



Department of Geography

University of Central Arkansas



The Newsletter of the Department of Geography

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May 2010

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR.....

The past academic year was an exceptionally good one for the Department of Geography. First, we were able to hire Ms. Mindy Conyers. Mindy is in the process of completing her PhD from Texas State University at San Marcos. She is skilled in physical geography and geospatial technology. Her assigned teaching includes landforms, soils, oceanography, and environmental GIS applications. She also teaches a graduate-level GIS course in the Master of GIS degree program. We are happy to have Mindy in the department. Read more about her in her autobiographical sketch found on page 3.

The Department of Geography is now home to three graduate programs. We continue to offer a successful Graduate Certificate in GIS and student enrollment in the Master of GIS degree program continues to rise. In addition to these two graduate programs, we are now the host department for the Master of Science in Community and Economic Development degree program, which came to us during the middle of the fall 2009 semester. The MSCED degree is an online degree directed by Dr. Michael Yoder. Learn more about this program on page 4.

With Dr. Jeff Allender's leadership, during the fall 2009 semester, the department hosted the annual conference of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers. The entire department participated in this successful conference.

Finally, we will add an eighth geographer to the department in the fall of 2011. We are busy, active, and growing.

Dr. Brooks Green

Outstanding Geography Student

The Outstanding Geography Student for the 2009-2010 academic year was Stephen DiGiacomo. Stephen excelled as a student and certainly had the qualities we look for in a student who is given this award. Stephen interned at Southwest Energy and is now employed there full-time. His boss is a former Outstanding Student – Mike Burgess. The photo below is Stephen, his wife, and two children.



Abney-Bradley Scholarship

Madeleine Rickert was the recipient of the Abney-Bradley Scholarship. Madeleine will be a senior geography major this fall and plans on graduating in December. The Abney-Bradley Scholarship is a \$500 award given toward Madeleine's fall tuition. Madeleine, her parents, and friend are shown below.



Geography Education Update

During the Bush administration, an educational reform program known as No Child Left Behind was initiated. That program included 9 core subjects, one of which was geography. For some reason, eight of the subjects received funding, but geography did not. For the past few years, geographers from around the country have been lobbying Congress in an attempt to get funding for geography education. That effort continues. You may be interested in knowing that Senator Lincoln and Congressmen Snyder, Ross, Berry, and Boozman supported legislation to fund geography. Senator Pryor continues to refuse to support that legislation.

The Arkansas Geographic Alliance, the organization that provides professional development opportunities for teachers around the state, is in the early stages of a major transition. During that transition, normal Alliance activities will be suspended while a Leadership Team attends a Capacity Building Course and writes a Strategic Plan that will guide the Alliance toward a 2025 goal of having 80% of all graduating high school seniors geographically literate. The Strategic Plan will include a major reform in geography education in Arkansas. Currently there are no stand-alone geography courses required in Arkansas schools. The Alliance hopes to change that in the coming years.



Mrs. Suzanne Rogers has concluded her 27th year as our Secretary and Administrative Assistant. She tells us that she has one year left before retirement. She spends a lot of time with her three granddaughters and is looking forward to the birth of her first grandson later this year.

Faculty Comings and Goings.....

Dr. Jeff Allender will become the director of the department's internship program beginning July 1, 2010. He no longer advises the environmental science-planning and administration track nor does he plan activities for incoming UCA faculty. But, he keeps busy by serving on a variety of departmental, college, and university committees. He successfully planned the annual conference of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers and he attended the National Conference on Geographic Education in Puerto Rico.

Dr. Brooks Green continues to chair the department. He began to teach the general education elective, Geography of World Regions. He led a group of teachers to the Altai region of Russia last summer and intends to lead another group to the Black Sea area in 2011. Dr. Green also attended the National Conference on Geographic Education and continues to be the Coordinator of the Arkansas Geographic Alliance.

Ms. Mary Sue Passé-Smith directs the Social Science computer lab and continues to anchor the entry-level geospatial technology courses (cartography and introduction to GIS). She directs GIS Day activities, assists with the State Geographic Bee, and continues her cutting-edge research on tornadic activity in Arkansas. Her research on this topic takes her annually to the International ESRI Users Conference in San Diego, California, where she presents her research. You can find her published work on the ESRI web site.

Dr. Brooks Pearson concluded his 5th year at UCA and has been awarded tenure beginning July 1, 2010. He spends a lot of time directing the MGIS degree program and teaching online graduate GIS courses. He is the advisor to several MGIS students who are in the process of writing their master's theses. For the third year in a row, Dr. Pearson has received a No Child Left Behind grant. The grant will enable him to conduct remote sensing/GIS-related workshops for teachers this summer.

Dr. Jerry Reynolds, after twenty some odd years, has finished directing the department's internship program. Scores of students have successfully completed this program and are now gainfully employed because of that experience. Dr. Reynolds is active professionally and frequently presents papers at conferences on water resource-related topics. He administers the geography assessment to graduating seniors and continues to challenge students in Research Seminar.

Dr. Michael Yoder has concluded his 2nd year at UCA. He successfully completed his mid-tenure review during the spring semester. Dr. Yoder is chair of the College of Liberal Arts Research Committee and was recently appointed Director of the Master of Science in Community and Economic Development degree program. He has a full-time graduate assistant who helps coordinate that program. State agencies and associations have become interested in Dr. Yoder's research on micropolitan areas.

Ms. Mindy Conyers
says:



I am glad to have just finished my first year in the UCA Geography Department. It was a great experience and everyone helped make my arrival and transition to teaching full time pleasant. I grew up in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex in (what used to be) the small town of Flower Mound. While pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography from the University of North Texas, I worked at an aquatic ecosystem research facility on Lake Lewisville. I worked alongside graduate students and enjoyed the idea of pursuing a graduate degree that would allow me to do field research. So, after graduation, I moved down to Texas State University in San Marcos and started on my Master of Applied Geography – Resource and Environmental Studies degree. My thesis research involved traveling around to thirty or so rivers in the Texas Hill Country, gathering river data, and taking pictures. I got to be outside hiking in rivers which is something I have always thoroughly enjoyed. I decided to keep going in graduate school after realizing that I enjoyed teaching in the geography department and doing field research. I stayed at Texas State to pursue my PhD in Environmental Geography. My dissertation is again on river processes, but this time I traveled to the San Juan Mountains in southwestern Colorado to conduct my field work. I love the great outdoors and have been enjoying the beauty of the Natural State since I moved here last summer. There are plenty of rivers to keep me busy, and my students did a great job of informing me of many, many more places I have yet to explore. I am thankful that I am a part of this superb Geography Department and a member of the UCA family.

Our work study student, Kendra Patterson will graduate in the August commencement. She has worked for us for nearly four years. We found her to be an excellent, reliable, and committed worker. We will miss her pleasant personality and contagious giggle. We wish her the best as she completes an internship and pursues her career goals.



Kendra Patterson



Suzanne and Kendra

Master of Science in Community and Economic Development

The Geography Department is now the home of the Masters of Science Degree in Community and Economic Development (MSCED). Dr. Michael Yoder, Associate Professor, is the director. "The online degree is a perfect fit for our department, given the option to take GIS courses as part of the Planning Track," says Dr. Yoder. The research interest in economic development in small Arkansas cities that exists in the department further enhances the compatibility of the degree with the department's mission. As an applied degree, the MSCED is designed to prepare practitioners (or students who wish to become practitioners) to bring about improvements in the quality of life and economies of their communities. Graduates are employed in state agencies, non-profit community development organizations, economic development corporations, banks, utility companies, and other entities that directly address the betterment of cities, towns, counties, and states. The curriculum is designed to balance theory and hands-on topics. A required internship greatly enhances a student's chances of finding employment or broadening their experience within their current position. Dr. Yoder notes that the program is well regarded by state and local officials and practitioners throughout Arkansas, and is gaining visibility here and in neighboring states.

Geography and Environmental Science Students Graduate.....

The following students graduated from our program during the last academic year (environmental science-geography notes those students advised in Geography with degrees in the Environmental Science-Planning and Administration track):

Fall 2009

Stephen Scott DiGiacomo, BS, *summa cum laude*, geography
Raynard D. Heaggans, BS, environmental science-geography
Daniel Philip Holland, BS, geography
Robert D. McDaniel, BS, environmental science-geography
Tyler Seth Moore, BS, geography

Spring 2010

Justin Lee Aylett, BS, geography
David Burge, BS, environmental science-geography
Mindy K. Clark, BS, geography
Samantha M. Dean, BA, geography
Matthew S. Duck, BS, geography
Lee Weston Garrett, BS, geography
Brandi Hendricks, BS, geography
Garrett A. Looney, BA, *cum laude*, geography
Nathaniel G. Schultz, BS, environmental science-geography
Brandie A. Smith, BS, environmental science-geography
Jacob H. Wesson, BS, environmental science-geography

For more information about the Department of Geography at UCA, go to its website at: <http://www.uca.edu/geography/>

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 or fax to 501-852-2926.

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