate Studies in Location Intelligence,  
Business Strategy, and Entrepreneurship**

**Dr. Murray Rice**

**My Role as Advisor**

During your time as a graduate student with me, I will invest significant amounts of time advising you, supervising your research, reading and editing your work, assisting you in your search for research opportunities, and helping you establish connections for your professional advancement. In addition, to the best of my abilities I will provide you with access to the resources you will need to complete your studies here.

*My primary goal is to support you in your development.* My aim is to train you to be the best student you can be: to help you improve your knowledge and skills, teach you how to design and carry out a major research project, and finally to embark on a career that allows you to contribute to society and to yourself. I will always support you in these efforts. In addition, I offer significant intellectual freedom. You are welcome to change advisors if you feel that this will better serve you. When you finish your degree at UNT, I will provide letters of recommendation and other materials that you will need, as well as any connections that I may have.

These are my duties as advisor. I ask that you be respectful and cognizant of what you ask of me and that you strive to distinguish between what is and is not appropriate to ask of an advisor. Remember that you are choosing to work here with me under my supervision, and therefore I expect you to adapt to my work preferences and conditions, not vice versa.

**Your Role as Advisee**

I expect you to take responsibility for your graduate education. Graduate school is difficult, and you should recognize that it is supposed to be this way. I will advise you during your time in this program, but you are the one who is responsible for making and executing the plan that will lead you to degree completion and making the transition to your next step in life from here.

**Coursework** Sometime during your program with me, I expect you to take the following graduate-level courses that I offer every year (the list here is current as of the 2017/18 academic year):

- *GEOG 5220*: Applied Retail Geography (Fall)
- *GEOG 5190*: Advanced Quantitative Methods (Spring)
- *GEOG 5230*: Location Intelligence – Business GIS Concepts & Applications (Spring)

Beyond this, you will need to select and complete coursework that satisfies the department's requirements for the MS in Applied Geography degree, and sets you up for where you want to go after UNT. Please see our MS program webpages for the current course requirements.

***Thesis Research Planning and Proposal*** Please note the following requirements that you need to take into account in your degree plans and scheduling:

- *By the end of your first semester at UNT*, I expect you to have a degree plan written that outlines the courses and other activities that you will pursue on the track to completing your degree. This timeline should include your proposal defense date, your research, your thesis defense, and other milestones that are relevant to your degree completion.
- *By the beginning of your second semester*, you must establish a committee that will examine you on your thesis proposal and your completed thesis. It is important that you define your committee by this time because you will solicit feedback on your thesis research from them. This feedback will be useful, and you will need to take this feedback into account as you complete your research and writing. Your thesis proposal should be defended by the end of the second semester if at all possible (and it almost certainly is).
- I ask that you follow a specific format for your thesis proposal. Briefly, this includes the following sections:

1. *Introduction*

- a. Definition of your research field in general
- b. Discussion of the key challenge(s) faced in the field
- c. Brief survey of the major kinds of questions to be addressed in the plan

2. *Study Background (often called a "Literature Review")*

- a. Summary of the previous research and publications that relate to your topic
- b. Discussion that demonstrates what has been done, and what is left to do ("gaps")

3. *Project Overview (sometimes called the "Case Study")*

- a. Full definition of the research questions to be addressed, given the material covered in the preceding study background section
- b. Full definition of the details of how you will address the research questions above, including details on study area, methods, budget, and timeline
- c. Discussion of the implications of your research. *Who cares about your study, and why?*

- You must give your committee two weeks to read your proposal. After this review period, you will approach each committee member individually to get their feedback and schedule a proposal defense. The thesis proposal defense may not be scheduled until after you have received feedback from each committee member. You must be flexible as you schedule this defense: your professors have busy schedules. You are responsible for scheduling the proposal defense in consultation with your committee.
- You must announce your proposal defense to the department at least one week in advance of the defense date. You are responsible for posting a flier with time and place information in the department.

**Thesis Defense** I expect you to have finished and defended your thesis by the end of your second year in the program.

- I understand that “life happens”, and some students may need a small amount of extra time beyond the usual two-year window (there needs to be a very good reason for this). However, you need to make a two-year completion time your goal, and work diligently toward this goal during your time here.
- I ask that you follow a specific format for your thesis. I will discuss this format with you in detail as you approach the thesis writing stage.
- You must give your committee 3 weeks to read your completed thesis. After this review period, you will approach each committee member individually to get their feedback and schedule a thesis defense. The thesis defense may not be scheduled until after you have received feedback from each committee member. You must be flexible as you schedule this defense: your professors have busy schedules. You are responsible for scheduling the thesis defense in consultation with your committee.
- You must announce your thesis defense to the department at least two weeks in advance of the defense date. You are responsible for posting a flier with time and place information in the department.

**Meetings** I expect you to establish a weekly meeting time with me. This time may shift from semester to semester and it may be in a group setting, but it must be established and agreed upon in advance. We will not necessarily meet every week, and some of our meetings might be short. However, most weeks we will meet, and often we will have important topics to cover. The central themes of each meeting will be the *tasks you have accomplished*, the *questions you have*, and the *new tasks you will set out* for the week and weeks ahead. I expect you to be on time and prepared for each meeting. You should bring a notebook, a pen, and a clear list of questions.

**Communication** Outside of our regular meetings, my major method of communicating with my students is email. I expect you to respond to my emails as soon as possible, especially when I am asking a question or otherwise expecting a response. If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification. Ignoring any emailed question or request from me is a very bad choice.

**Other** Here are a few other items you need to remember:

- *You are an important part* of the research community we are building at UNT Geography.
- *This community membership brings opportunities and responsibilities.* As a UNT Geography student (and eventually, graduate) you have access to a network of career and service connections. This network provides you with opportunities for personal and career growth, but it also provides you with responsibilities to help others. When you graduate, you need to remember where you came from and be actively thinking about tangible ways you can help those who come behind: time, resources, connections, and financial support.
- *You represent our program* and department as you go out from here.
- *I am glad you are here*, and I am thankful that you chose UNT Geography for your graduate studies.