



Department of Geography Newsletter

University of Alabama

Box 870322 Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0322, Vol. 4 Fall 2007

Chair's Greeting

I was honored to be appointed as the Department Chair of Geography at the University of Alabama with unanimous support from my colleagues. This appointment followed the departure of Professor Jerry Webster, who spent last seven years in that position. I would like to thank him for his strong leadership and tireless services to the department. The department is definitely moving in a positive direction under his leadership. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Bobbi Webster for her outstanding services to our undergraduate program and teaching over past 11 years.

We are delighted to be able to hire Dr. Jason Senkbeil as a full time instructor and the director of undergraduate programs. Dr. Senkbeil received his Ph.D. from Kent State University in 2007. He is in charge of advising our geography majors and interdisciplinary environmental science program students while teaching sections of GY 101 (Principles of Physical Geography I: Atmospheric Processes and Patterns).

We are also very glad to have Dr. Michael Steinberg be a part of faculty team, who is holding a joint appointment between geography and New College. Dr. Steinberg's specialty is human dimensions of environmental change and conservation.

This fall, we are happy to hire Mrs. Mary Pitts as a part time instructor. Mrs. Pitts received her graduate education from UK and is specialized in natural hazards and environmental site assessment.

Congratulations to Dr. Joe Weber, who was tenured and promoted to associate professor this past year. With Dr. Weber's promotion, now we have four professors (Drs. Bryan, Han, Shankman, and Wilson), two associate professors (Drs. Richetto and Weber), four assistant professors (Drs. Appiah-Opoku, Brommer, Davis, and Steinberg, a joint appointment with New College), and two full time instructors (Drs. Espy-Brown and Senkbeil).

We have 34 graduate students by this fall. Half of them are being funded. We now have 11 graduate teaching assistantships, which is a record for this department. Our graduate students have been continuously successful in their post graduation jobs and life. In this newsletter, two former graduate students

told their stories in "Where are They Now?"

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of you for your kind wishes and whole-hearted support of the department over the past year. I hope you continue to "watch" the department by browsing our new web site (<http://geography.ua.edu>). I also hope you support our graduate program by contributing to *David C. Weaver Endowed Support Fund*, which is now officially established.

Luoheng Han, Chair
Department of Geography

Jan S. Weaver's donation establishes the Professor David C. Weaver Endowed Support Fund

The University of Alabama Board of Trustees passed a resolution on September 14, 2007, reading in part as follows:

WHEREAS, Jan S. Weaver of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, has contributed \$10,000 to The Board of Trustees of The University of Alabama to honor the memory of her late husband, David C. Weaver, and to promote the education of students studying geography in the College of Arts and Sciences at The University of Alabama; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Weaver desires that this gift be accepted and maintained by The University of Alabama as a permanent fund to be named The David C. Weaver Endowed Support Fund in the College of Arts and Sciences...Endowment earnings shall be used to support students, preferably graduate students, in the Department of Geography who are deemed by the faculty and Chair of the Department to be academically superior and deserving of such support.

The goal of the Department of Geography is to raise funds above the \$20,000 level, which will enable the awarding of graduate student scholarships in Dr. Weaver's name. Please make donations directly to the Department or through the University's Capital Campaign program (designating the gift for the Department of Geography David C. Weaver Endowed Support Fund). Make checks payable to: The University of Alabama

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Faculty and Staff

Seth Appiah-Opoku



The past year my research continued to focus on ecotourism and indigenous belief systems. A manuscript titled “Indigenous Beliefs and Environmental Stewardship: A Case Study of Ghana” was published in the *Journal of Cultural Geography*. I presented the initial findings of my ecotourism research at both the AAG Annual Meeting in San Francisco and the SEDAAG Annual Meeting in Morgantown, WV.

I continued to serve on the Diversity Committee, as *alternate* on Faculty Senate, and a committee member on the AAST program committee. I also served as the Geography Department’s coordinator for the Adopt-a-Mile Program. I continued to enjoy teaching planning courses, geography of Africa, and a study abroad course in Ghana titled “Field Studies in Africa.” In addition, I served on several comprehensive examination committees.

Outside the UA campus, I continued to serve on the editorial board of the *Journal of Environmental Impact Assessment*; as a consultant to McGraw-Hill Publishing Company (Glencoe World Geography textbook); and as a resource person to the Tuscaloosa Housing Authority. Finally, I served as advisor to the Tuscaloosa Sister Cities Commission.

David Brommer



My first year at the University of Alabama provided many great opportunities and experiences that have me looking forward to another productive and rewarding school year. I have continued my research interests in quantifying the spatial and

temporal variations in precipitation duration throughout both the southeast and the conterminous United States. While I continue to work on questions pertaining to precipitation duration, I have also expanded my area of interest into precipitation variability and stream flow in the southeast United States and land/sea breeze interactions along the Gulf Coast. When not engaged in research, I have thoroughly enjoyed my interaction with undergradu-

ates and graduate students alike. I have introduced two new learning technologies (course capture and “clickers”) in my courses, in hopes that students will continue to be engaged in class and be active participants in their education. These new tools allow me to not only evaluate student progress and outcomes, but also help me become a better instructor. Among the many unique opportunities I have had since arriving at the University of Alabama, a trip in May was the highlight of my year. In May, I represented the Department of Geography on a trip to Cuba with various other faculty and staff from the University. Our goal was to interact with research and teaching faculty from the University of Havana in an effort to cultivate potential research and education exchanges in the future. What a great experience!

Hobson Bryan



The Department has an air of excitement these days with new faculty and record graduate student enrollment. My office, sharing space on the third floor with the Map Library, labs, and graduate student offices, is a particularly nice place to

share the vibrancy of the enterprise. This past year marked completion of projects concerning such diverse topic as tourism promotion and social, economic and environmental justice impacts. The latter ranged from proposed fishing net bans to disposal of high-level nuclear waste. I am particularly proud of co-authoring two book chapters with our former student, Susanne Rose in *Water Allocation in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia: New Issues, New Methods, New Models*. Susanne is a Ph.D. student at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. One of the editors is Aaron Wolf, who was a member of our faculty before going to Oregon State University a few years ago. During the coming year I will be offering “Social Impact Assessment” for the first time in several years. We have made what was formerly exclusively a graduate level course into a combined upper level undergraduate- graduate offering. I will also be teaching “Environment and Society” in the fall.

Amanda Espy-Brown



This year marks my second year as a full-time instructor in the Geography Department and I'm looking forward to another busy year in which I'll continue teaching World Regional Geography, Introductory Physical Geography, Cultural Geography and Medical Geography. Over the past year I was able to serve on committees for graduate students Lauren Hocutt and Thad Dixon and to be active in teaching geography and geology sessions to elementary school children. I completed a chapter on security issues in Ethiopia for a book entitled *International Security and Society* to be published later this year. My research interests continue to be in the cultural and health arenas and I am currently working on research on healthy communities with an emphasis on walking trends around neighborhood elementary schools. A first for me this fall is participation in the Freshman Learning Communities in which my GY 105 course is included in the Interdisciplinary Global Studies community. This is a wonderful way for freshmen to get to know each other and their teachers while focusing on ways to be active world citizens. As always, I look forward to getting to know my students and the graduate students within the department and am especially excited about the revamped Geography club, SAGA, spearheaded by graduate student Charles Long.

M.A. Lisa Davis



This year will be my third year in the Department of Geography at the University of Alabama where I am an Assistant Professor specializing in Geomorphology. During the 2006-2007 academic year, I taught GY 102: Earth Surface Processes (Fall 2006/Spring 2007), Geomorphology (Fall 2006), and Soil Science (Spring 2007). The past year was my first time teaching Soil Science. It has not been offered at UA in many years. The class proved to be challenging but rewarding. Challenging in the way that all new classes are – requiring more work! Rewarding in the impressive effort given by students in the class. Undergraduate

students in the Soil Science class conducted group research projects that consisted of laboratory analysis of soil samples the students collected from soils located in Tuscaloosa County. The student research culminated with student's developing and presenting professional quality research posters based on the results of their laboratory analyses and field observations. The students' effort was impressive, and this showed in the quality of their research poster presentations. As for research news, I recently had an article accepted for publication in the journal *Physical Geography*, and I have two more articles currently in review with other journals. All three articles examine different aspects of geomorphic change in river systems in response to processes of urbanization, with particular emphasis on spatial patterns of change. I continue to collaborate on ecogeomorphologic research with biologists Alex Hury and Jon Benstead of the Biology Department at UA. Our research, still in its early stages, focuses on identifying geomorphic process zones in order to explain the spatial distribution and association of bivalves in Bogue Chitto Creek, AL. This research could have important implications for understanding aquatic habitat structure, ecosystem dynamics, and the various links that exist between biologic and physical systems. The work has grown to include a graduate student's master's thesis research. I am now supervising master's student Alexis McGraw, and her research will involve exploring the link between the spatial variability of ecological processes and geomorphological process zones in Bogue Chitto Creek. I presented preliminary results of the Bogue Chitto ecogeomorphology research at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers held in San Francisco, CA. In addition, I gave another research presentation about the identification and spatial distribution of bank failure types in channelized streams and their role in altering sediment dynamics at the annual meeting of Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers held in Morgantown, WV. I have great plans for the upcoming academic year that include submitting more articles for publication, presenting research at the annual meetings of SE-DAAG and AAG, and developing a new graduate-level seminar on Fluvial Geomorphology to be offered in Spring 2008.

Luoheng Han

I have been working on remote sensing of water quality this past year. I published one co-authored



article in *International Journal of Remote Sensing*, and presented my research at the USDA-CSREES National Water Conference in January. In the 2007 AAG Annual Meeting, I served as co-organizer for three sessions and chaired one session on remote sensing and GIS for coastal and watershed studies and gave one presentation during the meeting. In teaching, I taught three technique courses and one summer study abroad course. This spring and summer, I was busy in transition to as the new chair of the Department of Geography at the University of Alabama.

Jeff Richetto



This academic year marks my twenty-eighth at the Capstone. I continue to focus my teaching and research interests in the areas of urban and economic geography. A manuscript on recreation planning in urban environments is forthcoming in *Papers of Applied Geography*, co-authored with Thad Dixon, and will be presented at the Applied Geography Conference in Indianapolis. Other ongoing research projects include—"Incorporating Sustainability into Urban Planning: an Examination of Recycling Opportunities" with Brendan Moore and "Connecting Community Facility Planning with Economic Development: A Case Study of Lake Martin, Alabama" with Lauren Hocutt. In addition to teaching in the University's Freshman Seminar program I am also participating in the College of Arts and Sciences Freshman Learning Communities program. Both programs introduce new students, on a more personal basis, to the University and are designed to help them acclimate to a post-high school educational environment. I continue to travel to the University of Nebraska during the summer, along with many other college and high school instructors, to serve as an AP reader and test developer for high school Human Geography courses. Finally, I will serve a last term on the University's Master Campus Plan which has had significant input in shaping the 'new' U of A campus.

Jason C. Senkbeil



I finished my Ph.D. at Kent State this past summer and I am very happy to be back in my home state. I never want to see snow in late April ever again. I am teaching 3 sections of GY 101 and also directing the undergraduate advising for both Geography and Environmental Science. My research interests include synoptic, applied, and bioclimatology and hurricane

hazards. Currently I am condensing 2 sections of my dissertation into publishable manuscripts. My dissertation assessed the impact of irrigation, with respect to flow type and air mass type, on precipitation in several heavily irrigated regions of the Great Plains. In my spare time (haha) I am also continuing to evaluate classification and perception of hurricane intensity as well as changes in atmospheric flow patterns over the southeastern U.S.

David Shankman



Most of my research focuses on forest vegetation in the southeastern U.S. I currently have projects dealing with riparian forests in the Appalachian Plateau and bottomland hardwood ecosystems in the Coastal Plain. I am pleased to have as collaborators on these projects Drs. Justin Hart, who received his MS degree from Alabama and is now at the University of North Alabama, Charles Lafon at Texas A&M, and Barry Keim at LSU. I also have a project addressing flood prediction and floodplain management in the Poyang Lake region in southern China. Earlier this year I presented this work at the Beijing Normal University and I was also invited to participate in the International Crane Foundation conference on Poyang Lake environmental studies to be held this fall in Nanchang, China. I continue to serve as the Environmental Science Program Director and hold an appointment as Adjunct Professor at the Key Laboratory for Poyang Lake Studies at the Jiangxi Normal University in China.

Michael Steinberg



I am a new geography professor in the department, having moved from the University of Hawaii in July 2007. I have a joint appointment at UA between Geography and the New College. My research and teaching interests focus on the human dimensions of environmental change and conserva-

tion. My fieldwork takes place in the US South and Central America. In highland Guatemala and Belize, my research examines the impact of globalization on crop diversity and traditional farming practices among the Maya. I am also participating in a research project that measures deforestation rates in highland Guatemala and Mexico. I have also studied endangered species conservation in the US South. For example, I finished a book this past year on the ivory-billed woodpecker in Louisiana. It will be published in 2008 by LSU Press. I am also working on two new books, one on the endangered Louisiana black bear, and the other on the conservation and management of the brook trout in the southern Appalachian Mountains.

Joe Weber



I am settling into my new title of Associate Professor, and my new office (FA228- Dr. Han's old office). I have lots of room and a nice view of a rooftop and parking lot. It's hard to believe I've been here six years already! I'm working on developing some new research topics in accessibility and network analysis

(though I think I said the same thing last year). In the past year I've started switching my GIS and Transport Geography lectures to PowerPoint (and even putting them online). I've become quite a GoogleEarth addict, and used it to discover old roads and trails back home in Death Valley National Park that I never knew about. This fall I'll start integrating it into GIS. I've learned some very useful new techniques for manipulating network topology in GIS, which I can't wait to put into GIS-T. Last year I was on 18 dissertation, thesis, and non-thesis paper committees, which kept me very busy. Everybody likes GIS! I also served on the committee that

helped set up the David Weaver memorial fund, which I think is a wonderful addition to the department. And I'm still serving on the university Parking and Traffic Committee, where I get a first hand look at transportation issues on campus, including our new Crimson Ride transit system (which I had nothing to do with!). I really enjoyed traveling to San Francisco last spring to the Annual Association of American Geographers meeting. This year I'll get to see Boston, which will be my first visit to New England.

Bobby Wilson



This past year saw the completed first draft of a book-length manuscript on "Black America, Consumption, and American Capitalism." I am now in the process of seeking a publisher who may want to review the manuscript for publication.

"Social Justice and Neoliberal Discourse" was published in the Southeastern Geographer (May 2007). A revised version of "Critically Understanding Race-Connected Practices: A Reading of W. E. B. Du Bois and Richard Wright," first published in The Professional Geographer (February 2002), is being considered for a reprint in "A Reader in Critical Geographies" to be published through Praxis (e) Press.

Placenames Research Center

Linda Watson and Tom Kallsen



This year has been even busier than last year at the Placenames Research Center. While we continued to work on our two ongoing US Geological Survey

GIS related placenames grants, one for the state of New York and the other for the top forty-six urban areas in the United States deemed highest homeland security risks, we also recently submitted grant proposals for three additional USGS geographic names

projects. These proposed projects which would update the USGS Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) Database would be similar in methodology to our ongoing projects. So far, we have been awarded one of the three, a special one year project beginning in October, to update new geographic names for a seven county area in Kansas, including Wichita and Kansas City. The award decisions for the other two proposals, one for counties along the Eastern Atlantic Seaboard and the other for the state of Alaska, have not yet been made by the granting authority. Regardless of their outcome, next year promises to be extremely busy for Tom, our students and me.

Currently, we are in the final phases of the forty-six urban areas update, a four year project scheduled to end in November 2007. Research for this project has resulted in the location of over seventy-five thousand new names which will aid emergency workers and homeland security personnel in finding the precise locations of administrative features in these high security risk cities. These structures include hospitals, schools, municipal buildings, shopping centers, water and sewage treatment facilities, and many other categories of critical facilities vital in rescue or security operations. Our project for the state of New York has over two years remaining and includes research regarding not only the names and locations of current critical infrastructure, but also research pertaining to physical and historical features as well.

Additionally, the Department of Geography and the Placenames Research Center is co-sponsoring an International Placenames Workshop to be held at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina in October of this year. Participants will include esteemed International Names Scholars from the United States and Canada and as far away as Israel, Australia, Finland and Slovenia. My presentation at the workshop will focus on toponymic i.e., placenames, bibliometrics and how geographic names research products are created and repackaged.

On a personal note, I just wanted to let all those former students with whom I took graduate classes to know that after four and half years, I finally finished my Geography Master's degree in December 2006.

Map Library

Tom Kallsen

The litany of Map Library projects seems to increase every year. In the realm of service, besides the myriad of reference questions that come along, we were again involved in hosting the "Road Scholar" portion of the Science Olympiad for middle school students. The Library also assisted Dr. Espy-Brown with her educational support of local elementary schools.

To see the results of our supporting research go to alabamamaps.ua.edu or geonames.usgs.gov. Quite a number of our 19th and early 20th Century maps appear on the Alabama Maps website. The Library is also providing research material for Linda Watson's Geographic Names Information System projects, the end results appear on the latter website. In addition, we get a steady stream of consultants that are looking for historic aerial photographs in order to be able to do site studies.

As can be seen from the above, finding something to do is not a problem

Cartographic Research Laboratory

Craig Remington

The Cartographic Research Lab has been working with determination toward seeking the conclusion of several endless projects. One such project is a new edition of the Historical Atlas of Alabama, Vol. 2. Cemetery Locations by County. This product will update our 1999 edition with a wealth of new information we have gathered over the last 8 years. We are encouraging cremation as a solution to producing future new editions. Our Alabama Maps website has grown by over 6,000 maps in the last year and is close to a total of 30,000 maps in the collection. We sold some reproductions to Senator Jeff Sessions today. We are relieved that he did not stumble upon the early European maps of America embellished with nude aboriginals. Another interesting project of late was mapping bank erosion on the Tombigbee River as it attempts to devour Sumter County. Apparently much of the county is now in Mobile Bay and no one seems to notice. And then we did a demographic study of the area around Yucca Mountain, Nevada. One of the easiest pro-

jects of the year, as no one lives there. I didn't include a picture because I'm the guy that puts this newsletter together and I'm out of space. I sent a recent photo in with an application for a new passport. The Department of State sent it back saying George Clooney already had a passport. Just remember me that way.

Attention Former Graduates

We enjoy having former students discuss their experiences since graduation with our current students and faculty. If you are interested in providing a presentation to the department, please contact Professor Han at (205) 348-5047 or by email at lhana@bama.ua.edu

Graduate Student Recruiting Day

The Department of Geography at the University of Alabama will be holding its annual open house on Friday, November 9, 2007. The event is intended for students considering a Masters degree in geography to visit our department, and interact with our faculty and graduate students. The open house will begin at approximately 11:00, with lunch being served. After a brief introductory program, students will meet the faculty and tour the Cartographic Research Laboratory, Map Library, and Computer/GIS/ Remote Sensing Laboratories. We expect these tours to conclude in mid afternoon. Please RSVP at lhana@bama.ua.edu or (205) 348-5047.

SAGA is back...

This Fall the graduate students from the department got together and reinstated SAGA (the Student Association of Geographers at Alabama). We wanted to have an organization where we could pursue our interest in Geography outside the classroom and provide a venue for more social interaction amongst the students and faculty. The latest incarnation of SAGA was constituted with the University early in the semester and we will be holding our first social event on October 24th at Wilhagan's Sports Grille. It will be a simple meet and greet where everyone in the department is invited as well as those from across campus who may share our interest in Geography. If any "old timer's" are in town that day we hope you will join us and play a round of pool or two. Several activities are in the works for the Spring, including a canoe trip, a celebration of Earth Day and of course, a Spring Social as well. Come join us!

Where are They Now?

Angela Myers



Since graduating in the fall of 2002, I have been working for Intergraph Services Company (ISC) in Huntsville, AL. ISC is a division of Intergraph with 175 employees that focus on digital and hardcopy map production and GIS database compilation. A large portion of our work is for the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency or NGA. This includes topographic maps used primarily by the military and hydrographic maps for use by mariners. We also recently completed GIS database work for several counties in Alabama.

I was originally hired by ISC to work as a cartographer in their hardcopy topographic map department. During that time I performed map finishing for TLMs covering several foreign countries. Later, I moved into my current technical lead position within the hardcopy department. I have tested different GIS software platforms for integration into map production. This helps us adapt our process to new products and changing requirements from our customers. When we receive contracts for new products I am responsible for helping to develop efficient workflows. I also provide trouble-shooting assistance for other employees within the department. At times, my job also requires me to act as a project lead. In this role, I interact with the customer to insure that we meet or exceed their needs. My time spent working for the cartographic research lab during graduate school on a wide variety of projects on software platforms provided a good foundation for my current job.

On a personal note, I currently live in Madison with my husband of two years, Chris, and our 3 month old son Alexander. I spend most of my free time helping my son grow and develop and enjoying the numerous outdoor activities available in Northern Alabama. I have also been teaching Alex to enjoy Alabama football, and we can already see crimson is one of his favorite colors.

Roll Tide!

Todd Reynolds



After I received my Masters degree in geography with a focus on water resources and environmental management, I was accepted by and enrolled in the geography department at the University of Oklahoma (OU) as a doctoral student. I began my studies at OU with an interest in Environmental Justice and the social groups impacted by environmental injustices and environmental racism. With the addition of the geography of disability as a recognized specialty group within the Association of American Geographers (AAG), I shifted to an interest in special needs social groups and natural hazards. Upon receiving special permission to continue my studies in a department that did not offer a specialization in the geography of disability, I received approval from the OU Ethics and Internal Review Board to conduct research on a vulnerable special needs social group. Using qualitative methods, I studied the personal experiences of people with sensory disabilities and how they become aware of severe weather warnings, and how people

with mobility impairments evacuate in the event of natural hazards. I completed my Dissertation on this topic during July 2007, and had three different newspapers send reporters to interview me about my research. Following this, I accepted a post-doc position at Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York. The post-doc is an advanced rehabilitation research and disability policy training program. The program provides advanced training in rehabilitation and disability policy research, with a particular focus on participation of people with disabilities in their communities. Also included are advanced coursework, projects, and seminars, independent writing and research. I am planning to use my experiences with the post-doc position to attain a permanent faculty and/or research position in the future.