

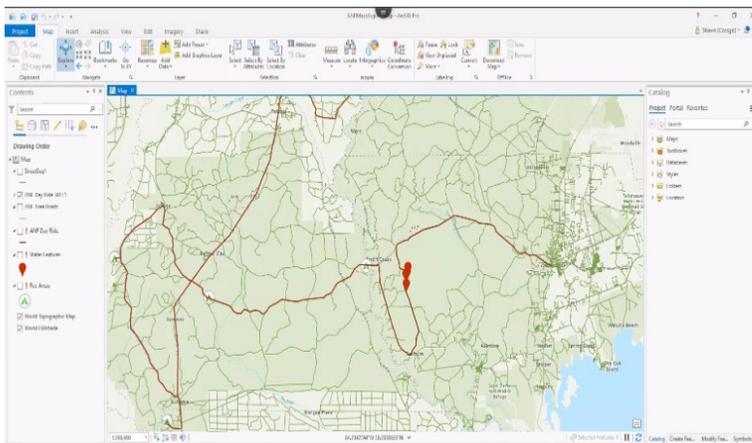
## Social Sciences Virtual Environment

Information Technology Services (ITS) partnered with the College of Social Sciences & Public Policy (COSSPP) to deliver a virtual environment for students to use for geographic information systems (GIS) related courses. Limitations to on-site operations brought on by COVID-19 required COSSPP to deliver virtual workstations for students and staff to continue to work.

### Time For Change

GIS courses historically were designed with physical lab locations in mind. When COVID-19 hit and face-to-face instruction was not possible, the college needed to pivot to a remote solution for GIS courses. To do so, COSSPP contacted ITS for expertise and infrastructure. Technology that was once deemed to be too expensive has now become a viable option for courses to continue remotely without access to brick-and-mortar computer labs.

**“Initially we saw the appliance solution at the Esri User Conference several years ago, but it was deemed too expensive. COVID changed our minds on that issue. Plus the hardware has become more affordable.” – Shawn Lewers**



Screenshot: Virtual map used in classroom

**“Many of our GIS classes are designed to meet in physical computer labs with a machine for each student. When that was not an option, we needed to pivot to a remote solution.” – Shawn Lewers, COSSPP IT Manager**

### Virtual Cartography

Creating the virtual environment for students to do spatial analysis work included improving hardware resources in the existing virtual computer lab (myFSUVLab). While it was possible to run the GIS in myFSUVLab, this software can be graphic (GPU) and processor intensive, and previously existing resources fell short of meeting COSSPP’s needs. COSSPP felt they could use this opportunity to expand on the capabilities of the myFSUVLab.

COSSPP had GIS expertise, but the virtual lab knowledge and infrastructure were out of reach. ITS gave COSSPP the extra resources needed to create the virtual GIS lab.

Students, faculty and staff are now able to access GIS packages and the resources they need using myFSUVLab, regardless of their operating system or hardware, simply with an internet connection and web browser.