



# Department of Geography

University of Central Arkansas



**The Newsletter of the Department of Geography**

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**May 2009**

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

In August 2008, we welcomed two new faculty members to the department, Ms. JoAnn Sullivan and Dr. Michael Yoder.

Ms. Sullivan came on a one-year appointment to replace Dr. Rajrani Kalra. She taught graduate-level GIS courses as well as Geography of Soils, Principles of Geography, and Introduction to Physical Geography. The year has now ended and JoAnn has returned to Florida where she will complete her PhD and enjoy life on the beach. We greatly appreciated her technological skills, enthusiasm, and her love for geography. She skillfully lead a Service Learning project in Stone County (see note elsewhere) that will no doubt be a memorable event for students who participated. We wish her the best.

Dr. Michael Yoder spent 13 years at Texas A & M International University in Laredo, Texas, before coming to UCA. We have known Michael for a number of years through our association at SWAAG meetings. Michael is an urban/economic geographer with a regional research interest in Mexico. He is a published scholar and an enthusiastic classroom instructor. We look forward to working together for many more years.

To replace Ms. Sullivan, we conducted a national search and have hired Ms. Mindy Conyers. She will join the department in August 2009. Mindy is a physical geographer with valuable geospatial technology skills. She will teach physical geography, graduate and undergraduate GIS courses, soils, landforms, and oceanography. We look forward to her arrival and contribution to the department.

Dr. Brooks Green

## Outstanding Geography Student

The Outstanding Geography Student for the 2008-2009 academic years was Sarah Waggoner. Sarah excelled as a student and certainly had the qualities we look for in a student who is given this award. Graduate school beckons Sarah. She will enter the University of Illinois-Carbondale in the fall. The photo below is Sarah and her parents at the reception where she was presented the award.



## Abney-Bradley Scholarship

Daniel Holland was the recipient of the first Abney-Bradley Scholarship. Daniel will be a senior geography major this fall. The Abney-Bradley Scholarship is a \$500 award given toward Daniel's fall tuition. We are able to award this scholarship because of the very generous monetary contributions of geography faculty members and former geography students. The scholarship is named after Billy Abney and Duwyane Bradley, both of whom passed away in the 1980's. The Department of Geography is very appreciative of all those who have made this scholarship possible. Daniel, his mother, and sister are shown below.



## Geography Education Update

Those of us closely associated with geography and geography education in the United States know that Americans are essentially geographically illiterate. A national network of state alliances, in partnership with the National Geographic Society, has been trying to fix that problem since 1985. Just three years ago, legislation titled, Teaching Geography is Fundamental, was introduced to both houses of Congress. It has been introduced again this year and there is some hope that it will pass. This legislation will provide geography education \$15 million each year over the next five years. If passed, this legislation will fund geography, the only core subject (there were nine) of No Child Left Behind that had not previously been funded. As of May 2009, in Arkansas, Senator Pryor and Congressmen Berry have yet to support this important legislation. You can find fax numbers and e-mails for these two on their websites if you are interested in helping move this legislation forward.



**Suzanne Rogers** has concluded her 25<sup>th</sup> year as our Secretary and Administrative Assistant. Her husband, Jerry, recently retired, so she spends a lot of time trying to keep tabs on him. Also, her grand-daughters occupy much of her time when she is not working; they all live in Conway. Her three children are gainfully employed, one in Conway, one in Little Rock, and one in Dallas.

## Faculty Comings and Goings.....

**Jeff Allender** has become one of the coordinators of the Arkansas Geographic Alliance. In that capacity he is planning a 10-day institute for teachers that will focus on the Ozark Mountains. Jeff is also the local arrangements person for the fall meeting of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers, which will be held in North Little Rock in October 2009.

**Brooks Green** is in his 5<sup>th</sup> year as department chair. He works with Jeff in the Arkansas Geographic Alliance. Last September Brooks went to Russia to attend a conference and present a paper and he is taking a group of 12 teachers to Russia this summer. The group will travel to Moscow, Novosibirsk, Barnaul, Biysk, Gorno-Altai, Ekaterinburg, and Ryazan'.

**Mary Sue Passé-Smith** continues to turn students into GIS experts and prepare them for high-paying jobs in geospatial technology. She is active in her research on tornado activity and attended the annual ESRI meeting in San Diego, California. Her research has been well received there and has been published in online journals. We couldn't function without Mary Sue's excellent work in keeping the lab up and running.

**Brooks Pearson** is the sole advisor to all of our master's degree students and is the anchor to our online graduate courses. He has become a successful grant writer as well. Over the past three years, he has been awarded three No Child Left Behind grants which have enabled him to introduce public school teachers to geospatial technology and its use in the classroom.

**Jerry Reynolds** continues to be the Research Seminar guru. That course remains one of the key components of our undergraduate geography degree. All students who have ever participated in our internship program can also thank Jerry for assisting them with important career skills. Jerry has directed the Internship Program for 20 years or so. It will be turned over to Jeff in 2010.

**Michael Yoder** has just completed his first year at UCA. He has been the chair of the College of Liberal Arts Research Committee, and has received a grant from the University Research Council to conduct research on micropolitan areas in Arkansas. Michael is now teaching our Latin America course and Jeff has taken over Recreation and Tourism.

I am absolutely delighted to be a member of the faculty of the Department of Geography at UCA. The university is part of a dynamic and progressive metropolitan region of the American South where geographic research topics abound. I have known Doctors Green, Allender, Reynolds, and Butt (whom I replaced when he retired) for several years through our association at annual meetings of the Southwestern Division of the Association of American Geographers (SWAAG). When they encouraged me to apply for Dr. Butt's position, I jumped at the chance. At the time I was in my thirteenth year as the sole geographer at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU), located in the border city of Laredo. I certainly developed an interesting research agenda along the US-Mexico border, but I felt that something was missing by not being a member of a standalone geography department.

I first got into geography when I was working on a second bachelors degree at University of Texas. I was pursuing a degree in math education, but my mind was changed upon taking my first two geography courses there. After completing several courses at UT, I pursued a master's degree at the University of South Carolina, where I studied cultural geography with Charles Kovacik and John Winberry, and wrote my thesis on the changing land use patterns of the Carolina Piedmont agricultural region. That set the stage for my pursuit of the doctorate at Louisiana State University, where I furthered my studies in cultural geography and political ecology with Kent Mathewson, Miles Richardson, and Bill Davidson. My dissertation, the result of nearly a year of field work in Costa Rica, examined changing rural land use patterns related to that country's policies in the early 1990's toward agriculture, and local attempts to reverse environmental decline resulting from distorted markets for various crops and livestock.

After seven years of focusing on rural issues, I decided to switch to urban and suburban topics in my research upon beginning my position at TAMIU. I researched such issues as social (public) housing and industrialization in northern Mexico, suburban sprawl related to the activities of international trade in Laredo and other border cities in Texas, and suburbanization in northern Mexican cities resulting from attempts by Mexican real estate developers and other investors to imitate the suburban style found in the U.S. I also studied the rapidly changing geographies of some of Mexico's maritime ports, in light of the expansion of NAFTA. I have several publications on these topics, including journal articles and chapters in edited volumes.

Upon completion this spring of a manuscript for a journal article on the spatial forms of the northern Mexican industrial cities of Monclova and Torreón, I will begin a detailed examination of the fourteen micropolitan areas of Arkansas. Micropolitan areas, which have populations between 10,000 and 50,000 and are core centers of regions at least as large as an entire county, are an under-studied category of cities that are fairly evenly distributed throughout this state. I plan to focus on their spatial layouts, to determine the extent to which they mimic metropolitan areas but on a small scale, and the planning and fiscal strategies they employ to attract economic development. I foresee this as an ongoing topic for years to come. Furthermore, I am fascinated by the growing connections between Arkansas and Mexico, including trade and migration. And, I am giving some thought to carrying out a detailed study of the historical geography of Ft. Smith.

I have come to the conclusion early on that UCA students are great! I have absolutely no trouble igniting lively discussions in class, and students seem genuinely delighted to educate me about the state of Arkansas. I look forward to a rewarding career at UCA that hopefully will span many years.

Dr. Yoder says:





In conjunction with the UCA Department of Geography soils class, the students of Ms. JoAnn Sullivan participated in a Service Learning project conducting a detailed soil survey of a local Arkansas farm. The object of the Service Learning project was to take the knowledge that is gained in the classroom and put that knowledge to practical use in the field while also benefiting the local farming community. In addition to their normal classroom instruction, the class hosted a guest lecturer, Mr. Mersiovski, of the Natural Resource Conservation Service of Little Rock, Arkansas, who discussed the specifics of soil sampling in the field. The father of one of the students operates a farm in Stone County, Arkansas. He was contacted to obtain permission to conduct a soil survey on his land.

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 am, the students assembled at the Ronald Clark farm and over the course of the next several hours collected 100 soil samples from pre-surveyed sites in one of Mr. Clark's fields. The collected soil samples were then sent to the Faulkner County extension service for detailed nutrient analysis. Upon receipt of the sample results, the students conducted a detailed GIS analysis of the spatial distribution of soil nutrients on the Clark farm. As a culmination of the Service Learning project the students presented Mr. Clark with a large poster detailing their findings.

As part of the overall process, Ms. Sullivan has received positive comments from the local community and from different branches of the county extension services. Other farmers have heard that UCA had the capability of conducting soil surveys. Ms. Sullivan has also received inquiries as to the possibilities of this being an annual UCA project.

### Geography Majors Graduate.....

The following students graduated from our program during the last academic year:

Regina Karigan-Winter, *cum laude*  
Sarah Waggoner, BA  
James Holley, BS  
Clayton Parker, BS  
Tobin Williamson, *cum laude*  
Drew Aylesworth, BS, SGA President  
Gordon Miller, BS

Allison Jarvis, BA  
Jonathon Hawkins, BS  
Will Leach, BS  
Sean Oakley, *magna cum laude*  
Shawn Hall, BA  
Alex Miller, BS  
Jeff Yates, BS

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 501-852-2926.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ News Items: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year degree was granted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Outstanding Student and Abney-Bradley Scholarship Reception

From left:

Daniel Holland, Daniel's sister, Daniel's mother, Sarah Waggoner, Sarah's father, and Sarah's mother.



Outstanding Student and Abney-Bradley Scholarship Reception

From right:

Mary Sue Passe-Smith, Jeff Allender, JoAnn Sullivan, Paul Butt, and Michael Yoder