

Spring 2000

## Geography Newsletter, Spring 2000

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

# DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2000

Issue No. 6

Editor: Dr. Philip W. Suckling, Professor and Head

[Visit our departmental web page at: <http://www.uni.edu/geography/>]

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### As the New Century Dawns

Whether you consider the year 2000 to be the first year of the 21<sup>st</sup> century or the last of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one can argue that we are at the dawn of a new era. With information technology emerging as a dominant force in the economy, geography is well positioned to be an important relevant discipline. Interest in geography as an academic discipline continues to grow as witnessed by the record number of faculty jobs being advertised nationally during the last two years, ample job opportunities for our students, and strong enrollments.

In the 1997 issue of the Newsletter, I outlined enrollment trends over the last decade for our department. The number of geography majors during the last couple of years has been in the 50-60 range. Most are still juniors and seniors as relatively few students "find" us until they have been on campus for awhile - a situation common throughout the country. However, with increasing exposure to geography in the high school curriculum, and the emergence of geographic information systems (GIS) and other related technologies, there are indications of change on the horizon. This year, a total of 3 incoming freshman at UNI listed geography as their prospective major - a small number but much larger than the typical 0-1!

At the graduate level, we have had about 15 registered students during each of the last 4 or 5 semesters. In our College, only Psychology and Public Policy have had consistently larger enrollments than our graduate program in the last couple of years. Part of our growth has been due to our success in obtaining external funding for graduate assistantships.

Another indication of growing interest in geography is found by examining student enrollments in our advanced courses (i.e. the non-introductory or non-general education courses). Unlike many other social science disciplines, approximately half of our upper division enrollments are from non-majors, indicating an understanding of the relevance and usefulness of geography recognized by students and their mentors from many other disciplines. Traditionally, we have had many students from history and earth science take our courses, but we have seen a distinct increase in enrollments from students majoring in economics and other business programs, anthropology, political science, and elsewhere. The graph on the next page indicates this strong upward trend from a low of 163 non-introductory enrollments for 1988/89 to this year's high of 533.

Clearly, geography is alive and well at the dawn of the new century!

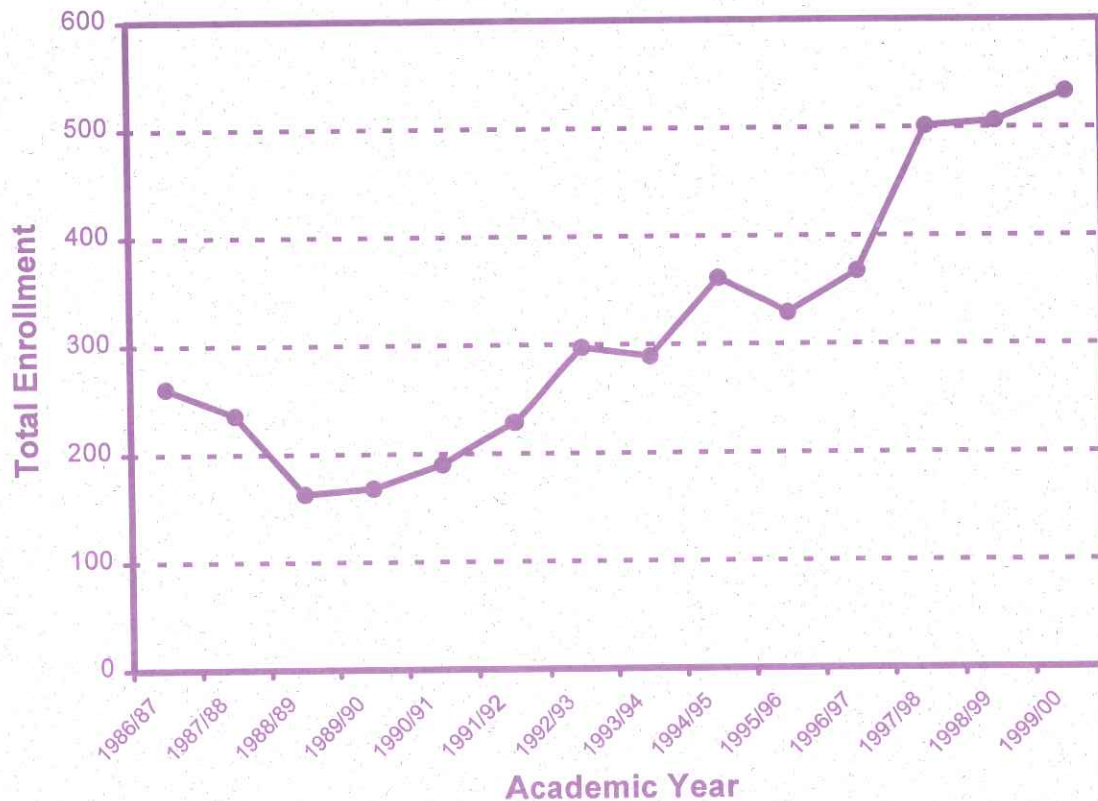


### Dr. Robert Clark Retired Spring 1999

Shortly after the end of exams last May, Bob Clark announced his retirement. Bob joined the geography faculty in 1965 and obtained his Ph.D. degree from the University of Nebraska in 1974. In recent years, Bob's teaching responsibilities have included the introductory human geography course, historical geography, cultural geography and his very popular regional geography of Iowa course. During the summer, Bob moved westward to Sedro-Woolley, Washington.



## Geography Enrollments for Non-Introductory Courses



### UNI Partnership in the Midwestern Transportation Consortium

The Midwest Transportation Consortium (MTC) is a federally supported program for the region that includes Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. Funded for five years beginning in 1999, Iowa State University (ISU) and the University of Missouri-Columbia serve as MTC's lead institutions with administration housed at ISU's Center for Transportation Research and Education (CTRE).

Four junior partner institutions are programmatically linked to MTC, largely to support graduate students through the

Transportation Scholars Program. These institutions are the University of Missouri at Kansas City, the University of Missouri at St. Louis, Lincoln University and the University of Northern Iowa.

UNI's component is being administered by the Department of Geography under the direction of Dr. Tim Strauss. Graduate student assistantships support students in geography, public policy and industrial technology. To learn more about UNI's involvement in this interdisciplinary program, visit the Northern Iowa Division of MTC web site on Geography's home page at:

<http://www.uni.edu/transport>



## Careers in Geography

What careers are available to an aspiring geographer? This is often an important question for students and their parents when considering opportunities in higher education. Preparing for a career in teaching has always been an attractive field for geographers. However, in reality, modern geography has a lot to offer with respect to careers beyond teaching – much more than that typical for most of the social sciences.

Geography is indeed a very attractive university major for students. Its theories and methods provide analytical techniques applicable to a wide range of questions asked over a broad spectrum of occupations. For students planning to end their formal education with the bachelor's degree, a geography major provides marketable skills and a perspective on the environment and society that enable graduates to move beyond entry-level positions. For similar reasons, geography provides a sound foundation for students who plan to enter graduate work in a variety of fields, from geography to business, land use planning, public policy, environmental studies, and other fields.

The potential for practicing geography in private enterprise and government has grown considerably in recent years, although few such positions are designated with the title of "geographer". The surge in job opportunities has been especially robust in the area of geographic information technologies (i.e. GIS, computer cartography, remote sensing, global positioning systems and related technologies).

The web site [<http://www.aag.org/>] of the Association of American Geographers

has a section titled "Careers in Geography" with extensive lists of job titles held by geography graduates and other information regarding seeking careers in geography. Examples of jobs currently held by recent graduates of UNI's geography program include: city planners for several Iowa communities, GIS technicians for private companies and city/county governments, air photo interpretation specialist, field operations manager for the Census Bureau, remote sensing specialist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, location analyst for an economic development firm, and school teachers in Iowa and elsewhere in the U.S. and abroad.

In order to provide prospective geography majors with up-to-date information, we ask that alumni let us know about their career experiences. What jobs have you held and/or currently hold? Many geographers go onto careers that are not directly related to geography. We need to know about these experiences as well. Please write to us about your experiences or send e-mail to: [suckling@uni.edu](mailto:suckling@uni.edu).

## Curricular Developments

For the 2000-02 University catalog, the Geography program has made only modest changes. Highlights include the following new courses: Transportation Geography, Quaternary Environments and Landforms, and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) Field Survey Methods. We have also officially cross-listed our advanced quantitative course with the Department of Mathematics under the new title of Spatial Data Analysis. Dr. Mark Ecker, Assistant Professor of Mathematics will be the instructor.

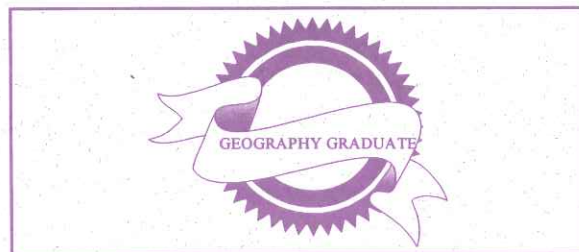


### **New Cultural Geography Faculty Member Appointed for 2000-01**

Given the retirement of Bob Clark last summer, we recently conducted a national search for a cultural geographer to join our faculty effective August 2000. We are pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. J. Henry Owusu as Assistant Professor. Dr. Owusu is a native of Ghana where he obtained a B.A. degree in 1977 from the University of Science and Technology of Ghana, with majors in geography and economics. Subsequently, in 1980 he received an M.S. degree in geography and regional planning from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. After teaching in Ghana for a few years, he returned to the U.S. where he earned M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in 1990 and 1993 from the University of Iowa's geography program. Since 1994, he has been on the geography faculty at the University of Connecticut. Henry is looking forward to returning to Iowa with his wife and two young children.

### **Department of Geography to Establish Foundation Account**

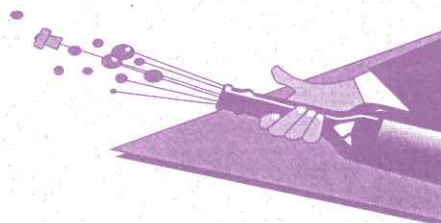
In recent years, several alumni have inquired about whether there is a specific account within the UNI Foundation designated for the use of the Department of Geography. We are in the process of establishing such a discretionary account within the Foundation in order to support special travel, field trips and other student-centered activities. If you are interested in donating to this account, please send your contribution during this initial year directly to the Department, but made out to the UNI Foundation. For additional information, contact the Department or e-mail: [suckling@uni.edu](mailto:suckling@uni.edu).



### **Recent Geography Graduates**

A record high of 27 students graduated from UNI's geography programs during the 1999 calendar year.

- Spring '99: *John Alexander*  
*Michael Carpenter*  
*Brian Fisher*  
*Chad Guge*  
*Steven Huyser*  
*Michelle Iverson*  
*Robert Judge*  
*Brian Knudtson*  
*Dean Miller*  
*Valerie Nehl*  
*Steve Schelich*  
*Larry Teig*  
*David Van Eman*  
*Tara Wedemeyer*
- Summer '99: *James Dickerson (M.A.)*  
*Geoffrey Farrell*  
*Chris Hand*  
*Derek Peck*
- Fall '99: *James Danielson*  
*Jeremie Knutson*  
*Christopher Lampe*  
*John Leavitt*  
*Shane Palas*  
*Daniel Schlichtman*  
*Aaron Zinn*





## Alumni Album

For future issues of the Newsletter, please send your alumni news items to:

Ms. Sandra Heller, Secretary  
Department of Geography  
University of Northern Iowa  
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0406.

E-mail: [sandra.heller@uni.edu](mailto:sandra.heller@uni.edu) Fax: 319-273-7103

*Mike Carpenter* (B.A. 1999) is currently a graduate student in our M.A. program, funded as one of three transportation scholars. For his assistantship duties, Mike has been working with UNI's Institute for Decision Making.

*Brad Cutler* (B.A. 1996) is a GIS Specialist with an organization called Golden Hills Resource, Conservations, and Development which is located in southwestern Iowa near Council Bluffs.

*Jim Dickerson* (M.A. 1999) is the Data Management Coordinator for Minnesota's state Department of Natural Resources.

*Brian Fisher* (B.A. 1999) is studying for his M.B.A. degree at UNI.

*Chad Guge* (B.A. 1999) is teaching geography, sociology and history at North Scott High School in Eldridge, Iowa.

*Greg Halverson* (B.A. 1997) is working in Augusta, Georgia conducting GIS work in city/regional planning.

*Brian Harger* (B.A. 1984) is working at the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL. Brian is in charge of NIU's portion of the State Data Center and Business and Industry Data Center programs. He also conducts economic development research for municipal and county governments throughout Illinois.



*Judy Jacobi* (B.A. 1981) holds a management position with Home Depot in Eagan, Minnesota.

*Kyle Kepler* (B.A. 1998) is a graduate student in UNI's physical education program.

*Lynn Kloberdanz* (B.A. 1998) works in the Black Hawk County engineer's office in Waterloo.

*Christopher Klohs* (B.A. 1998) and *Stephanie Knight* (B.A. 1998) are both working for M.J. Hardin Associates in Kansas City. Their duties primarily involve air photo interpretation, digital mapping and GIS work for the location of pipelines.

*Chris Lampe* (B.A. 1999) is conducting GIS work for the Iowa Waste Reduction Center located on the UNI campus.

*Sara Mace* (B.A. 1997) completed an M.S. degree in geography at the University of Alabama in May 1999. She is now working as a GIS analyst for Gannett Fleming Inc. which is an engineering consulting firm located in Newport News, Virginia.

*Frederick Payne* (M.A. 1998) has completed his law degree and is now working with a law firm in Indianapolis.

*Don Peterson* (B.A. 1965; M.A. 1975) is retiring this spring after teaching for many years at Marshalltown High School. Don is also currently teaching as a part-time instructor within our geography program at UNI.



*Randy Pilkington* (B.A. 1980; M.A. 1998) has recently been appointed Executive Director of the Business and Community Services Division at UNI. Randy will also continue to serve part-time as Director of UNI's Institute for Decision Making, a position he has held since 1990.

*Chris Robbins* (M.A. 1988) worked for several years with the Cannon River Watershed Partnership which is a non-profit organization based in Faribault, Minnesota. She and her husband currently live in the Twin Cities area.

*Jennifer Rover* (B.A. 1998) is a GIS Project Consultant for the South Dakota office of PMC, ProMap which is headquartered in Ames, Iowa.

*Larry Teig* (B.A. 1999) is Assistant Manager of Field Operations for the Waterloo office of the U.S. Census Bureau. Later this summer, Larry will relocate to the Bureau's Kansas City office.

*Dave Van Dee* (B.A. 1983) has recently assumed the position of chief city administrator for Dyersville, Iowa, after serving almost 16 years as a planner in the City of Waterloo Planning and Zoning Department.

*Dave Van Eman* (B.A. 1999) is doing GIS work with a consulting company called Techstaff, working out of Cedar Rapids.



## Roy Chung to Retire This Spring

In the Fall of 1997, Roy Chung entered a 3-year phased retirement program. This semester represents Roy's last semester of teaching at UNI – a career that spans more than 40 years. Roy joined the faculty in 1958 when the institution was known as Iowa State Teacher's College. He is the last UNI faculty member whose tenure dates from the decade of the 1950s! Having taught in six different decades, Roy has witnessed much change both within the Department and academia as a whole.

In order to recognize Roy's long career at UNI, we will honor him at this spring's awards banquet, in lieu of presenting an outstanding alumnus award. Alumni who wish to participate in this recognition by saying a few words at the banquet or sending a message should contact the Department as soon as possible.

# INVITATION

**Spring Awards Banquet:  
Friday, April 21, 2000**

The Twentieth Annual Geography Awards Banquet will be held during the evening of Friday, April 21, 2000 at Celebrations, 3555 University Avenue, Waterloo. In addition to our traditional student honors, Roy Chung will be honored as he retires after over 40 years on the UNI faculty. All students, faculty, staff and alumni are strongly encouraged to attend this gala event. For further information about the banquet, contact Sandra Heller in the department office at 319-273-2772 or send e-mail to: [sandra.heller@uni.edu](mailto:sandra.heller@uni.edu).



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