Hello Friends of MSU Geography!

Yet another year has passed and it’s time to celebrate in our annual newsletter. It continues to be a time of rapid change in the department, one that is pushing us in new and exciting directions. If you were in the building on any given day in the academic year you would notice a distinctive hustle and bustle in the hallways as folks zip around on their appointed rounds. Faculty are working hard to update their classes and teach them to a growing number of undergraduates who populate the hallways. The staff is doing the great job that they do to keep the ship afloat and the place organized. The graduate students come up for air (and light) from the basement while wondering if they have ever worked this hard. If it sounds pretty chaotic… well, it is, and pretty stressful at times too. That said, what sets our Department apart from many is that the vibe around here is almost always really positive. People smile at each other in the hallways and laughter is a common sound. It’s a good place to be, one that is increasingly recognized as such by the College of Social Sciences (where we live) and the university as a whole.

This positive vibe is even having an impact on our graduate recruiting. This is more than double the number for the first time anyone can remember. Both of these majors are proving to be a time of rapid change in the department, one that is pushing us in new and exciting directions. One new major in Economic Geography has been launched and the staff is doing a wonderful job. Both of these majors are proving to be popular. Gary (Schnakenberg) has also done a wonderful job as our undergraduate advisor and deserves a lot of credit for a job well done.

Our faculty and graduate students continue to be very productive and highly visible. Lots of examples abound, and I certainly don’t have room to list all here. A great example on the faculty side is that Randy Schaetzl did an awesome job organizing the International Loessfest that was held in Eau Claire, Wisconsin in the fall, and was attended by over 100 people from as far away as Australia. Believe it or not, prehistoric wind-blown dust is a popular thing. Amber Pearson’s work on “blue spaces” garnered international attention, and Nathan Moore won a prestigious MSU Teacher/Scholar award. On the national level, Sharon Zhong was elected a Fellow of the American Meteorological Association (AMS); Emilio Moran was chosen by President Obama as a member of the National Science Board, which establishes the policies of the National Science Foundation. I could go on…...........easily. I know because we believe that, if we can get a recruit to visit us, the chances are really good that they will join us in the coming fall.

With that preamble, I invite you to have a look at the inside pages of this newsletter. You will see a representative sampling of the many great things that are ongoing in the unit. On the undergraduate front, for example, we are knocking on the door of 100 majors for the first time anyone can remember. This is more than double the number we had in 2012 and is a testament to our systematic efforts to better promote the Department across campus. A great example of such promotion was (again) the very successful presentation we sponsored during Geography Awareness Week. Last year, if you recall, we hosted Dr. Roberta Bondar, the first female Canadian astronaut, who did a wonderful job. This year, we hosted Steven Lerner and Reuben Aaronson who presented their film When the Well Runs Dry to a packed house of about 600. The film was about growing water scarcity in Kansas, my home state, and was met with rave reviews. We also have reconceived and updated our Web pages. With the new (awesome) Alumni Board and that our onGEO group continues to do really cool things that have important financial implications for the department. A few of our faculty are highlighted to provide a glimpse into their work and lives. A few of our alums also chipped in to give an update about what they’ve been doing. Special thanks to Judy Reginek who has done a fantastic job over the years organizing and publishing this newsletter. Judy has indicated that she plans to retire at the end of this academic year and she will be missed for a variety of reasons, not the least being that the bar for this newsletter is now very high. Thanks Judy!
and since 2013 I have facilitated implementation of that plan. This project takes me all across the state every year; in 2016, this included speaking about the importance of tourism and outdoor recreation to groups in Traverse City, Kalkaska, Marshall and Marquette, and to the County Board of Commissioners in Antrim and Lenawee counties. In April, I presented elements of the MTSP at the Inaugural International Conference on Tourism and Leisure Studies in Honolulu, HI, and the National Bicycle Tourism Conference took me to St. Pete Beach, FL, in November.

In 2015-16 I very much appreciated my first sabbatical. Though the MTSP kept me in Michigan for some of the year, I was able to participate in a month-long Research Fellowship at the Institute for Environment and Climate Research at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. This allowed me to continue a now decade-long partnership with Dr. Bas Amelung working on the inter-relationships between climate variability and change, and tourism and outdoor recreation. During that visit Bas and I co-hosted a workshop for about a dozen European researchers on “Agent Based Modeling (ABM) Meets Tourism.” Since then, we have partnered with two of these new colleagues, from Portugal and Andorra, and other collaborators from MSU Extension and Purdue, to develop a project focusing on the potential of ABM to help us better understand tourism industry collaboration, cooperation and partnerships; we recently received a seed grant from the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development to fund this proposal. Also during my sabbatical I enjoyed spending some time with my parents in Kent and Cornwall, England.

I continue to Chair the All University Traffic and Transportation Committee and the Ingham County Parks and Recreation Commission. I also serve on the Michigan Trails Advisory Council, an appointment made by Governor Snyder in 2015. My GEO teaching alternates on an annual basis between two of my favorite courses, GEO 259 Geography of Recreation and Tourism and GEO 459 Tourism in Regional Development. When I’m not talking or teaching about travel, or traveling for work, I love to … travel! As Ronald Reagan observed, “The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.”

It was a great pleasure to have spent an evening with Canada’s first woman astronaut, Dr. Roberta Bondar, during her visit to MSU as the keynote speaker for the Geography Awareness Week of 2016. L to R: Igor Vojnovic, Roberta Bondar, Sharon Zhong.

Sarah Nicholls
Associate Professor

Greetings Spartan Geographers!

I am an Associate Professor jointly appointed between Geography, Environmental, and Spatial Sciences (25%), Community Sustainability (50%) and AgBioResearch (25%). My work focuses on the role of tourism, recreation and parks in the creation of active, vibrant and sustainable communities in Michigan, the US and beyond. Back in 2012 I was appointed between Geography, Environmental, and Spatial Sciences (25%), Community Sustainability (50%) and AgBioResearch (25%). My work focuses on the role of tourism, recreation and parks in the creation of active, vibrant and sustainable communities in Michigan, the US and beyond. Back in 2012 I was privileged to be given the opportunity to develop the 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan (MTSP). As the Michigan Travel Commission and Travel Michigan,
As an Associate Professor of Geography coming to the discipline via a circuitous educational and professional route, I continued to ground my research within international development, policy and sustainable livelihoods. My background combines the social sciences (PhD in Human Geography from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and MA in GIS and International Development from Clark University, Worcester, MA), the natural sciences (BSc in Ecological Science with Honors in Forestry, University of Edinburgh, Scotland), and years of professional experience in social forestry and biodiversity conservation in Africa. My research falls broadly into nature-society interactions, health and the Desertification of the two, focusing on Sub-Saharan Africa. Areas of interest include environmental governance and policy, community-based natural resources management, social forestry, solid biomass energy, extractive resources, agriculture, land use change, climate change adaptation, resource tenure and forest condition in Malawi and Ghana, under the program Sustainable Agricultural Intensiﬁcation Research and Learning in Africa (SAILRA).

One of the continuing projects, Protecting Ecosystems and Restoring Forests in Malawi (PERFORM), is a 5-year (2014-2019) forestry project funded by USAID (MSU collaborators Dr. David Skole and Dr. Pascal Nzekou, Forestry Department). It seeks to build Malawi’s capacity in preparation for REDD+ projects and a low-carbon development pathway. I led development and drafting of a Malawi National Charcoal Strategy, working with a multi-sectoral task force and diverse stakeholders. With 97% of all households dependent on ﬁrewood and charcoal as the primary cooking energy, and 54% of urban households on charcoal, a holistic charcoal strategy that enhances sustainable production and use while promoting alternative energy sources and livelihoods options for charcoal producers is essential. I also published a related newspaper article in one of the daily newspapers in Malawi.

On teaching and advising, advisee Ellis Adams graduated and secured a tenure-track faculty position as Assistant Professor in the Global Social Development Lab at Georgia State University. We wish him all the success. I continue to advise more than a dozen graduate students in the Human-Environment Geography program. I facilitated a similar workshop for the Implementation of the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) for Developing Countries’ Experts Group (UNEP), I facilitated the Priority-setting Workshop on Advancing National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) for developing countries. As the resource person at the request of the UNFCCC and the Environmental Program (UNEP), I facilitated the Priority-setting Workshop for the Implementation of the Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative (LAKI) for the Indian Ocean Sub-region (Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and the Seychelles) in Sri Lanka in October 2016. In these LAKI workshops, regional experts identify and prioritize (rank) knowledge gaps in climate adaptation needs and formulates strategies on how to ﬁll them without conducting new research.

In the tradition of a "world-grant" university, I continued engagement and international professional service with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat based in Bonn, Germany, and the Least Developed Countries’ Experts Group (LEG), which dates back to my graduate student years. Activities with the UNFCCC/LEG include contributions to development of the technical guidance book for National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) for developing countries. As the resource person at the request of the UNFCCC and the Environmental Program (UNEP), I facilitated the Priority-setting Workshop for the Implementation of the Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative (LAKI) for the Indian Ocean Sub-region (Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and the Seychelles) in Sri Lanka in October 2016. In these LAKI workshops, regional experts identify and prioritize (rank) knowledge gaps in climate adaptation needs and formulates strategies on how to fill them without conducting new research. I facilitated a similar workshop for the Southern Africa sub-region at the MSU in November 2015. As an invited expert panelist, I also presented and led discussion sessions at the NAP Expo in July, 2016 in Bonn, Germany, on the theme of identifying vulnerable and interdependent communities in the context of adaptation and development planning and implementation. The NAP Expo has become an annual forum organized by the UNFCCC/LEG for experts, stakeholders, and developing country representatives to exchange experiences, lessons and ideas on climate-change adaptation strategies. I facilitated a one-week Regional Training Workshop on Advancing National Adaptation Plans for Anglophone African Countries in February 2017, in Lilongwe, Malawi.

In June 2016, I completed my two-year stint as Editor for the journal African Geographical Review (AGR) preceded by a two-year term as Associate Editor. The AGR is edited by the Africa Specialty Group and published by the Taylor and Francis Group for the American Association of Geographers. I learned a great deal from this experience. I join the Africa Specialty Group and the AGR Editorial Board in gratefully acknowledging the support given by our department head, Dr. Alan Arbogast, during my editorial stint. I also particularly thank our graduate student Cadi Fung for her excellent work as the Editorial Assistant. This assistance illustrates MSU GEO’s role as a champion of geographic scholarship on Africa. I have since gratefully retired into the Editorial Board of the AGR for the next four years.

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I also look forward to serving on the NSF Geographical and Spatial Sciences (GSS) Program Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Award (DDRI) External Review Panel for the next two years, starting April 2017. I hope to use the experience to help our graduate students to prepare for the DDRI grant. I continue to promote in international collaboration in research at MSU, including in my capacity as Coordinator (with Dr. Anne Ferguson) of the MSU/Malawi Strategic Partnership. This is one of the most successful strategic partnerships at MSU in numbers of proposals and total budget awards.

Socially, I enjoy family, travel, movies and riding my bicycle like a crazy person and in unsuitable weather conditions! Last summer, we were delighted to have my brother (a demographer) and his family join us from Nairobi on a one-week holiday in the Big Apple. We did all the touristy stuff and loved it. For a family scattered across the oceans, it was particularly important for the children (ours a high school junior and a junior at MSU) to reconnect after other years. The hero of the trip was a selfie stick!
The AAG Rose Award for Anti-Racism Research and Practice was created in 2012 to honor Harold M. Rose, who was a pioneer in conducting research on the conditions faced by African Americans. The award honors geographers who have demonstrated a record of this type of research which has both advanced the discipline and made an impact on anti-racism practice. Joe T. Darden is a Professor of Geography and a core member of the Canadian Studies Center at Michigan State University. He has received numerous awards, including a Fulbright Fellowship, the Distinguished Scholar of Ethnic Geography Award (AAG), and the AAG Enhancing Diversity Award. Dr. Darden has published more than 80 peer-reviewed articles, dozens of book chapters, and numerous authored and edited books.

Dr. Darden’s research offers a broad perspective on the many racialized groups that live in North American cities, and in the ways in which their spatial insertion in the city is related to poverty, health, housing, and access to civic participation. Dr. Darden's work as a public advocate for anti-racism is extensive. He worked for the Chicago Board of Education, as a member of the State of Michigan Task Force on Minority Health Affairs, as a demographic consultant for the NAAACP and the Detroit Police Force, as an expert witness in many legal defenses, and as a frequent media commentator, among many other roles.

Joe has made many important contributions to the discipline of Geography, including serving on numerous committees of the AAG, and especially as Chair of the Enhancing Diversity Committee.

Joe Darden is a committed anti-racist whose research, teaching, and civic contributions mark him as someone dedicated to change. For these many reasons the AAG is pleased to recognize Joe T. Darden with the Harold Rose Award.

A pioneer in the field of environmental research, Moran will begin his six-year term after he is sworn in at the board’s next meeting in early November.

“I am honored to have been nominated and appointed to the National Science Board,” Moran said. “This is a group of eminent scientists and industry innovators who try to make sure that the investments made in science and technology at the National Science Foundation are directed at the best science and at the needs of the nation. Being part of such decisions is a great responsibility.”

The 24-member board and the NSF director are jointly responsible for recommending and encouraging the pursuit of national policies for the promotion of research and education in science and engineering. The board also influences the research direction of the NSF and acts as an independent body of advisers to both the president and Congress on matters of policy.

Moran, who joined the MSU faculty in 2013, is a professor in the Department of Geography and a researcher in the Center for Global Change and Earth Observations and Center for Systems Integration and Sustainability.

“We are all extremely proud that Dr. Moran has been appointed to this position,” said Rachel Croson, dean of the College of Social Science. “His unique research expertise, blending the social and the natural sciences, will contribute significantly to the National Science Foundation, and to our nation.”

The author of 11 books and more than 200 journal articles, Moran was elected to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences in 2010. His work combines the natural and social sciences to understand human-environment interactions.

“I hope that my long history of interdisciplinary research linking the natural and the social sciences will bring useful insights to the discussions of the complex science issues and problems that society faces that require a diverse range of disciplines,” Moran said.

The Ron Abler Distinguished Service Honors are named in honor of Professor Hunter Winkler, who served as chair of the Department of Geography from 1967 to 1995 when he retired as a Professor Emeritus. His career was marked by integrative approaches. She has done her insights to bear in guiding several departments through programmatic reviews. Her career has been marked by those things held as noteworthy by Ron Abler – a desire to sustain the breadth and vitality of geography, support of faculty in their careers, and a commitment to moving the field in a direction that is marked by integrative approaches. She has done this exceptional service without sacrificing her contribution to research and teaching.

We are sorry to report of the death of Dr. John Hunter at age 88 on December 15, 2016 following a long illness. John was a leading faculty member of the Geography Department from 1967 to 1995 when he retired as an MSU University Distinguished Professor. An avid field researcher, John did most of his work in Africa specializing on the spatial relationships of environmental conditions and various diseases. In addition to many monographs, book chapters, reviews, research proposals, and agency reports, John authored or co-authored over 100 refereed journal articles. Following is part of the formal obituary from Arizona where he spent his career.

Professor Hunter was an influential figure in establishing the study of medical geography as a specialty within geography. He served as a captain in the Royal West African Frontier Force in Ghana from 1954 to 1957, then on continued on as a lecturer at the University of Ghana, from 1957 to 1964. During that time, he developed his hypothesis of cyclical advance and retreat of riverine settlements due to onchocerciasis. His 1966 published paper had an effect on the World Health Organization (WHO) when they decided to develop a West African Savanna zone scheme to eliminate the black fly. While a professor at Michigan State University, he was asked by two WHO physicians, who had read the 1966 article, to serve as a consultant in Ghana resulting in a 1972, 353 page mission report. He continued as a short term WHO consultant from 1972 - 1996.

John Melton Hunter was born in Windsor, Canada on January 1, 1928. His parents thereafter returned to the United Kingdom. John was educated at Bermose School, Derby and went on to receive his PhD in geography from the University of Reading in 1954. During his time at the University of Ghana, he was planning officer and adviser for the national registration and enumeration of area maps and census reports for the 1960 Ghana Census. After returning to Great Britain, he taught at the University of Essex from 1964 to 1967 before beginning his tenure at Michigan State University.

Throughout his career at Michigan State University he received numerous honors, awards and appointments including the Distinguished Faculty award in 1982; an Honors Award from the Association of American Geographers; Appointed to serve on the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council, Board of Science and Technology for International Development; Juba Valley Advisory Panel 1986-88; Appointed Member of WHO Commission on Health and Environment 1990-92; and University Distinguished Professor 1990. He is survived by his wife, Kathleen, two children and three step children.
North to Alaska

This past summer graduate students Kelsey Nyland and Clayton Queen, and visiting scholar Jing Li ventured north to Alaska where they participated in an ongoing permafrost (perennially frozen ground) monitoring program on the Arctic North Slope. In addition, Kelsey and Clayton established several sites for a new geomorphic project in the alpine subarctic. Both projects are led by Professor Fritz Nelson, a co-PI on the NSF-funded Circumpolar Active Layer Monitoring (CALM) program and advisor to both Kelsey and Clayton.

The CALM project is an international global-change monitoring effort involving investigators from 15 countries and more than 200 permafrost observatories in the Arctic and Antarctic. The work performed by the MSU group this summer, along with collaborators from The George Washington University, University of Montana, and Northern Michigan University, constitutes the American contingency of the monitoring network. The field team visited sites near Nome (famous for the Alaskan gold rush), Barrow (the northernmost community in the US), and along the Dalton Highway, famous for its leading role in the Discovery Channel’s show ‘Ice Road Truckers.’ At each site the team measured the depth the ground had thawed during the summer, collected ground and air temperatures, and precisely measured ground surface movement. These monitoring data are publicly available online and have been in a large number of Arctic climate change, permafrost, and infrastructure related modeling efforts (https://www2.gwu.edu/~calm/).

The other project, conducted in the alpine subarctic, focuses on a little studied, but striking geomorphic feature found throughout central and western Alaska – cryoplanation terraces. These step-like landforms ascend ridges and hillsides, creating an illusion by Professor Fritz Nelson, a co-PI on the NSF-funded Circumpolar Active Layer Monitoring (CALM) program and advisor to both Kelsey and Clayton.

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Always a land of extremes, this summer was one of the hottest and wettest on record for Arctic Alaska according to the NOAA, but the team persevered and had a very successful, data-rich, and fun field season that Kelsey and Clayton hope to repeat this coming summer.

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Research in Alaska

Every spring semester of odd-numbered years Dr. Arbogast teaches a class entitled Regional Geomorphology of North America. This class is a survey of the physiographic provinces of the continent, including the Appalachian Mountains, Great Lakes region, Great Plains, and Rocky Mountains, to name a few. Since the second offering in 1999, he has taken the class, and whomever else wants to go (~15 total people), on a week-long trip to the central Great Plains at the end of the term (in May) to explore the landscapes of the region. This field trip is an eye-opening experience for the students because most have never traveled west of the Mississippi. For those who have, the trip is enlightening because few have been off the main interstate highways that bisect the region. The trip includes a number of stops to see such features as the Mississippi and Missouri River floodplains, thick loess outcrops, volcanic ash, sand dunes, and bedrock topography. Although most of the work is in Kansas (4 days), the group also spends time in Iowa and Nebraska. Beyond the fascinating geomorphology and wide-open spaces, the trip is interesting from a cultural perspective because the pace of life out there is somewhat different. The trips are a lot of fun and make lasting memories for everyone. Here are some representative photos from the field trip over the years.

Left: The World’s largest Czech egg in beautiful downtown Wilson, Kansas, 2015.
Left: Dr. Lusch enthusiastically talking about NAD 27 at Meade’s Ranch, Kansas, 2011.

Right: Kelsey Nyland (left) and Clayton Queen (right) use DGPS equipment to collect highly precise measurements of ground surface subsidence at a CALM monitoring site on the Alaskan North Slope. Over an extended period the surface has been found to subside likely due to warming air temperatures.

Above: Graduate students Clayton Queen (left) and Kelsey Nyland (right) prepare to hike down from a cryoplanation terrace site where they monitor temperatures, performed general surveying of the features, and measured differences in the weathering of rocks across the surfaces.

Left: Visiting scholar, Jing Li, at a CALM near-surface permafrost monitoring site on the Alaskan North Slope, helps to collect data and maintain the site.

Above: Graduate students Clayton Queen (left) and Kelsey Nyland (right) prepare to hike down from a cryoplanation terrace site where they monitor temperatures, performed general surveying of the features, and measured differences in the weathering of rocks across the surfaces.

Left: Kelsey Nyland (right) and Clayton Queen (left) use DGPS equipment to collect highly precise measurements of ground surface subsidence at a CALM monitoring site on the Alaskan North Slope. Over an extended period the surface has been found to subside likely due to warming air temperatures.

Students Research Entrepreneurship

As part of funded work through the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation for Entrepreneurship three students traveled with Dr. Mack to Albuquerque, New Mexico to meet with Mayor Barry and parties involved with fostering entrepreneurship. The meetings took place at the mayor’s office and the Albuquerque Community Foundation in April. The goal of the meetings was to increase participation in surveys that are being distributed to study spinoff activity, which is business activity generated by former employees of existing businesses, government, or educational institutions in the greater Albuquerque metropolitan area. Kevin Credit (Geography Ph.D. student), Grace Hough (undergraduate double major in Economics and Geography), and Matthew Suandi (undergraduate majors in Economics and Mathematics) are research assistants for this project and have helped design and distribute surveys, and collect secondary data about the vitality of the entrepreneurial environment.

Supporting Women in Geography (SWIG)

The Supporting Women in Geography (SWIG) group provides a forum for women in Geography and their supporters to come together for intellectual, professional, and personal support. In addition to organizing a series of breakfasts to connect students with visiting female geographers, members have taken part in a number of community outreach activities.

In its second year of existence, the SWIG group has picked up great momentum. SWIG members participated in Geography Awareness Week, staffing tables in Brody Hall and hosting a geocache contest over social media. They have also organized a weekly writing group, providing support and accountability to their peers in their writing endeavors. In addition, undergraduates can participate in the SWIG mentoring program, being paired with SWIG graduate and faculty mentors with similar geographic interests.

Below: (L to R): Lisa-Marie Pierre; Cadi Fung; April Frake, co-president; Libbey Kutch; Nafiseh Haghtalab; Michelle Church; Victoria Breeze, co-president; Meg Reesor, Treasurer; Dr. Raechel White, Faculty Advisor.

GREETINGS

Greetings!

As some of you know, each year the staff of the Online Geography program, or onGEO, takes up a small part of the newsletter to update readers on what is happening in the program, and this year is no different. In 2016, just as in years past, we experienced exciting changes that we know will improve both our reach and our ability to educate students. No matter the subject of our annual newsletter piece, geography education is at the heart of what we do in onGEO and as teacher and poet Robert John Meehan once wrote, “The most valuable resource that all teachers have is each other. Without collaboration our growth is limited to our own perspectives.” With the addition of Drs. Yi Shi and Grant Gunn to the onGEO team in September, we are without doubt enjoying new perspectives and greater collaboration. We hope you enjoy reading about these two talented, passionate geographers and educators in the paragraphs that follow.

Yi Shi

Associate Director of Professional Courses

Dr. Shi joined the onGEO staff on 29 August 2016. Prior to that he worked in the private sector as a GIS scientist and for the Institute of Water Research and Precision Agriculture Lab on the MSU campus. Dr. Shi is also an alumnus of MSU, earning his Ph.D. in Geography with a specialization in GIS in 2008. He has a wide range of research, teaching, and professional experiences in the realm of geospatial technologies and their applications. Over the years, he has developed numerous GIS applications for many clients, including all levels of government. Simply put, Dr. Shi loves geospatial technologies and the ways they are changing the world for the better. He is delighted to share his knowledge of geospatial technologies with students and colleagues and being instrumental in their educational journey.

Grant Gunn

Assistant Professor

Dr. Gunn joined the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences at MSU as Assistant Professor after working as a geospatial analyst at Agriculture and AgriFoods Canada. He received his Ph.D. degree in Geography from the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, researching the microwave remote sensing of snow-covered lake ice in Arctic environments. He is currently looking forward to continuing his research of the remote sensing of the Cryosphere, quantifying and monitoring snow and ice parameters both locally in Michigan and on a global scale. As a member of onGEO, he enjoys providing students a relatable perspective to the theory presented in GIS and remote sensing, showing the past, present and future uses of the ever-evolving technologies. Whether teaching students about politics, history, or land-cover change, Dr. Gunn always welcomes the opportunity to show students how the world can be viewed through a geospatial lens.

While busy bringing Drs. Shi and Gunn up to speed this fall, the onGEO group managed to accomplish a few other noteworthy things. We created a new landing page for our Professional Certificate in GIS. The design of the new site streamlines our information and encourages potential students to contact us with any questions they have and take the first steps in registering for our courses. Be sure to check it out at (professional.ongeo.msu.edu). We also hired a firm to help us optimize our onGEO website (ongeo.msu.edu) and re-focus our online marketing strategy, which we will be implementing this spring. In addition, Dr. Yi Shi eagerly translated our Professional Certificate brochure into Chinese and has begun to distribute it to Chinese students on campus -- many of whom would benefit from having GIS skills and training to complement their major programs. And last but not least, we managed to take a little time this fall to celebrate record high enrollments in our Professional Certificate courses. Not only are we thrilled to be growing so quickly, with the arrival of Drs. Shi and Gunn we feel that our staff is uniquely suited to expand onGEO in new and exciting ways for years to come.
The Michigan State University Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences Alumni Advisory Board was established in spring 2015 to support the GEO department and its students and to facilitate communication between our students and alumni. In January 2017, the nine-person Board approved the Charter & Bylaws, held elections for Board positions, established a presence on social media and developed an online survey to collect feedback from GEO Alumni and Friends. The Board is committed to establishing the means to connect our current students to our knowledgeable and passionate GEO alumni and friends, and to connect our alumni and friends with each other. To do so, we are asking you to participate in our Alumni and Friends Survey (https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1Zj8ECAKHsNjNVX). The 5-10-minute survey will collect your current contact information, and gauge your interest in a variety of potential activities that will allow you to interact with and support our Department.

Alumni Advisory Board Charter
The board is focused on the needs of students. The purposes of the GEO Alumni Advisory Board are to:
• Encourage and facilitate communication between alumni and students to better
  o Connect students to professionals for mentorship/internship opportunities
  o Establish closer contact between the department and its alumni
  o Encourage career development networks and enhance student learning
• Grow the department endowment to directly benefit students
• Assist in the recruitment of students to the department and programs
• Serve as a sounding board for the Department
• Support the Department’s initiatives to University Administrators

Search for MSU GEO Alumni and Friends on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter!
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12031026
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/MSUGEOAlumni/
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/msugeoalumni/
Twitter: https://twitter.com/MSUGEOAlumni

Learn more about the Board
http://geo.msu.edu/people_categories/alumni_advisory_board/

Contact the Board
MSUGEoAlumniAndFriends@gmail.com

2017 GEO Alumni Advisory Board Members
Melissa Faustich (Vice-Chair), B.S. 2005. Location Based Services Product Manager at General Motors, Detroit, MI
Steve Aldrich, Ph.D. 2009. Assistant Professor of Geography, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN
Alan Arbogast, Department Chair MSU Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences
Ruth Collard-Sotak, B.S. 1983. Trade Link Holdings, LCC, Chicago, IL
Sarah Hession, Ph.D. 2011. Senior Statistician, Center for Statistical Training and Consulting, MSU, East Lansing, MI
Beth Myers-Graham, M.S. 1996. Vice President, AECOM, Cincinnati, Ohio
Beth Weisenborn, M.S. 2001. onGEO Director of Online Courses, MSU, East Lansing, MI

Summer Courses
All of these online courses are offered during both 2017 Summer Sessions
Classes begin May 15 and July 5
Enroll in these online courses just like any other, using Schedule Builder during your enrollment period.

Experience the world’s cultures in GEO 151 (Human Geography)
Pack your umbrella and sunscreen for GEO 205 (Intro to Meteorology)
Journey to the world’s farthest reaches in GEO 204 (World Regional Geography)
Climb a mountain, hike through forests, and relax on the beach in GEO 206 (Physical Geography)
Map out your adventures in GEO 221 and GEO 221 Lab (Introduction to Geographic Information)
Embark on a road trip across North America in GEO 330 ( Geography of the U.S. and Canada)
Explore connections among humans and their environments in ISS 310 (People and the Environment)
Spend some time with your creative side in GEO 326 (Cartographic Design)

For more information
visit us online at onGEO.msu.edu or email us at onGEO@msu.edu
GeoClub 2016 (Right) was fantastic! Late in August the Department welcomed 16 new graduate students and headed north to Camp Wa Wa Sum, on the Au Sable River near Grayling. GeoCamp has been based out of this camp for several years, because it is a wonderful place to get to know about each other, and about Michigan. Almost everybody went tubing in the river, which is an amazing experience: clear, natural, and definitely cold!

Field trip elements included a visit to the Manistee National Forest where we talked about forest management issues with alumnus Trevor Hobbs and checked out some unique environments. We also met up with Professor Arbogast at Arcadia Dunes, one of the most impressive landscapes in our state. Professor Yansa led a field trip to Hartwick Pines and also to the Civilian Conservation Corps museum to cover more about the biogeography of Michigan and its human context. The weather was pure Michigan - mostly pretty good! - and the food was great. It is remarkable how much food gets eaten at GeoCamp! Many thanks to Professors Yansa and Shortridge, and to second-year graduate students Cristina Gauthier and Nick Ronnei, for leadership and key support on this trip!

GeoCamp 2016 (Left) was fantastic! Late in August the Department welcomed 16 new graduate students and headed north to Camp Wa Wa Sum, on the Au Sable River near Grayling. GeoCamp has been based out of this camp for several years, because it is a wonderful place to get to know about each other, and about Michigan. Almost everybody went tubing in the river, which is an amazing experience: clear, natural, and definitely cold!

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Student News

2016 GEO GTU SPRING RECEPTION

Gamma Theta Upsilon Initiates


Above: Geography Club VP Paige Gebhardt and President Hayley Kelter. Right: Triple G President Dee Jordan and SWIG Co-President Victoria Breeze.

Not pictured: Joshua Haga was named Geography’s outstanding graduating senior and was recognized at the College of Social Science Commencement and honored by being announced first by major during the distribution of diplomas.

Crystal King is the first Geography undergraduate to receive a de Blij Scholarship.

Graduate Research Presentation Winners

L to R: PhD students Josh Vertalka (3rd place), April Frake (2nd Place), Kevin Credit (1st Place), and Associate Professor Nathan Moore.

Award winner Lydia Rill with Professor Sharon Zhong.

Marjorie & Lawrence Sommers Graduate Fellowship for International Research and Travel

Award winner April Frake, Laurie Sommers (presenter), and award winner Martie Bens.

Dr. Harold A. ‘Duke’ Winters Memorial Fellowship in Environmental Geography

Professor Randy Schatsch with award winner Ross DiFalco

These awards were established by the late Professor Harm de Blij in 2008 in honor of Dr. E. James Potchen, a special Friend of Geography.

Undergraduate of the Year

These awards were established by the late Professor Harm de Blij in 2008 in honor of Dr. E. James Potchen, a special Friend of Geography.

Graduate of the Year

Left: Assistant Professor Rachel White with award winner Paige Gebhardt. Right: Associate Professor Catherine Vasta accepting the graduate award on behalf of award winner Albert Fulton.
### Student News

#### UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES 2016

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| SUMMER | **| **|
|--------| **| **|
| Wetzel, Richard | **| **|
| Yang, Suchen | **| **|

^ Additional Major  
^^Second Degree

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### GRADUATE STUDENT DEGREES COMPLETED IN 2016

- Adams, Ellis, PhD (Leo Zulu), “Decentralization, Institutions, and Access to Potable Water in Malawi’s Urban and peri-Urban Informal Settlements.”
- Apps, Deanna, MS (Lifeng Luo), “An Analysis of the Soil Moisture-Precipitation Relationship across the Continental United States.”
- Feng, Jia, PhD (Guo Chen), “Migrant Livelihood and Business in Urban China: The Case of Henan and Recycling in Beijing.”
- Johnson, Laura Bowen, PhD (Gary Schnakenberg), “Toward a Relational Agro-Food System: The Case of the Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture High Country Farm Tour.”
- Koh, Kcumsok, PhD (Sae Grady), “Geographic Impacts of Federally Funded State-based Obesity Programs on Adult Obesity Prevalence in the United States.”
- Rill, Lydia, MS (Jeffrey Andresen), “Climatology of Springtime Freeze Events in the Great Lakes Region and their Impact on Tart Cherry Yields in Historical and Projected Future Time Frames.”
- Smith, Nicole, MS (Joseph Messina), “Identifying the Best Local-scale Prediction Maps for Dynamic Landscape Patterns of Aquatic Habitats of Anopheline Larvae in Western Lowland Kenya.”
- Wu, Ruqun, PhD (Jiquan Chen), “The Influences of Green Building Design on Building Users.”
**But I am not an Explorer**

Since second grade, when in my autograph book with other classmates, I penned that my favorite subject is geography. Didn’t have geography after elementary school until, as a sophomore at MSU, I enrolled in Geography 101 anticipating that I would have Harm de Blij as professor. Much to my chagrin, Harm left to Miami (FL) and was taught by Ian Madsen, an exceptional instructor. Much to his surprise, dismay or other utterances, Duke Winters became my undergraduate advisor…and a fine one at that!

While at Geography, I had the opportunity to be introduced and know personally many geographers such as Arthur Robinson, Preston James, Don Meinig, Judy Olson, Cindy Brewer, Harm de Blij, Alice Rechlin, Kit and Cathy Salter to name a few. Many were MSU graduates or were staff.

We had some wonderful experiences at Geographic. Many celebrities wanted to tour the Cartographic Division because of its reputation. Charlton Heston visited and towered over our short-walled cubicles as if he were truly parting the Red Sea. But one of those who entered the hall of the MSU Geography Department was Bob Thomas—my mentor and major professor. We had met his first year at State when I had enrolled in his Middle America class. I excelled, or he was very generous, and we became lifelong friends until his death. He guided me through the labyrinth of graduate school until I decided to go out and teach the world of geography. Here the story became a fulfillment of my second grade boast.

Today my bride and I, after raising three children—one of whom followed his dad’s career path and is a cartographic specialist for the FAA—continue to expand our own geographic knowledge by traveling. It’s rather fun to encounter some of the errors I inadvertently spread because as the Little Prince found out, “(the geographer) does not leave his desk. But he receives the explorers in his study”…a real professional.

* with apologies to The Little Prince. Ch XV, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1943

I’ve spent the past 11 years with the company in an interesting array of positions. It began with an entry level position in the Information Technology organization loading and manipulating map data for OnStar and troubleshooting related customer complaints. I was able to translate that technical knowledge into a project management role on the development team that creates our GIS application. I ultimately transitioned out of IT and into a business role with the call center operations organization creating, measuring and eventually managing the processes and language used to deliver OnStar navigation to North American customers.

My most recent and current role is within product management where I manage a team of General Motor’s navigation products across the globe through the vehicle, mobile apps, the web and OnStar.

I want to thank the MSU Geography family for welcoming me into their midst 17 years ago. After wearing multiple hats as the mom, dairy farmer, 4-H leader, choir director, bus driver, EMT, Posse member, animal nutritionist, and temp worker, I settled into my longest stint with the Geography Department. When I was hired, there were ~16 faculty members and look at us now! We’ve done a lot together and probably at least some of the more memorable times would have been helping everyone part with precious memorabilia to downsize into smaller office spaces. Many have been hired since I started and we’ve all grown together into a powerhouse department. It’s been a pleasure and honor working with all of you. I plan to start a new chapter in my life this summer by retiring from MSU and enjoying more time to travel with my husband, spoil my grandchildren, and ride my horse.

Tim Carter
par4dad@gmail.com
Alumni News

Owen Gregg
BA 1964
I continue to support the Geography Department at MSU as much as I can. While I didn’t have an opportunity to visit campus this past year, I did have some memorable interactions recently. On November 12th of last year, I had the opportunity to attend a keynote panel discussion at the Blue Ocean Film Festival in nearby St. Petersburg, Florida entitled, “Can a Film Change the World?” One of the panelists was none other than Jeff Orlowski, who visited MSU in late 2013, showing and discussing his film, “Chasing Ice.” He was just wrapping-up his newest film, “Chasing Coral,” and announced that he had just submitted it to be featured at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. Quite an honor. As of this writing, the film received very favorable reviews, and was immediately picked up by Netflix. I talked with him briefly after the panel discussion, and he remembers MSU, and his degree in Geography, very fondly. He said he would be open to coming back to campus with “Chasing Coral,” perhaps in 2018.

Audrey Joslin
MS 2008
Greetings! It has been a while since I have contributed to the annual newsletter and I have a few updates that I am pleased to share. In the past year, I finished my dissertation, Labor and Territory in Payments for Ecosystem Services in Ecuador’s Andes, and graduated with my PhD in Geography from Texas A&M University. After working as a lecturer for a semester with the Geography Department at Texas A&M, I joined Kansas State University with a tenure-track position as an Assistant Professor. It seems that Kansas State shares some traditions with Michigan State, including a branch of St. George’s Geographical Society. While I plan to continue research in the Andes, I am also enjoying getting to know the people and the grasslands of the Flint Hills and am looking forward to developing local projects in the near future.

Zeenat Kotval-Karamchandani
PhD 2013
2016 was a good year for me. I accepted a tenure-track position with the Urban and Regional Planning department at Michigan State University after being in a specialist/fixed term teaching position for three years with the same department. I couldn’t be happier...Michigan and MSU has been my home for the past 11 years and hope to be here for many more.

David Kromm
PhD 1966
Not much to report beyond that my wife and I drove Route 77 when we were 77 (we both turned 78 in September), but I drove north from Martinsville, to where US 77 once ended in Otterville, MN (now terminates in Sioux City, Iowa) and south to the end in Brownsville, TX. Many neat towns and historical places along the way. We drove Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica when we were 66. We moved here 50 years ago last week (I defended my dissertation at MSU in December of 1966), and I have been going over 50 years of photographs in Kansas. Our youngest son was born here (another one was born in Lansing, and the first when I was a young Army officer stationed in Maryland). I plan to put together a family album “Photos of 50 years in Kansas.” Oh, Bobbie and I will be at the AAG meeting in Boston. It will be my first conference since retiring in 2012. There is a session remembering Steve White in which I was asked to participate. Steve and I collaborated on numerous articles dealing with the Ogallala between 1979 and 2003. All the research was sponsored, and much of it is being replicated in the next few years with a team from several universities (land grant schools in the various Ogallala states).

Susan E. McMahon
MA 1978
Medical Geography

John M. Hunter, advisor)

Just finished my 30th year at Columbia University (1986-2016) and am actually still working (now in the School of Nursing). I left Michigan and MSU at the time of the automobile crisis of 1982 and relocated to NYC to take a job with Helen Keller International (a blindness prevention agency). In those early years I was busy photographing wildlife and bird life, but happened and I created a career in grants management at the Columbia University Medical Center.

I love to remind people (mostly young ones) that I have no accounting or MBA degree (but rather Geography degrees) and that I have been able to learn and be resourceful in whatever tasks I have had to do because of the broad based liberal arts education I received at Syracuse (undergrad) and MSU.

Mike Michalek
MS 2015
2016 was an extremely busy year for me. I completed my first year teaching for the Michigan DNR. In the beginning of the year I started managing ALL DNR land ownership data, and relocated to NYC to take a job with Helen Keller International (a blindness prevention agency). In those early years I was busy photographing wildlife and bird life, but happened and I created a career in grants management at the Columbia University Medical Center.

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Steven Schultz
PhD 2015
I’m a tenure-track professor at the University of South Alabama. I’ve taught Physical Geography, Climatology, and Biogeography since arriving, and I also took students on a three week field class in May 2016 up from Alabama to Michigan. We made stops in Berrien Springs, Ludington, Sleeping Bear Dunes, the Old Mission Peninsula, Mackinac Island, Pictured Rocks, Tahquamenon Falls, Downtown Detroit, and even East Lansing. 2018’s edition is already booked full. Currently I’m working on a number of projects ranging from advanced soccer analytics based on spatial statistical methods to an analysis of preconceptions of chronic disease across the U.S. Most interestingly (to me, at least) is my research on ultra-fine spatiotemporal mapping of microclimate influences on crop production. I’ve also taken a lead role in managing the South Alabama mesonet network of weather stations.

See you in Boston!

Steve

GEO staff have multiple talents!

Dr. Rick Sambrook
MS 1980, PhD 1992
I am serving in my 8th year as Department Head in Geography & Geology at Eastern Michigan University. Regarding department news, we initiated a new STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) major this term, established a new undergraduate minor in Digital Information Science and Technology (GIST) and are preparing for the Strong Building to be renovated over the next two years. Our current search has spread between and among fourteen degree programs. We have two tenure-track searches taking place this year - one for a hydro-geologist and one for expertise in surficial processes. The Geography program will host the East Lakes regional IGU (International Geographical Union) meeting in Boston. It will be my first IGU meeting, in Beijing last August and will likely attend future gatherings. Stephanie Wilson Sambrook and I celebrated our 32nd anniversary on January 11th and the birth of our first grandson - Owen Ulysses - on September 12th of 2016. In Georgetown, Kentucky where our son Everett and his wife Emily reside. Everett works for Toyota. Our daughter Kirsten lives and works as a design engineer in Elkhart, Indiana.

Alan Waddilove
MSGSci 2003
In September, 2016 Alan Waddilove joined the IT department of the County of Ottawa, MI after returning to Michigan having lived the last eight years in Illinois.

Alan’s current title is Business Analyst II, and he performs a variety of project management and database development tasks for Ottawa County.

Alan has a good relationship with the four currently GIS-focused employees at Ottawa County -- including MSU GEO grad and current director Shane Pavlik -- and enjoys reminiscing about his GIS days with his supervisor Aaron Boos (Ohio State Buckeye and former Ottawa County GIS director before Shane), and his co-GIS Analysts (Dave Cost, former GIS Analyst of Watertown, NY).

Alan's GIS days may be in the past, but hey, no one knows the future. In order to feed his love of the outdoors and increase his need for interesting maps, Alan plans to have many hiking adventures in Michigan and other places with his two boys Liam (age 4) and Tommy (age 2) once they are old enough.

Lacy Zweneksten
BA 1969, MA 1971
After retiring from my daytime job (after 42 years in charge of local health planning in West Michigan) I am the Rotary District Chair for International Youth Exchange in Western Michigan, the eastern UP and Northern Ontario. It is very rewarding to live vicariously through the dozens of exchange students we have had in our homes, and preparing our students for international travel and study.

It is wonderful to keep up on the real changes in the world since my days in the Department in the 1960’s.

Above: Sharon Ruggles made this quilt for her granddaughter, Finley Morton. Below: Tammy Mihalos, also a quilter, made these fabric wrapped swimshells and cute bowls.

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THANK YOU!
To all who contributed to the various Geography Department funds and scholarships. We are making continued efforts to increase our departmental contributions to enhance our programs and benefit students. Please consider donating to one of the Geography Department funds listed.

Please specify desired fund and make checks payable to:
Michigan State University
Mail to:
Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences
Geography Building
673 Auditorium Rd Rm 116
East Lansing, MI 48824
You may make a credit card donation on-line at:
http://www.geo.msu.edu/giving.html

- Geography at MSU Fund
  Established in 2001 to promote the MSU Department of Geography, including related advertising, fundraising, travel, and similar expenses.

- Geographic Field Experience Fund
  Established in 2001 to fund student field experiences, including field trips, primary data collection, course related field experience, and transportation and lodging expenses.

- Geographic Literacy Fund
  Established by Harm de Blij, this fund promotes the field of Geography to students.

- Michael A. Graff Dissertation Completion Award
  Established by Michael Graff to provide doctoral students with additional resources for travel, data collection, materials, supplies and equipment to complete research for dissertation projects.

- The de Blij Geography Scholars Endowment
  Established in 2013 as a scholarship to be awarded to incoming freshmen who choose to major in Geography.

- Ian Matley Memorial Fund
  Established to bring guest speakers to campus to enrich the geographic education of students and faculty.

- GTU/Geography Endowment Fund
  Established in 1999 by Robert and Dorothy Thomas to fund geography related student activities.

- E. James Potchen Awards in Geography for Graduate and Undergraduate Students
  Established in 2008 by Harm de Blij to fund yearly cash awards for outstanding graduate and undergraduate students based on GPA, progress towards degrees, and other quality indicators such as field work and research.

- Harold A. “Duke” Winters Scholarship
  To support graduate study in Geography at MSU.

- Jay R. Harman Undergraduate Scholarship in Geography
  To support undergraduate study in Geography at MSU.

- Marjorie & Lawrence Sommers Geography Graduate Fellowship for International Research & Travel
  A graduate fellowship to be awarded yearly for Masters or PhD students to support international research and travel.

- Owen Gregg Endowment for Global Climate Change Research
  Established in 2012 to support global climate change science research in the Department of Geography.

Name:_____________________________________________________          Address:________________________________________________
City/State/Zip______________________________________________         Email:__________________________________________________
Please specify: Alumnus/Degree/Yr______________                                Friend of MSU Geography________________

$___________GTU/Geography Endowment Fund
$___________E. James Potchen Awards
$___________Harold A. “Duke” Winters Scholarship
$___________Jay R. Harman Undergrad Scholarship
$___________Marjorie & Lawrence Sommers Int’l Rsch
$___________Owen Gregg Endowment-Global Climate Chg
$___________Geography at MSU Fund
$___________Geographic Field Experience
$___________Geographic Literacy Fund
$___________Michael A. Graff Award
$___________de Blij Geography Scholars
$___________Ian Matley Memorial Fund
We hope you find this newsletter informative and interesting. One way you can help keep it that way is to send us news about yourself. Share news about your career, family, or other things with your fellow alumni. Send an e-mail or letter and we will insert it into the next issue of the newsletter. Thanks for helping make the newsletter even better.

We also encourage you to keep in touch and provide your contact information. We have been working very hard to update and correct our e-mail and mailing lists. Please notify us whenever you have a change of mailing or e-mail address. This and past newsletters can be viewed on-line at our website, http://www.geo.msu.edu/aboutus/category/newsletters/

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