



Department of Geography

University of Central Arkansas



The *Newsletter* of the Department of Geography

Vol. 8 No. 1

May 2011

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR.....



This past academic year was, perhaps, one of the busiest of my 31-year career. With our own departmental search going on; participating in the search for a new chair of the Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; attending meetings regarding UCA's strategic plan; preparing for a 20th trip to Russia; being involved in a strategic planning process for the Arkansas Geographic Alliance; and the normal departmental operations; I kept extremely busy. In the midst of that frenetic schedule, we had an exceptional year. Other than a few items related to the department, the large portion of this newsletter is about the activities of the faculty and staff – the exceptional people who provide an extraordinary education for our students and support that effort.

Dr. Brooks Green

Outstanding Geography Student

The Outstanding Geography Student for the 2010-2011 academic year was Angie Lewis. Angie quietly excelled as a student and certainly had the qualities we look for in a student who is given this award. She is planning on obtaining a teaching certificate and entering the school system as a teacher. Her Dad, Mom, and little brother are with her in the photo below.



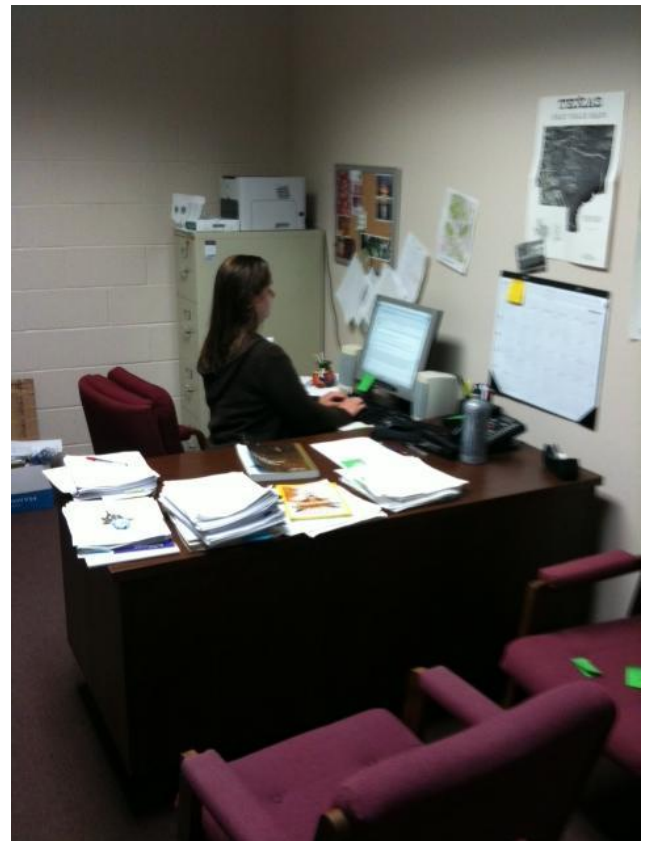
Abney-Bradley Scholarship

Dylan Melton was the recipient of the Abney-Bradley Scholarship. Dylan is a jazz clarinetist and a chess enthusiast. The Abney-Bradley Scholarship is a \$500 award applied toward Dylan's fall tuition.



Dr. Jeff Allender continues to teach sections of our General Education courses (Principles of Geography and the Geography of World Regions), Human Geography, and Urban and Regional Planning. He also now teaches a course on China and East Asia and has begun to teach Recreation and Tourism. Additionally, Dr. Allender has taken over the directorship of the department internship program.

Included in Dr. Allender's professional activities this past year was participation in the annual meeting of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers. He continues to refine his study of vernacular rock and brick construction in the southern Ozarks and is developing a new line of research on ethnic and gender participation in high school soccer in Arkansas.



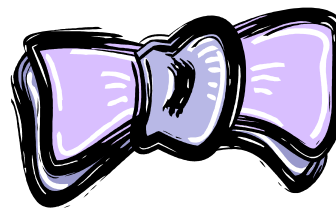
Dr. Mindy Conyers just completed her second year in the department. Her teaching duties are Physical Geography (rotating every other semester with Dr. Jerry Reynolds), GIS in Practice: Environmental Applications, Landforms, and Soils. She also teaches courses in the Master of GIS degree program. Most recently, Dr. Conyers has become the advisor to a large number of students who are environmental science majors with an administration and planning track. Also, because of her expertise, she will teach the Environmental Science Practicum in the fall semester.

Dr. Conyers is a fluvial geomorphologist and defended her dissertation on May 11. She is active professionally, but has devoted most of her free time to the completion and defense of her doctoral dissertation.

Toward the end of the spring semester, a small group of our energetic students got together and reactivated the Geography Club. We anticipate great things from this group beginning in the fall semester. Dr. Allender is the advisor.

Every year or so, Dr. Allender tracts down all of the students who are eligible to join GTU (Gamma Theta Upsilon), the national geography honor society, and conducts an initiation ceremony. The local chapter, Iota Xi, was organized and Angie Lewis became its president.

Dr. Jerry Reynolds continues to advise the Environmental Alliance, a campus-wide organization devoted to environmental awareness and related activities.



After an extensive national search for an eighth geographer, we are pleased to announce that Dr. Steve O'Connell will join the department beginning in August. Dr. O'Connell obtained his PhD at Oklahoma State University and has been at the University of Mary Washington in Virginia for the past few years. When you meet him, you will understand the bowtie graphic. He will teach Urban Geography, GIS, Geographic Information Analysis, and GIS in Practice: Social Science and Business Applications.

Geography Education

Many of you know that there has been a Senate and a House bill before Congress for the last few years which, if passed, would correct a more-than-a-decade old problem with No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The bills, both titled Teaching Geography is Fundamentals (TGIF), would provide funding for geography education. For some reason, when NCLB was funded, no funds were allocated for geography education. TGIF is meant to fix that problem. Geographers and teachers from across the country have lobbied Congress for passage of TGIF, but to no avail. Within recent years, all members of Arkansas' congressional delegation have supported TGIF, with the exception of Senator Mark Pryor. This year, however, with the loss of Senator Blanch Lincoln, Congressman Vic Snyder, and Congressman Marion Berry, we have lost support. Senator John Boozman and Congressman Mike Ross continue to support TGIF, but Congressmen Rick Crawford, Tim Griffin, and Steve Womack refuse to back any legislation that costs money. And, Senator Mark Pryor continues to hold out on his support.

Nonetheless, work toward improving geography education in Arkansas is pressing forward under the direction of the Arkansas Geographic Alliance and many people who understand the critical need for an improved understanding of geography. The Alliance is in the process of developing a strategic plan to guide it toward the goal of having 80% of high school graduates being geographically literate by 2025. The ground work is being laid, connections are being made, and a committed group of university educators, K – 12 school teachers, state legislators, and many others, are dedicated to improving geographic literacy in Arkansas. To assist the Alliance in its efforts, it has hired the consulting firm, Non-Profit Leadership from Atlanta, to guide an Alliance Planning Team through the strategic planning process.

The Arkansas Geographic Alliance is also involved in a multi-state effort, led by the Mississippi Geographic Alliance, to provide objective resources and knowledge about climate change. The intent is to make sure that educators at all levels have access to data and related resources from across the Southeast United States so that students can learn about climate change in an objective, unbiased way.



Mary Sue Passé-Smith continues to anchor our undergraduate geospatial technology courses and directs the Social Science lab. She teaches Cartography and GIS every semester. The department is in the process of obtaining its own GIS lab in January 2012 which will be located in Burdick Hall. Mary Sue will likely move her office to Burdick where she can be closer to the new lab.

Tornado research has been an interest of Mary Sue's for a long time. More recently, she and her husband have begun to examine issues related to environmental justice. Her most recent presentation at the annual ESRI conference was on tornado vortex signatures.

Mrs. Suzanne Rogers has now been the department's Secretary and Administrative Assistant for 28 years. Outside of work, she spends a lot of time with her son and daughter and their four children who live in Conway. Another son lives in Dallas, but works several weeks each year in China for his company. Suzanne and her husband are planning a trip to China with their son this summer. Suzanne is also looking into all aspects of Medicare as she looks into the future toward retirement.

Her longevity with the department means that she knows everything that ever needs to be done. Her work is exemplary and greatly appreciated!



Spring 2011 Graduates

Brad Tharp, Master of Geographic Information System (the first to graduate in this program)

Claudine Forte, Master of Science in Community and Economic Development

Jonathan Hawkins, Master of Science in Community and Economic Development

Meredith Johnson, Master of Science in Community and Economic Development

Olivia Johnson, Master of Science in Community and Economic Development

Angie Lewis, BA Geography (Outstanding Student for the 2010-2011 academic year)

Bridgette Anderson, BS Geography

Stephanie Dunn, BS Geography

Mike Fish, BS Geography

Zach Hudson, BS Geography

Brandon Jones, BS Geography

Yang Cao, BS Environmental Science, Administration and Planning

Kathryne Crain, BS Environmental Science, Administration and Planning

Donald Daily, BS Environmental Science, Administration and Planning

Matthew Embrey, BS Environmental Science, Administration and Planning

Wesley Gunselman, BS Environmental Science, Administration and Planning

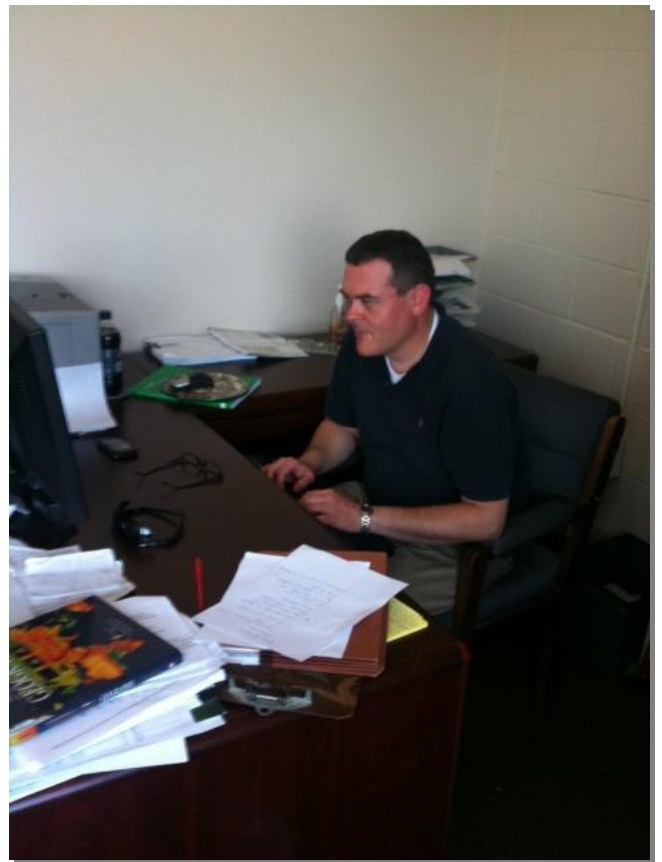
Hunter Mays, BS Environmental Science, Administration and Planning

Uta Meyer, BS Environmental Science, Administration and Planning

Joseph Potts, BS Environmental Science, Administration and Planning

Hayley Sebourn, BS Environmental Science, Administration and Planning

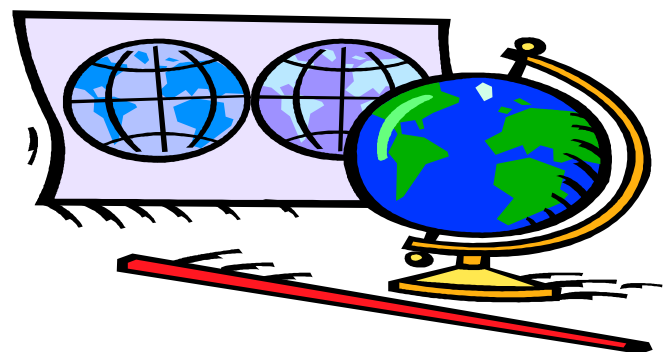
Dr. Brooks Green is preparing for his 20th visit to the Russian Federation. In late June and through most of July, Dr. Green will lead a group of 12 American educators and students to Russia. The experience is funded by a \$75,000 grant from the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program. The purpose of the stay in Russia is for the American educators to learn about Russian ethnic and cultural diversity. The group will begin the Russian excursion in Moscow then travel south to Rostov-on-Don, Tuapse on the Black Sea coast, Volgograd on the Volga River, Astrakhan on the north coast of the Caspian Sea, and Ryazan'. Participants in the group will give presentations on Russian ethnic groups and attend classes on Russian history, geography, and the Russian language. Ms. Eva Hruska, a Russian Language professor at Baylor University, will teach the history and language classes. Dr. Green will teach the geography course.



Dr. Brooks Pearson has completed his sixth year at UCA. He is the director of our geospatial graduate programs, the Minton Center, and graduate studies. He anchors the Graduate GIS Certificate program and the Master of GIS degree program by offering two graduate-level GIS courses each semester and advises nine MGIS theses.

Remote sensing/image processing and quantitative methods in geography are two of his regular courses. We are in the process of modifying the sophomore-level quantitative methods course. Its name will change to Research Methods and Analysis and a good portion of the course will be devoted to, among other things, research techniques, writing literature reviews, and citation methodology. The intent of this course, as taught by Dr. Pearson, is to better prepare students for upper division course research papers and Dr. Jerry Reynolds' Research Seminar course.

Dr. Pearson's focus right now is on the analysis of ASTER satellite data in an attempt to estimate surface temperature. He is also directing a project that will assemble a digital archive of antebellum maps of Arkansas.



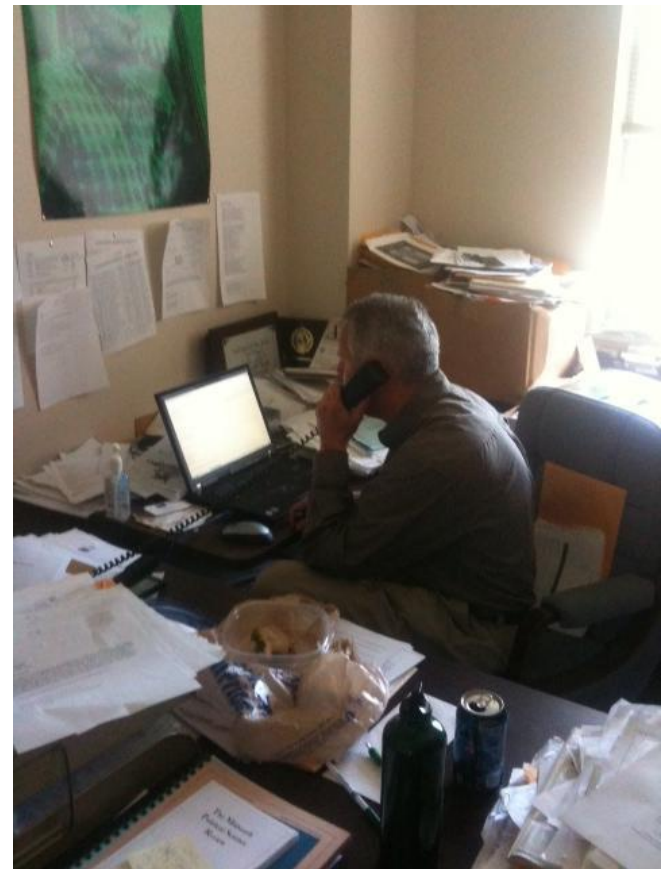


Dr. Jerry Reynolds concluded his 27th year at UCA. His teaching responsibilities have been weather and climate, natural resources, biogeography, natural hazards, water resource, and research seminar. Last semester Dr. Reynolds had an exceptionally large number of students, some of whom included students in a Residential College course. He continues to advise the Environmental Alliance, a campus-wide organization which promotes environmental awareness and a variety of activities. Students continue to get an excellent education in Research Seminar, a course Dr. Reynolds has taught since his arrival at UCA.

Dr. Reynolds' current research interest is the consequences of and adjustments to global warming in a coastal environment. He has also reviewed chapters of the textbook, *Introduction to Geography*, published by Pearson/Prentice-Hall.

Dr. Michael Yoder just completed his fourth year at UCA. He came as an Associate Professor from Texas A & M International University in Laredo, Texas. His duties within the department are to teach political geography and the geography of Latin America. Dr. Yoder was selected to direct the Master of Science in Community and Economic Development degree program last year. With that assignment, he teaches an online course in that program, advises all of the students in the MSCED program, and has a reduced teaching load in the department.

Dr. Yoder has chaired the College of Liberal Arts Research Committee for the last three years and has served on the University Research Council. He is an active scholar with many publications related to topics focused on Mexico and, more recently, micropolitan cities in Arkansas. Dr. Yoder has also been the recipient of grants from UCA and the Arkansas Humanities Council.



Graduate Programs in the Department of Geography

- GIS Certificate: 15 hours of online course work
- Master of GIS: 24 hours of online course work, 6 hours of thesis
- Master of Science in Community and Economic Development: 36 hours of online course work



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.

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