Geography Newsletter, 2007-2008

University of Northern Iowa. Department of Geography.

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Greetings to all alumni, students, and friends of Geography. We've just wrapped up another year of Geography at UNI. The department is looking good and looking to the future. We've seen growth in a number of ways this year. Most notably we've seen a significant increase in majors through the Fall and Spring semesters. Students have been coming into all three of our major areas of emphasis; environmental, liberal arts, and GISc. This Spring, we have the highest number of majors we've had in four years. In addition to becoming more numerous, our students are also of outstanding quality. 21 of our majors were on the honor roll this year, and a number of both undergraduate and graduate students won various awards for outstanding research and academic achievements (see the rest of the newsletter for details).

We've also grown in our number of full-time faculty. In September of 2007 the college gave Geography a new faculty position for GISc. During the Fall and Spring semesters we conducted a search and successfully hired Andrey Petrov, currently at University of Toronto. Andrey will be joining us in the fall and we'll include a full biographical introduction of him in our next newsletter.

In addition to continuing to offer a wide range of classes—and filling nearly all of them to capacity—we continue to make contributions to Iowa and the U.S. through cutting edge research. By my estimation during the past year the department has carried, in new or continuing projects, over $1.5 million in grants and contracts. There is more information about research publications and grants later in the newsletter, but our activities make us one of the most productive departments at UNI.

Another newsworthy occurrence is that we are now an official ESRI GIS Learning Center. ESRI, the world leader in GIS software, selects sites around the country to hold GIS training and workshops. They were impressed enough with our lab, our reputation in GIS, and our expertise that we are the newest Learning Center and will be used as a primary Midwest site. You can find a link to our information at http://training.esri.com/gateway/index.cfm?fa=trainingLocations.gateway.

As always we would love to hear from alumni. Please drop us a note about job changes, moves, marriages and children, a general update, or just to share a fond memory. We are always looking for ways to help current students, so if you have job openings or other announcements you would like current UNI geographers to see, just send them to me at patrick.pease@uni.edu. Also, if you are interested in being involved with the department, there are a lot a ways to give back including gifts, visiting classes, interning or mentoring students, advising the department, giving guest lectures, and many more. Feel free to write or call if you'd like to know more. Until then, we wish you well.

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Kay Weller Receives Fulbright-Hays!

Kay Weller received a Fulbright-Hays Group Project Award (over $73,000) to develop curriculum about natural hazards in Bangladesh. A team of twelve teachers and three university faculty spent four weeks in country where they met with faculty and students at universities and schools. The main purpose was to study and develop curriculum about natural hazards in Bangladesh. While they were there the worst flooding in a decade struck Bangladesh so they had opportunities to see how people coped with disaster. They found people in Bangladesh to be exceedingly friendly making it a great place to visit. The group generated curriculum materials that are available at www.uni.edu/gia.

GAI Workshop in Costa Rica

The Geographic Alliance of Iowa sponsored a workshop in Costa Rica. Twenty teachers and their guests attended. Participants experienced the rain forest during heavy downpours, visited volcanoes, and saw macaws, crocodiles, poison frogs and iguanas. They also had the chance to see both the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea. The group also had the rare opportunity to see a sloth hanging on a barbed wire fence. The teachers will now have the ability to turn those experiences into wonder learning opportunities for hundreds of students across Iowa.

Dr. Weller is already organizing new workshops. If you are interested in travel and geographic education, contact Kay for details of upcoming events.
Annual Geography Banquet

Our 2007 Awards Banquet was a great success again; thanks to all who attended. We moved locations this past year to the Bourbon Street restaurant. As always we had a number of awards and honors to give out. The NCGE Award for Excellence of Scholarship went to Timothy Menge and Derek Rieckmann was awarded the Annual Academic Certificate of Achievement. John Jones and Bryan Westphal were the recipients of the first ever Department Award for Distinguished Service for work they did as student ambassadors. Kirk Stufflebeam (B.A. 1989; M.A. 1992), long-time adjunct instructor in the department was awarded the UNI Geography Outstanding Alumnus Award. As a testament to the quality of our students, our Geography Honor list was lengthy, including Jesse Brass, Kyle Burns, Chad Case, James Crawford, Kevin Gorell, Blake Harris, John Jones, Jacob Leibbrand, Adam Lee, Joseph Lobdell, Timothy Menge, Derek Rieckmann, Austin Roelfs, Lynn Rutz, Morgan Schuler, Taylor Sinclair, Jacob Stewart, Jason Terry, Justin Thomas, and Philip Trusheim. Four students, Jesse Brass, Elizabeth Swanberg, John Jones, and Justin Thomas, earned program Certificates in Cartography and GIS.

Giving Back

Giving to the department is a great way to help current students as they work toward their degrees. The Department of Geography has a discretionary account within the UNI Foundation which we use to fund special field trips, student travel, guest speakers, our annual spring student banquet, and many other student-related activities. The UNI Foundation can also set up special accounts dedicated to particular goals such as scholarships. If you are interested in giving to the Department of Geography, please contact either Dr. Patrick Pease (319-273-2772, patrick.pease@uni.edu) or the UNI Foundation (800-782-9522, UNI.Foundation@uni.edu, http://www.uni-foundation.org/).
Sugu Recognized for Community Service

Ramanathan "Sugu" Sugumaran won a 2008 Veridian Credit Union Community Engagement Award. The awards honor one faculty member from each of the University of Northern Iowa's five undergraduate colleges who combines their instructional and scholarly efforts with projects that benefit the greater community. In addition to a plaque, Sugu received a check for $1,000 to donate to a nonprofit organization of his choice.

The award was given to Sugu for his work with the GeoInformatics Training, Research, Education and Extension (GeoTREE) Center. This center is an invaluable technological resource to public agencies, including federal, state, local and tribal governments, as well as to UNI students. The GeoTREE Center offers free workshops to train public agency professionals in geospatial related technologies such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS), satellite remote sensing and Global Positioning Systems (GPS).

Geography Teams with UNI Museum

The Department of Geography helped the UNI Museum during their hosting of a special program this spring titled Earth from Space. The program is a traveling exhibit developed by Smithsonian Institution displaying how satellites and satellite remote sensing is changing our view and understanding of the Earth. Department faculty gave two public presentations. Ramanathan “Sugu” Sugumaran presented information on his remote sensing research and outreach in “GeoTREE Center at University of Northern Iowa”. Alex Oberle talked about emerging social issues related to remote sensing and the expansion of access to imagery in his presentation title “Ethics, Privacy, and Security in Satellite Imagery and Related Technologies”. We also helped set up an interactive link to real-time satellite information. The exhibit is up until June 28, so please stop by the museum at 3219 Hudson Road and spend some time with this fantastic

Kay Weller Recognized

In 2008, Kay Weller received an "Apple Polisher" award from Student Admissions Ambassadors. The Apple Polishers is an annual award by ambassadors to recognize a UNI faculty or staff member who has had a positive influence on their development while at UNI. Recognition is always nice, but it is especially meaningful when it comes from students. Kudos to Kay!

Dr. Alex Oberle

Dr. Ramanathan "Sugu" Sugumaran holding his Veridian Award
First Annual Lu Lecture

In the Fall semester, 2007, the department hosted the first lecture on Bible Geography, funded by former department head, Jonathon Lu. The Department of Geography along with the Department of Philosophy and Religion, sponsored a lecture by Dr. William Dando titled "Viewing the Holy Land from Above: Old Resources and new Technologies for Understanding the Geography of the Bible". The event was attended by over 200 people, mostly from the community. Dr. Dando kindly supplied 40 copies of his book (co-edited with Dr. Lu) “Geography of the Holy Lands: Perspectives” and many copies of Holy Lands and Biblical atlases as door prizes for attendees. Following the lecture He kindly stayed at a reception and signed copies of the books he had just given away.

Dr. Dando's lecture was the inaugural event for the "Dr. Jonathan J. Lu and Sayoko Lu Biblical Geography Endowment Fund" to enhance the teaching and research of Bible geography. Dr. Lu joined the Geography faculty at UNI in 1974 and served as the head of the department from 1987 to 1991. He left UNI in 1991 to become the president of the Holy Light Theological Seminary in Taiwan. Dr. Lu was also a founding member of the Bible Geography specialty group of the Association of American Geographers.

Dr. Dando is currently a professor emeritus at Indiana State University. He was Head of the Department of Geography, State from 1989 until he received a B.S. degree in climatology, agriculture, and a Ph.D. from University of Minnesota and holds research specialties in climatology, agriculture, land use, famine, and Bible geography. He has published 22 books and over 70 scholarly articles and is widely recognized as a preeminent scholar in the field of Bible geography.

Dr. Dennis Dahms and Henry Owusu were both awarded Professional Development Assignments in the Fall semester. The PDA is a research leave awarded on a competitive basis to allow scholars to pursue research projects.

Dr. Dahms project titled “Investigations of early-to-mid Pleistocene glacial deposits in the Rocky Mountains and Midwest” found him doing field work in sites spanning from Iowa to Wyoming. Dr. Owusu’s project titled, “Africa, timber, turf and trade: geographic perspectives on Ghana’s timber industry” is focused on continuing research for which Dr. Owusu is writing a book.
UNI Geography major Nick Kirk from Dubuque, Iowa was named the Missouri Valley Conference pitcher of the week on March 31. He threw a no-hitter in the MVC opener against Evansville and was named "Louisville Slugger’s" National Player of the Week by Collegiate Baseball. This was the first no-hitter for the Panthers since 1995, and the 1st nine-inning no-hitter since UNI moved to Division I. Nick was the first MVC pitcher to throw a no-hitter since 2005; the first to throw a nine-inning no-hitter since 1990. Kirk struck out 15, a career high, on the way to the win.

baby news!

The Geography department got a little bigger. Srivishnu Sugumaran was born to Vanitha and Ramanathan on April 20th, 2008. He weighed in at 6.3 pounds and everyone is doing well. The department suspects, that the doctors are glad they no longer have to hear lectures on absorption and reflectance properties of the sonic waves during Vanitha’s "remote sensing” ultrasounds.

Adam Lee, a graduating senior in Fall 2008, won two awards recently for a research project he worked on with Sugu. His research poster titled “MUSLE-based Soil Erosion Modeling Using ArcGIS” won 1st place in both the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences Student Research Conference and the Sigma Xi Research Conference. The CSBS Student Research Conference is a college-wide student research symposium and competition held each year with dozens of participants vying for top honors. Sigma Xi is an honorary society for scientists and engineers and hosts its own student research conference at UNI. Congratulations Adam!

Good Job Nick!

In 2007 we had two Master’s students win awards from the UNI Graduate College. Each year the Graduate College awards 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place awards for outstanding theses and outstanding research papers. Nathan Green received the 2nd place award for Outstanding Master’s Thesis for his thesis titled “Monitoring Spatial and Temporal Water Quality Changes in Iowa Lakes Using Airborne Hyperspectral Imagery”. Our second 2007 winner was Jeff Rossate who received the 2nd place Outstanding Master’s Research Paper Award for “Ethanol Facility Locations in the United States: Historical Trends and Future Directions”.

Matthew Voss received the first place nod for “Outstanding Master’s Thesis Award”. Matt’s thesis, title "Tree species identification in an urban environment using a data fusion approach" took the top honor in Spring 2008.

During the past four years Geography graduate students have won eight 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place awards from the Graduate College for outstanding research projects; far more than any other department at UNI. Congratulations to Matt, Nathan, and Jeff for their great accomplishments.

Graduate Thesis Award

Undergraduate Awards and Recognitions
During the summer of 2007 Dr. Dave May again worked on the Clary Ranch Paleoindian sites with Matt Hill and Dave Rapson from Iowa State University. The 2007 season was their final for work on two of four Paleoindian sites in the basin. The multi-disciplinary research has been funded by the National Science foundation and the National Geographic Society. In October of 2007 they ran a field trip to the basin to show their research to other geoarchaeologists. The field trip was a long, one-day trip run out of Denver for the Geological Society of America. Everyone in attendance enjoyed the barbeque lunch cooked by a local resident under the rustling cottonwoods along the draw. Dave presented papers on their collaborative geoarchaeological research from spring at the regional Geological Society of America meeting, the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America, and at the annual Plains Anthropological Conference.

In addition to great educational experiences for our students, Geography has been very active in research. Over that past year the Department of Geography faculty has collectively carried, in new and continued funding, over $1.5 million in external grants. This money is used to purchase equipment, run the projects, and pay salaries and tuition for graduate and undergraduate students. Related to all of this funding, faculty and student members of the department published 14 peer-reviews journal articles and book chapters and gave 32 professional research presentations at conferences and universities across the country and around the world.
After 30 years of service to the University of Northern Iowa, Fred Fryman is retiring. We will all miss him. I talked to him recently about his years at UNI, and learned about his first few years in the Department of Geography. His story begins in Spring of 1978 after he had completed his comprehensive exams and was writing his dissertation. At the time, Fred had teaching experience at the University of North Carolina, as well as in the U.S. Air Force. His expertise was in population geography and political geography.

The Geography Department at UNI had lost two, full-time faculty in the 1977-1978 academic year. John Gunter, who taught physical geography and aerial photography, had resigned. Lowell Goodman, who taught cartography and economic geography, also had resigned. One of these positions was filled for Fall, 1978 by a new, tenure-track faculty member, Jon Eftlan, a physical geographer. The other position was advertised in late-Spring/early-Summer as a temporary, full-time, one-year position. Fred applied for this position, and was interviewed in July 1978.

Fred’s interview was brief. He arrived about 10:00pm and was met by Basheer Nijim, the Head of the Department at the time. Basheer toured him through downtown Cedar Falls, and briefed him on the Department until after 11:00pm. The next morning Fred made a presentation to a World Geography class. He had lunch with Roy Chung at the Broom Factory restaurant, but because of an especially busy lunch hour, they had to eat in the bar. Fred was asked repeatedly by Roy at that lunch whether or not he would take the job if it were offered to him. Fred sensed some urgency; Fall semester would start in about five weeks. After visiting with Dean Moran, Fred was taken to the airport and departed Waterloo at 4:00pm.

Soon after Fred returned to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, he was offered the position. He took a few days to decide. Sandra Heller, the Departmental secretary at the time, called him up and asked him directly, “Are you coming to UNI in the Fall or not?” She said that Basheer Nijim was at the airport and would be out of the country for the remainder of the summer and needed to know now. Sandra told Fred to take the job, and Fred then agreed to accept it.

Fred arrived in Cedar Falls in August, 1978. For his first semester he taught World Geography at 8:00am, 10:00am, and 11:00am on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. During his second semester he taught World Geography and Communicating through Maps (which was a course in the General Education Program at the time). The next year his teaching responsibilities included Cartography and Aerial Photography. Fred eventually developed a GIS course, and was the first faculty member to regularly teach the course after Roy Chung had taught it twice on a single Apple computer.

In the late 1980s there were no computer labs in Sabin Hall. Geography had set up several different models of PCs in Room 27 (the corner room that used to house the large copy camera when Lowell Goodman was at UNI and that now houses the Department of Social Work office). He said that there were many challenges in using different models and ages of computers. The lab was eventually moved across the hall to the interior room, Sabin 24. Back then, the GIS course enrolled 6-8 students.

Fred was trained in population geography and political geography. However, the only time in 30 years that he was able to offer political geography was when Basheer Nijim, the first Department Head, was on leave. He has only been able to offer population geography a few times, because there were as many as four population geographers in the Department in the late 1980s.

As Fred leaves the Department and UNI after 30 years of service, we will all miss him. His sense of humor, his laugh, his cheerful nature, all keep us laughing and in a good mood. Fred will not be leaving the classroom, however. He has been offered an adjunct position at Central Michigan University to teach two courses in the Fall 2008 semester.

Good Luck Fred!
The Geography Department invites you to write in about your recent accomplishments. We would love to hear about what you are up to. Please send your alumni news items to:

Dr. Patrick Pease  
Department of Geography  
University of Northern Iowa  
Cedar Falls, IA 50613-0406  
[Email: Patrick.Pease@uni.edu]  
[Fax to: 319-273-7103]

Joseph P Capesius (B.A. 1992) continued his education after leaving UNI with his degree in Geography and History to receive his Master’s degree in the Arts of Geography at the University of Denver in 1996. Joseph gained employment with the US Geological Survey in Denver with a brief 2.5 year stint in Tempe, AZ. Currently is a hydrologist studying primary surface-water hydrology with topics such as groundwater hydrology and water-quality of streams and groundwater are not beyond his experiences or expectations. Joseph visited the Cedar Valley this past summer as he rode through his memories while on the route of RAGBRAI. He is still a proud member of the US Army Reserve, a Master Sergeant with 20 years of service and has a family with his wife Melanie (Kelly) Capesius, originally from Cherokee Iowa, and his two children ages 6 and 2.

Craig McCoy (B.A. 1972, M.A. 1975) went on to teach Geography in West Des Moines area schools.

Also at that time, he worked for Drake University in their Department of Geography. He then decided to shift his career from education to business by starting his own company, McCoy & Associates, Inc. from 1977 to 2000. An offer was made on his business and in 2000 decided that he would make yet another career decision. Craig wanted to utilize his geographical perspective of human activity by teaching at the collegiate level. To this day he continues his teaching responsibilities and is also consulting with the U.S. Center on Citizen Diplomacy in creating their Leadership Institute.

Kyle Kepler (M.A. 1998) spent many years in the Cedar Falls area, 12 to be exact, through being a student-athlete, assistant coach and head coach to the track team. He received an opportunity to take over his own program in Salt Lake City, Utah and has been there for 2 years. He commented on what a tremendous place UNI is and that it is filled with some of the best people in the world; he has so many fond memories.

Josh Spaete (B.A. 2001) is currently living in Muskegon “The Lumber City,” Michigan where he is in charge of the GIS database for the Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab. While not at work he is taking an additional class so that he can receive his sailing certification; that is when he is not busy at work at work. The Research Lab is a grant-based research institute where he is working on a specific project pertaining to Lake Huron Watershed. He also plans to focus more on the computer weather system once the lake thaws.

Update your alumni information online at www.uni.edu/geography/alumni_contact.html
GeoTREE was established in January 2006 as a research and service Center funded by NASA at the University of Northern Iowa. It is an interdisciplinary center, housed within the Department of Geography, and unique in transferring geospatial technologies to federal, state, local and tribal (FSLT) agencies. The purpose of the GeoTREE Center is multifaceted with three major components: education and training, research and development, and extension and outreach in geospatial data and technologies. Several of the latest geospatial technologies and techniques used to solve real world FSLT problems include LiDAR (Light Detection And Ranging), Satellite and Air-borne data: Multi and Hyperspectral Data, Expert System and Spatial Decision Support Systems (SDSS), Statistical Modeling, Internet Mapping and Modeling. GeoTREE blazed the trail, and was first to hire a Post Doc at UNI which has opened the door for others.

In the last few years, the center has conducted several workshops on topics including LiDAR, Geodatabase, Remote Sensing, Global Positioning System (GPS), GIS, color infrared interpretation, Internet mapping and customizing ArcGIS-Python scripting. More than 100 participants have attended these training sessions. GeoTREE is currently collaborating with several local, state and federal agencies on various research topics. Some of the on-going research areas include the following applications:

- Site suitability analysis: confined animal feeding operations (DNR) (Black Hawk County)
- Water quality monitoring using remote sensing data (Iowa DNR)
- Air quality monitoring using satellite data (NOAA)
- Tree species identification using RS data, LiDAR and GIS (NRCS, U.S. Fish & Wildlife)
- Transportation: the intelligent winter maintenance SDSS (Iowa DOT)
- Public Health: West Nile virus habitat analysis, risk model (Iowa Public Health & Black Hawk County)
- Wetland: mapping and monitoring using RS and GIS data (NRCS, Iowa DNR) Agrobioterrorism
- (NASA & Homeland Security)

Several on-line tutorial, tools and quiz modules have also been developed to assist FSLT agencies.

In December, Nathan Green, GeoTREE Research Associate, was awarded 2nd place in UNI’s Outstanding Master Thesis Award. His thesis was entitled “Monitoring Spatial and Temporal Water Quality Changes in Iowa Lakes Using Airborne Hyperspectral Imagery.” Matt Voss, GeoTREE graduate student was awarded prestigious NASA summer internship at the Ames Center in California.

For further information, contact us at sugu@uni.edu, or visit us on-line at www.geotree@uni.edu GeoTREE office phone: 319/273-3713 or 319/273-3816 and Fax 319/273-7103.