



# Department of Geography

University of Central Arkansas



The *Newsletter* of the Department of Geography

Vol. 2 No. 1 February 2005

## A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR.....

**Greetings, geographers!!** I hope that the last twelve months have been good to you! The past year for us has been exceptionally busy, but we seem to have survived. Some of you have written to us while others have come to campus for visits. We appreciate your contact. We also appreciate your participation in GIS Day and other departmental activities!

The Department seems to be in a constant state of flux. This past year we hired a permanent chair, introduced two new GIS courses, and began the process of writing a new General Education course to be called Geography of World Regions. New courses on Asia and Russia are also in the works. Laptop computers have been added to some faculty offices and one of our classrooms (307) has become "smart" with electronic hardware to augment the wireless capacity we now have in Irby Hall.

Last fall we also placed an ad to hire a new GIS faculty member. That search led to 40 persons applying for the position. We eventually narrowed the search to 7 candidates, 2 of whom will come to campus in late February for interviews.

Our geography program continues to remain strong and vibrant. Please keep in touch with us! Drop by or send us a note!

Dr. Brooks Green

## DEPARTMENT HAPPENINGS.....

**Stony Point Chili** – Since Dr. Reynolds joined the department in the mid-1980s, we have enjoyed his chili and other good food on the banks of the Arkansas River at Stony Point. Each fall semester, faculty, staff, and their spouses or friends, gather for the traditional Stony Point cookout. We are happy that the tradition continues.

**Christmas Gathering Renewed.** When Dr. Green became chair in 1988, he began a tradition of having the geography faculty and staff at his home for a holiday dinner. That tradition was temporarily halted in 1994 when consolidation of geography, political science, and sociology occurred. But, because geography is now on its own again, Dr. Green has renewed the holiday dinner tradition. Smoked turkey and pork were the main course this past December.

**New Lab in Irby 213.** During the last year, we have moved into a new computer lab. The old Geosystems Lab that was in Irby 308 has been remodeled into four offices and a classroom. All of the computers were retired. We wish them well!! A new, 30-seat lab has been created in Irby 213. All of our technology courses are now taught in the new lab, which has enabled us to increase the enrollment in the geospatial technology courses. The room is nicely equipped with computers, printers, plotter, and data projector. We are fortunate that Ms. Mary Sue Passé-Smith continues to direct the lab in addition to her four-course teaching load. We are able to employ five student workers, which permits us to keep the lab open at all times except when courses are in session. Future plans are to convert Irby 302 (currently a classroom) into two faculty offices and a GIS Center. That will enable us to move Mary Sue closer to the department office and have room to expand when we have the need to hire a seventh faculty member. The GIS Center will provide work experience for students who will become involved in faculty research projects and consulting

### Faculty Doings.....

**Dr. Jeff Allender** continues to be very busy on campus as the director of New Faculty Orientation. He makes sure that newly hired faculty members learn the ins and outs of working at UCA and living in the Conway area. He just completed an exciting year as Chair of the Conway Planning Commission where he had served as a member for a number of years. He also advises students in Environmental Science and is the faculty advisor to Gamma Theta Upsilon, the national geography honor society. He has been active in the East/West Center and because of that activity he is preparing a new course on the Geography of Asia. Additionally, he is developing a new general education course for freshmen, Geography of World Regions, which will be loaded with important and innovative technological applications.

**Dr. Paul Butt** spends a significant portion of his time writing a book on the geography of food consumption. He has completed several chapters with three more to be finished this year. In 2006, he will conclude the final chapter and prepare to have the book published. McGraw-Hill Publishing Company has been interested in Dr. Butt's book. Within a relatively short time, you will all be able to purchase the book and read all you want to know about the spatial aspects of food consumption. Dr. Butt traveled to Nacogdoches, Texas, in November where he read a paper at the meetings of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers.

**Dr. Brooks Green** was officially hired as Chair of the Department of Geography in April 2004. During the past year, Dr. Green again traveled across Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railroad as he led a group of Arkansas school teachers. Enroute, the group spent time in Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, and Vladivostok where they visited with

activities. We are excited about the future possibilities the the Center might bring to faculty and students.

**MIS Has New GIS Track.** During the past year or so, we have been working with the Department of Management Information Systems to create a GIS track for their students. After some negotiating and testing of courses, we have finally implemented the track. Students in MIS can now choose the GIS track, which includes taking a series of three courses in our department – Cartography, Introduction to GIS, and either GIS in Practice: Business and Social Science Applications or Geographic Information Analysis. We are also seeing many Public Administration, Environmental Science, Biology, and a scattering of other students enrolling in our GIS courses.

**The Mayflower Partnership.** A few months ago, Mayor Frank Pearce of the City of Mayflower approached UCA President, Lu Hardin, about forming a partnership between UCA and Mayflower. Since the initial contact, personnel in Academic Outreach and Extended Programs (formerly Continuing Education) have brought faculty from Geography, Political Science, the Graduate School of Leadership, Management and Administration, and the Community and Economic Development Program of Graduate Studies together to shape and implement the partnership. Drs. Allender and Green in the Department of Geography are assisting in areas of planning, cartography, and GIS. In the future, the partnership will provide internship opportunities (coordinated by Dr. Reynolds) for our students. Currently nine students, enrolled in a Special Problems course under the direction of Dr. Green, are involved in fieldwork in Mayflower where they are "GPSing" culverts, streams, and ditches. The Mayflower and UCA partnership will be an ongoing relationship – one that will provide valuable work experiences for our students.

**Graduate GIS Certificate.** Most of you know that a few years ago we began to offer a graduate-level GIS certificate. The certificate can be earned by completing 5 of 7 courses. We are now in the process of putting the entire certificate program on-line so that students can earn the certificate from the comfort of their own homes rather than having to drive to UCA. The first course, Geography 5310, Geographic Information Systems, is now prepared and ready to go on-line. We are now working through a bureaucratic maze that when completed, will permit us to begin to offer the first course. Our hopes are to have the

## More News

Russian educators, toured museums, and explored the highways and byways of Russia. A grant for \$64,000 from the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program funded the Trans-Siberian journey. Dr. Green's review of a book on migration and an article about land use and land cover in the Pra River watershed of Russia were published in the *Professional Geographer* and ESRI's *ArcNews*, respectively. Dr. Green also traveled to Nacogdoches where he read a paper at the SWAAG conference.

**Ms. Mary Sue Passé-Smith** also had a very busy year. She traveled to San Diego where she presented a paper at the ESRI Conference and attended several sessions and workshops. The paper that Mary Sue presented at the ESRI conference was later published! This past year she completed her Master's Degree at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, and has been very busy disseminating her newly acquired knowledge to her GIS students. She began teaching a new course, GIS in Practice: Business and Social Science Applications. The new Social Science lab is also directed by Mary Sue. She keeps extremely busy trying to keep order in what she would call chaos, as well as managing five student workers.

**Dr. Jerry Reynolds** continues to cause headaches for students in Research Seminar, but they love him anyway. This past semester, Dr. Reynolds taught a course in the Honors College and presented a paper at the SWAAG conference in Nacogdoches, Texas. He continues to advise the Environmental Alliance, direct the departmental internship program, and tries to keep track of the whereabouts of former geography students. Dr. Reynolds remains active in the Arkansas Meteorological Society and the State Earthquake Advisory Board.

first course on-line in a few weeks. The second course, Geography 5315, Mapping Fundamentals for GIS, will be ready to go on-line by May 2005. We will be working frantically to get the other five courses on-line during the next several months. We hope that the on-line option for completing the certificate will become popular among graduate students at UCA and working GIS professionals who need to upgrade their skills and enhance their career options.

### Students in the News.....

**Kelly B. Danaher** was selected by the faculty to be the Outstanding Geography Student for the 2003/2004 academic year. We had a pleasant reception for Kelly last spring when her parents attended as did a few former recipients of that award. Kelly is now married and living in the Conway area.

**Scott Alsbrook** was selected by ESRI to attend and work at the ESRI Conference in San Diego. He had a wonderful experience and said that it was a great opportunity.

**Matt Charton** spent the summer in North Carolina at the University of North Carolina as a student intern working with a professor on a remote sensing project where he identified invasive plant species. He reported that it was an exceptionally good experience.

**Randy Puckett** has been working for the City of Conway as a GIS Crime Analyst for the police department. Randy played a major role in establishing GIS as a significant component of the police department's crime analysis capabilities. A few weeks ago Randy began a new GIS job in Little Rock at the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality.

**James Samples, Matt Schroeder, and Brad Tharp** were the pioneers in the Graduate GIS Certificate Program. They were the first three students of that program to receive their certificates. We hosted a reception for them where the dean of our college, Dr. Maurice Lee, and the associate dean, Dr. Peter Mehl, and the geography faculty, witnessed the presentation of their certificates. We wish them success as they pursue their chosen careers.

**Rick White** spent the entire fall 2003 semester in Nepal. He came back with some very exciting tales to tell about his experiences. Rick participated in an academic program arranged by a university other than UCA.

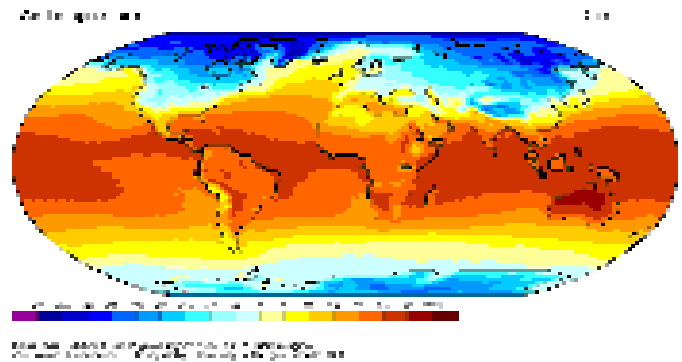
# More News

**Dr. Amadou Thiam** has been keeping the GIS Certificate Program alive by offering two courses per semester. He has been exceptionally busy preparing exercises for the certificate courses that will go on-line later this year. Within recent weeks Dr. Thiam received word that an article he submitted to *Transactions in GIS* will be published soon. He continues to be actively involved in grant writing and research that is focused on the African Sahel. This is Dr. Thiam's last semester with us. We wish him all the best as he moves on to greener pastures.

**Mr. Ian Bowles** has been teaching night courses for us for several semesters. Ian works at Pulaski Area GIS during the day, but comes to Conway one night per week to teach for us. We have appreciated his contribution to our program as he has taught Cartography and Principles of Geography. If anyone has suggestions on how to keep Ian out of automobile accidents, pass them on.

## Around the Office .....

**Mrs. Suzanne Rogers** tries very hard to keep the office in tiptop shape. But, it is a real challenge with a bunch of eccentric geographers stumbling through the office. Yet, she does a great job!! We hope she can tolerate us for a few more years. Our student worker, **Ashley McMinn**, helps keep Suzanne's blood pressure under control. We do have a great office staff that keeps the office working efficiently. Ashley is a psychology major, sociology minor from Linden, Texas. Her favorite activities, other than working for us, are watching *Judging Amy* and *The Apprentice*.



If you are interested in supporting the Department of Geography at UCA with a financial donation, please send it to:

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***Any donation is greatly appreciated. The money helps support our efforts in improving the quality of our program.***

The Department of Geography at UCA would like to hear from you. Please send us information about your professional and personal achievements. You may use the form below, and mail it to us, or e-mail to [brooksg@uca.edu](mailto:brooksg@uca.edu) or fax to 501-450-5185.

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