

CAG Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography Dr Don Boyes

Dr. Don Boyes is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Toronto, St George, and has been teaching in the department since 2001. He teaches undergraduate and graduate GIS courses, ranging in size from small to large (20 to over 160 students) and receives excellent course evaluations, year in and year out. He is the recipient of a Faculty of Arts & Science Outstanding Achievement Award for Teaching (2008) and the APUS-SAC Undergraduate Teaching Award (2001), a student-sponsored award. In 2014, he received the President's Teaching Award, the University of Toronto's highest award for teaching excellence.



Dr. Boyes teaches students how to examine critically what they may see in data, maps, written publications, and the world around them, how to approach a problem in an organized and methodical way, how to perform analysis using rigorous thinking and quantifiable methods, and how to communicate their results in graphical, oral, and written modes. He teaches four undergraduate courses that form a sequence and comprise the core of the GIS Minor in our department. He also teaches a graduate-level introduction to GIS that draws students from across the university and a second project-based graduate course. When Dr. Boyes arrived at UofT, he redesigned and rationalized the entire GIS curriculum so that there was a coherence and logical sequence within, and between, courses and he has continued to reassess and update the GIS curriculum using standards such as the U.S. Department of Labor's Geospatial Technology Competency Model.

Dr. Boyes is recognized for his exceptional work in online education and teaching with technology more generally. He serves on the Teaching, Learning and Technology Advisory Committee chaired by the Vice Provost at UofT, as well as the university's Academic Toolbox Reference Group, which advises on priorities for instructional technologies. He has also been active in helping to build a community of practice for those interested in online teaching and learning by organizing regular round table meetings to discuss various teaching methods such as student-faculty interaction using video-based and webinar strategies. He also manages an email list to facilitate discussion in this community of practice, which currently has 94 members from across the university. He has been an early pioneer at UofT in the use of online office hours, virtual software access, and simultaneously teaching a live lecture to both students in class as well as online, all with the intention of broadening access and offering new ways for students to learn. In May 2015, he launched an Ontario Online introductory GIS course that is open to all university students in Ontario.

Dr. Boyes started to explore online learning in 2010-11 when he created two video software demonstrations for his intermediate GIS course. From there, he developed pre-recorded lecture podcasts, online video office hours, and webcasting lectures. Many of the educational resources he created for his online courses are publically available. His lecture podcast web pages have received thousands of unique page views, and he has received positive feedback from many students who appreciate having them available, and from his colleagues, some of whom have used them as resources for their own students.

Dr. Boyes uses social media to reach out to students as well as other GIS instructors around the world. He started a blog on GIS, teaching, technology, and higher education that has had about 35,000 visits from 180 countries. He created a YouTube channel to distribute the software video demonstrations he produced. It currently has 41 videos with 573 subscribers and has received over 110,000 views. Dr. Boyes is also active on Twitter and regularly tweets on GIS, teaching, technology, and higher education; he currently has 1,400 followers.

Another contribution by Dr. Boyes is the effort that he has devoted to preparing his students for life beyond the classroom. He has provided his fourth-year students with experiential learning opportunities through

projects with many organizations such as World Wildlife Fund Canada, Toronto Environmental Alliance, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. He created a LinkedIn group for students and alumni of his courses, so that current students can see where former students are now working, to facilitate communication between them, and to distribute relevant GIS job listings. This group currently has over 400 members.

In sum, Dr. Don Boyes' commitment to innovation is exemplary and his teaching record is outstanding. He is truly a worthy recipient of the Canadian Association of Geographer's Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography.