Geography 476 GIS Practicum

GIS Certificates; Professional Certifications

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**RE:** GIS Technical Certifications

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## Problem

Although the necessity of accurate map production has been recognized for centuries, in our modern world -typically full of regulations- the industry professionals responsible for providing maps are not uniformly trained, tested, or certified. In fact, the different sources of Geographic education and Cartographic training offered prior to entering the workforce are not sequential, comparable or synchronous. The wide range of approaches and software limitations, do not converge into an unambiguous testing procedure for the profession. Some professions which require passing a professional level test to be able to work are Doctors, Lawyers, and Educators etc. However as a GIS worker, the expertise is still very loosely interpreted, as there has no best way to guarantee proficiency one way or not. All it takes, “is knowing how to press the buttons to get the software to do what you need it to.” But, those are the people these testing certifications need to be weeding out of the industry. Sadly though, a deep understanding of data types and how or why the computer represents what you click it to is not, really, required. Commercial software and equipment make it available for anyone to pick up “GIS Technician” as a job if they wanted to.

###### WHAT TO DO:

Currently, the levels of education involved with GIS start off with GIS certificate programs, GIS minors of study, GIS majors of study, and on to GIS master’s degree and PhD degree programs. And, outside of the educational sphere the two most commonly recognized technical certifications in the workplace are a GISP (GISprofessional) or an ESRI Technical Certification.

## GIS\_Professional vs. ESRI Certification

###### GISP:

* A GISP is awarded by GIS Certification Institute (GISCI), a not-for-profit organization, who offers Certifications to geospatial professionals around the world
* **Cost $$$$**   
   **Initially**: $250.00, and must renew every 5 years   
   **+ renewal** $115.00
* Applications can be done online or manually printed and mailed in;
* Requires you to compile and present requested information in which you are graded by a point system – the more you have done within the given categories the more you will score.

Categories to be judged:   
 Education  
 Professional Experience   
 Amount worked (full-time VS part-time, number of years, how many places)   
 Amount of contribution you have made to the profession

###### ESRI:

* An ESRI Certification can be obtained by taking a standardized computer test, hosted by ESRI;
* Scored by a test of questions - with a couple of different tests offered for particular category areas as well as different levels of difficulty certifications; such as Associate VS. Professional; Desktop, Developer and Enterprise
* **Cost $$$$   
  Initially: $225.00, AND the certification tests are by the VERSION of software..**
* BIASED towards ESRI software

## Decision Making

I think it really depends on where you are in your GIS education, skill level, or career. Also heavily depends on who you work for and what your goals are. If you work for a company that uses ESRI – ESRI certifications should work fine and could possibly be paid for the testing by your employer. However, if you really know what you are doing and are getting the experience as well – waiting to get a GISP could be easier.