View west along the banks of the Red Cedar River near the Administration Building on the MSU campus.
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Yes, as you look things over keep in mind that the newsletter is a representative slice of life in the department. It leaves out a lot of things, such as the great work that our energized Advisory Board is doing on our behalf, the fantastic work our O&GEO group is doing with our online courses, and the success we’ve had marketing our Professional Development Certificate in GIS. We currently have over 90 students in that program from all over the world. On a personal note, I was reappointed last spring for another five-year term, as Department Chair and am proud to continue in this role. It was a simple decision, actually, because the department is awesome and the job is fun. We also have a fantastic staff that works well together. Claudia Brown, our Office Manager, ably leads this group. Although Judy (Reginek) indeed retired last spring, leaving big shoes to fill, Becky Young is doing a great job in that critical role and we’re in good hands on that front. Ana O’Donnell joined us last fall to take Becky’s old job and is a great fit. Sharon Ruggles continues her awesome work holding the grad program together and Tammy Mihalus keeps our contracts and grants well organized. Our technical staff (Jim, Matt, Sean, and Wilson) is great. In short, although there are some difficult times on campus, our Department is just a wonderful place to work!

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Jiquan Chen
Professor of Geography

The students, visitors, postdocs and faculty at the Landscape Ecology & Ecosystem Science (LEES) Lab have completed our third year at MSU, with many more exciting news and achievements. In my department, we have three important publications that focus on different aspects of geography and its applications.

LEES is also well-known for our international collaborations. We teamed up with a large number of European colleagues to compete for the Horizon 2020 program on Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) for future urban landscapes. A special issue of the journal was recently published in Environmental Research. The journal of Ecological Processes, with Dr. Chen as the Editor-in-Chief, doubled in submissions and publications in 2017. In addition, Dr. Jiquan Chen continued his service as the chief scientist for the US-China Carbon Consortium (USCC). The 14th annual meeting, held in Tianyan, had the highest number of participants yet. He also delivered the keynote address at the 60th annual meeting of the national Association for Vegetation Science (AVS) in Sicily, June, 2017, where he discussed the fundamental role of ‘vegetation science’, proposing to replace it with land cover science.

Our educational endeavor was also marked by a new hands-on teaching approach through Micrometeorological Instrumentation & Measurements (GEO 892). For the first time, we designed a curriculum that students can learn and enhance their learning by completing the installation of a complicated eddy-covariance tower. In addition to learning fundamental concepts in micrometeorology, the students spent much time learning about sensors and their construction and, eventually, used their new knowledge and skills to erect an advanced urban flux tower on the roof of Baker Hall on MSU’s campus. The tower (see photo) has been functioning since November 2017.

Welcome to my teaching in 2018! Sue

Sue Grady
Associate Professor
Greetings Spartan Geographers!

What excites me the most about Geography are the rich lives of geographers and their wide range of experiences in the world. Many geographers begin their career in another discipline only to find their way ‘home’ along the way. I myself volunteered as a registered nurse working in the cardiovascular surgical intensive care unit at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis. I also volunteered at the Children’s Heart Fund a non-profit devoted to the care of children’s hearts in countries around the world. My life changed when I was called to Honduras during a rheumatic fever outbreak to train nurses in the post-op care of children. I was immediately intrigued. I contacted Connie Weil a medical geographer at the University of Minnesota who worked in Bolivia and her children’s health. Shortly afterwards I was enrolled—studying geography during the day and nursing in the evening. No one at the time had any idea what I was doing, but I knew I was following my dreams!

The BA degree, and six months in Colombia, I completed my MPH and was sent to Zimbabwe where children’s health and disease from a medical geography—i.e., human ecology perspective—the interactions between people, culture and the environment. Having had a pretty good understanding of people—I decided to pursue a MA degree in Anthropology at Hunter College where faculty managed the Journal of Human Ecology. I then completed my PhD in Environmental Science and policy at the City University of New York. This degree program followed the merger of the New York Institute of Technology and to my benefit I was able to contextualize my medical geography training in earth science.

Today, my medical geography research continues to focus on children—including mothers and infants. I conduct health disparity research to visualize the spatial patterns of adverse birth outcomes, including infant mortality and I utilize spatial epidemiological methods to understand their underlying processes—a challenge of the population in certain places and not others?

Most of my own research is in Michigan after developing important relationships with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. I am particularly dedicated to investigating levels of pollution in highly segregated and poor communities in inner urban areas of Michigan and how these untoward exposures impact vulnerability, population susceptibility and maternal and child health.

What I am very proud of, are the serious and dedicated students who have in the past, and currently are working with me on medical geography. Not only one of these students has or is addressing a really important societal question and making a really important contribution in the world.

What I am very proud of also, are the graduate students and postdocs in my department who work in medical geography—please watch for their reports in upcoming Spartan Geography Newsletters!

Thank you, and best wishes in 2018!” Sue

Dave Lusch
Fixed Term Professor
MA 1975; PhD 1983

After 37 years on staff at Michigan State University, I officially retired at the end of June 2016. As part of my transition plan, I continued to teach as a temporary faculty member - GEO 324 (Remote Sensing of Environment) in the Fall 2016 semester and GIS 310 (People and Environment) in the Spring 2017 semester. I’m teaching my GEO 411 (Stream Systems and Programs) this last Spring semester for the last time.

Since I’ve been around the department for a long time (I began my Masters program in the Fall of 1973), Alan Arbogast asked me to write a few musings about
the "old days." The department of the 1970s was dramatically different from our department of today. Back then the department was housed in the Natural Science Building. While the administrative hub of the unit was on the third floor, faculty and graduate TAs offices were widely dispersed on the first, third and fourth floors. The cohort of physical geography TAs was housed in room 343 on the far west end of Nat Sci. I have many fond memories of "talking shop" with my student colleagues in that office.

Until the late 1980s, there were only two "labs" in the department, the air-photo lab and the cartography lab – both devoted primarily to instruction. When Randy Schaeftel joined the faculty in 1987, he built the first research lab, which was devoted to soil and sediment analyses. Prior to this, all of the physical geography grad students who needed to analyze sediments in their research (and there were several of us) did so in the facilities of the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences through the collegial generosity of Professors Mokma, Schneider and White-side. Today, our department has two "wet bench" labs, one for soil/sediment analyses, and the other for pollen analyses. In addition, there are computer labs to support climate, medical geography, and spatial analysis research.

Another stark difference between our current department and that of the 1970s was the all-male faculty that persisted until Professor Judy Olson was hired in 1983. Today, nearly half of the regular faculty are women (11/26) and four of our nine adjunct faculty members are women.

During my Masters Program I had the great good fortune to work as a research cartographer on the Atlas of Michigan (Lawrence M. Sommers, ed., 1977). In those days, pen-and-ink, zip-a-tune and press type were still the cartographic norm in the department. The Atlas Project broke new ground by employing digital mapping at MSU. In support of the early 1990s he has co-managed the Circumpolar Active Layer Monitoring (CALM) program, the first coordinated international global-change program focused on permafrost. CALM has been funded continuously by the U.S. National Science Foundation since 1998 and operates as the umbrella organization for well over 200 permafrost observatories in both Polar Regions and several mid-latitude mountain ranges. Fritz spends several weeks each summer on Alaska's North Slope and Seward Peninsula, working at CALM data collection sites. Information about CALM can be found at: https://www2.gwu.edu/~calm/

Nelson's main research interests—on place since his "old days" at MSU—are in permafrost and periglacial (cold climate, non-glacial) geomorphology. Since the early 1990s he has co-managed the Circumpolar Active Layer Monitoring (CALM) program, the first coordinated international global-change program focused on permafrost. CALM has been funded continuously by the U.S. National Science Foundation since 1998 and operates as the umbrella organization for well over 200 permafrost observatories in both Polar Regions and several mid-latitude mountain ranges. Fritz spends several weeks each summer on Alaska's North Slope and Seward Peninsula, working at CALM data collection sites. Information about CALM can be found at: https://www2.gwu.edu/~calm/.

Nelson's MS thesis at MSU, supervised by Dieter Brunnschweiler, was concerned with small periglacial landforms near the Juneau Icefield in southeast Alaska and adjacent parts of Yukon and British Columbia. The Juneau Icefield Research Program (JIRP) was then administered through MSU's geology department. Fritz spent the better part of three summers working out of Camp 29, a hut at high elevation near Atlin, BC. After landing his first academic job, at Rutgers, Fritz's research focus changed to the effects of climate change on permafrost. He's worked closely with scientists from Russia, Canada, China, and several European countries on that topic since the late 1980s.

After taking early retirement from undergrad teaching at Delaware in 2013, Fritz returned to MSU to work with grad students. Kelsey Nyland and Clayton Queen enrolled in our PhD and MS programs in 2015 and 2016, respectively, and spent the past three summers working on projects in Alaska with Fritz. Besides working on the CALM program, Kelsey and Clayton are pursuing thesis projects involving periglacial landforms in interior and western Alaska.

Cryoplanation terraces (CTs) look much like giant staircases ascending ridges and hills—one scientific article described them as "Cyclopean stairways." They are very common in the uplands of Beringia, the mostly unglaciated region extending from eastern Siberia to northwestern Canada. Although much has been written about these striking landforms, little is known about how they form and how old they are. Kelsey and Clayton have obtained funding for their work on CTs from several sources, including the Arctic Institute of North America, the US Permafrost Association, the Geological Society of America, and several MSU units. Kelsey recently received a dissertation improvement award from the National Science Foundation to support her research on determining the ages and rates of development of these landforms.

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Faculty Focus

Frederick (‘Fritz’) Nelson
Adjunct Professor

Frederick (‘Fritz’) Nelson has been an Adjunct Professor in the department since 2014. After spending 25 years as a professor in universities on and near the east coast (Rutgers, Cornell, SUNY, Delaware), Fritz retired from undergraduate teaching and moved back to his native upper Midwest. This isn't his first affiliation with our department—he earned his MS degree in MSU's geography program in the 1970s.

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Over the past decade Nelson has served as President of the U.S. Permafrost Association, Vice-President and Councilor of the American Geographical Society, as a member of the Board of Governors of the Arctic Institute of North America, and on the Council of the International Permafrost Association. He was part of the subgroup of permafrostists in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change awarded (collectively, with former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore) the Nobel Peace Prize. He is a recipient of the François Emile Matthes Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Cryospheric Sciences from the Association of American Geographers, and the Distinguished Alumni Award from Northern Michigan University.

Fritz is very happy to be affiliated with his old home department again, and hopes to recruit new graduate students for thesis research on any of the projects described here.
Ashton Shortridge Professor of Geography

Let’s start with some Geography Trivia! Travel by bike or car from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Seattle, Washington, passing only through US States and Canadian Provinces that start with a letter in the word WOMAN. What’s your route? While you puzzle that out, I’ll fill you in on some happenings from 2017. I continued to work as Graduate Program Director, and will cover that I’ll also briefly mention my own work in the classroom, with my graduate students, and a family update.

This was a busy year for me and the students I work with. In the Spring I taught Advanced GIS (GEO 425) and a fairly new course called Geoprocessing (GEO 429). I’ve taught GEO 425 at least 15 times since 2001, so I’ve gotten to know most of our GIS-oriented students through that course. Geoprocessing is all about using code (mostly Python) to think about and solve spatial problems. I had an especially strong group of students in that course. In the Fall I taught Digital Terrain Analysis (GEO 866), my favorite courses. GEO 428 was back after several years of not being in my rotation, while GEO 866, a spatial statistics course, is an old standby. I had over thirty students in that course, including six geographers, one of whom was an undergraduate! I advised just three students this year.

Nick Ronnei produced an outstanding master's thesis. Among other things he developed a slick web-based map interface and system architecture to download global elevation data. Ameen Kadhim passed his comps exams and is busily analyzing the effects of environmental change on southeastern Iraq. And Jonnel Sanciangco joined me this fall to research geospatial health.

As for my research, I spent significant time in 2017 working on uncertainty models for digital terrain data, facilitating applied health research for the State of Michigan, and working with many people on a range of interesting projects, from business site location to panda habitats, from characterizing classification accuracy of land cover in coastal and humid areas, to using social media data to understand dynamic traffic patterns in New York City. On the personal side, while I got to go to France (and Andorra) in 2016, this past year was less adventurous. I did travel to Carbondale, Illinois with my family to see the eclipse. It was fantastic, and very, very hot and humid. I do love Michigan summers! My three girls are all teens, with the oldest, Ayley, starting her sophomore year here at Michigan State. My wife Anastasia and I often attend events at high school and wonder where the time went.

Julie Winkler Professor of Geography

Since I last contributed to the departmental newsletter, I completed my term as AAG vice president, president, and past president; and published Climate Change: A Global Dilemma (GEO 409) that is electives for the concentration and for the Environmental Geoscience degree more broadly. I am also teaching, for the first time in 17 years, Advanced Quantitative Methods (GEO 865). I am taking over from Bruce Pigozzi who recently retired—big shoes to fill!

I am now in my fourth year as an associate editor for Science Advances, the online journal published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. On the personal front, I continue to pursue dressage and gardening, and local and international travel with my wonderful husband.

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 and visiting female geographers, SWIG organizes a weekly writing group, hosts a graduate-to-undergraduate mentoring program, and contributes to Department and community events such as Geography Awareness Week, Girls in Math and Science Day, and more. SWIG is also working with the GEO Alumni Network to facilitate an alumni-to-graduate mentoring program. At the beginning of 2018, SWIG launched its first school-wide scholarship. The scholarship is intended to encourage geography students who are dedicated to furthering their academic and professional goals to seek graduate opportunities. Recipients receive $75. i.e. the cost of applying to graduate school at MSU.

Along with other MSU geographers, Sharon Ruggles experienced the excitement of the great solar eclipse in 2017 from the south parking lot. The sun was about 80% covered in the East Lansing area.

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Inaugural Class of AAG Fellows

Joe T. Darden
Professor of Geography

The American Association of Geographers recognized Dr. Joe T. Darden in the inaugural class of AAG Fellows in December, 2017. This group of distinguished individuals serve the AAG by facilitating strategic directions as well as mentoring early and mid-career faculty. Conferred for life, this prestigious award honors geographers who have made significant contributions toward advancing geography over the course of their careers. In addition to his longstanding role as a faculty member in the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences, Dr. Darden is the former Dean of Urban Affairs at MSU. He has received numerous awards for his scholarship and service, including a Fulbright Fellowship, the Distinguished Scholar of Ethnic Geography Award (AAG), the Diversity Award (AAG) and the AAG’s Harold Rose Award for Antiracism Research and Practice in 2016. Dr. Darden is the author or editor of many influential books in the areas of urban geography and social justice, such as The Significance of White Supremacy in the Canadian Metropolis of Toronto (2004) and Detroit: Race Riots, Racial Conflicts and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide (2013). Dr. Darden is committed to issues related to equality and anti-racism and has served organizations such as the Chicago Board of Education, the State of Michigan Task Force on Minority Health Affairs, and the NAACP in that capacity. In a related vein, he has served as Chair of the Enhancing Diversity Committee, which focuses on equity practices and the goal of increasing diversity of graduate Geography enrollments in North America.

Outstanding Faculty Advisor Award

Gary Schnakenberg
Undergraduate Advisor

This year, the Office of the Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Dean of Undergraduate Advising established the first University-wide recognition of Academic Advisors at MSU. Four different categories of awards were presented: Outstanding New Academic Advisor, Outstanding Established Advisor, Outstanding Advising Administrator, and for Advisors who also fulfill teaching duties for at least half of their assignments, Outstanding Faculty Advisor. Our own Department’s Gary Schnakenberg won this latter award.

In her nomination letter on Gary’s behalf, Geography Department alumna Paige Gebhardt said, “I found Gary, and the Geography Department, at the Marathon of Majors in 2014… I am grateful to Gary for… showing me that degree in Geography could be both fulfilling and rewarding,” adding that the Geography Department came to feel “like my own family.” Referring to educational research that shows that in middle and high school, overall student success is linked to each student being known well by at least one person working at the school, Gary said, “The job of the academic advisor is a way to bring that into higher education. Students need to feel connected, which in turn leads to their continuing to develop and cultivate further relationship-building.” I am both humbled and honored by receiving this award, and by the great support I have received from the students, Alan, and the rest of the Department faculty and staff.”

Alan’s note: It was very easy for me to nominate Gary for the Outstanding Faculty Advisor Award because he perfectly exemplifies the honor. He totally deserved it because 1) he is an excellent instructor of our Human Geography class and now Senior Seminar, which is our capstone course, and 2) he is an outstanding advisor, one who really cares about his students. Writing his nomination letter was a simple task because it was filled with sentences like this: Gary has done a fantastic job, one that has absolutely revitalized our undergraduate program. We have more than doubled our majors in four years.

Prestigious Fellowship at the Woodrow Wilson Center

Guo Chen
Associate Professor

Dr. Guo Chen has been awarded a prestigious fellowship by the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. for the 2017-18 academic year. This fellowship allows Dr. Chen to work full-time at the Wilson Center with research support to complete her writings on inequality and slums and engage with the Washington policy community. The Wilson Center is the nation’s key nonpartisan policy forum for tackling global issues. Congratulations, Guo!

Undergraduate Research Faculty Mentor of the Year Award

Amber Pearson
Assistant Professor

Dr. Amber Pearson was honored with an Undergraduate Research Faculty Mentor of the Year Award in 2017. Two such awards are given each year at MSU and are designed to honor faculty members who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to mentoring undergraduate students who are conducting research. One of the awards is given to a faculty member associated with science and engineering, whereas the other is for a faculty member in the social sciences and humanities. Dr. Pearson represents the latter group with this honor. The award is distinctive at MSU because it is entirely driven by student nominations and a subsequent review by undergraduate research ambassadors. One of our seniors, Ross Bottomley, nominated Dr. Pearson for this award and had this to say about her: “I am not only proud to be engaged in Dr. Pearson’s research, but also to be able to call her my mentor. She is a highly qualified, highly disciplined, and highly passionate professional intent on instilling in her students the widest breadth of skills with the finest attention to detail. All of us, under her mentorship, have had our lives changed for the better and will be able to covet more competitive positions in the future as a result of our experiences with her.”

Outstanding Specialist Award

Jeff Andresen
Professor of Geography

Dr. Jeff Andresen received the Outstanding Specialist Award for 2016 from the Michigan Association of Extension Agents. In addition to being a Professor in Geography, he is also the Michigan State Climatologist. He is the first geographer to win this award.
Study Abroad in Italy with Dr. Assefa Mehretu

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) 2017 report, Michigan State University ranks in the top ten universities for study abroad participation. Close to 3,000 students participate in study abroad every year. MSU’s goal has been to have over a third of its students participate in study abroad programs before they graduate. The current participation rate is one in four seniors. MSU students may choose from about 270 programs in over 60 countries in all continents including Antarctica. The Social Science in Rome, Italy program which I have been directing since 1992 is a faculty-directed summer program sponsored by the Department of Geography, Environment and Spatial Sciences in the College of Social Science. The focus of the five-week program has been anchored by courses from Integrated Studies in Social Science (ISS) combined with other departmental offerings depending upon the disciplinary interest of the lead professor. When I took over the program in 1992, I offered ISS 315 (Global Diversity and Interdependence) from the Center for Integrative Studies, and added two Geography courses, GEO 113 (Introduction to Economic Geography), and GEO 336 (Geography of Europe). I also added variable credit independent courses from Geography and the College of Social Science that students may elect if they did not need the fixed credit GEO or ISS courses. The Social Science in Rome program is open to all majors in all colleges at MSU. The program’s focus is on current global dynamics in economic, urban, political and cultural globalization with a special focus on factors of international interdependence, competition, cooperation, and conflict. The program also includes introduction to Italian culture, history, art and architecture, and contemporary challenges within the European Union. In addition to my lectures, students are also exposed to about ten guest speakers from Italian universities and think tanks to offer European perspectives on the European culture area and critical issues of international relations, development, trade and finance, geopolitics, international aid, and immigration. Students are required to enroll for a minimum of seven credits from a list of courses in ISS and Geography. The Rome program serves as a vehicle for students to acquire an extramural active learning opportunity by placing students in one of the most vibrant global cities in the world which manifests opportunities and challenges that exemplify current dynamics of globalization. To this end, the program mimics an internship experience by introducing students to major aspects of the Italian culture, the organization of the European economic domain and European politics by using local Italian partners and guest lecturers from Italian universities and think tanks to lecture and provide field experience. Students that show interest in being involved in active civic engagement on issues centered on community problems, environmental stewardship, economic disparities, urban development, and international relations maybe assigned to local collaborating professors or public professionals to pursue their particular interests. However, what most students experience is an exposure to intellectual cavings of global citizenship encompassing qualities of an informed and critical thinking individual with knowledge of places and peoples of the world and the challenges they face to achieve democracy, the rule of law, development, and multi-laterality. Ability to speak Italian is not required. All lectures, including guest presentations, are in English. Italy is a tourist Mecca and many of those tourists are American. Therefore, most places that come in contact with tourists often speak English. The program includes a 15-hour Italian short course to enable MSU students to say greetings and thanks, ask for directions, order food, make simple conversations, etc. A Program Assistant (PA) or two are hired from past Rome students to help new students get acclimated to the city of Rome and the neighborhood where the student accommodation and classroom are located. The PA(s) reside in the same hotel as students and are on call for any help that may be needed. The PA’s responsibility includes helping the professor(s) ensure the safety and wellbeing of students in the program and to let him/her or MSU safety officials know if there are problems that require their immediate attention. The PA(s) also serve as an information source for Rome students for a variety of matters including shopping, touring, banking, dining, etc. After directing the Social Science in Rome program for twenty six years, I plan to phase out following the completion of the 2019 summer program. It is gratifying to know that the program will remain in Geography in the able hands of my Geography colleague, Professor Igor Vojnovic, who will be shadowing in Rome with a three-week overlap with me during the 2018 and 2019 programs. Professor Vojnovic will begin directing the program in summer 2020. I took 31 students and two Program Assistants to Rome last summer. There are now 27 enrolled so far. I have been fortunate to have had a good run with the program with 100 percent completion rate and safety record for students who went with me to Rome since I started directing the program in 1992. I also received pretty good assessments from students about their experience in Rome.

I will end this report with a mention of a sample of direct quotations from letters I have received over the years.

“Thank you for contributing to one of the greatest experiences of my life.”

“First and foremost thank you endlessly for allowing [me] to accompany you and the Michigan State University students to Rome. It was without a doubt the best trip that I have taken in my 20 years of existence.”

“I had such a wonderful time and nothing but good memories to share with my friends and family. Thanks for everything, it was a pleasure to be in your class and to take the trip.”

“Before I went to Rome, I was deadset into going into the medical field. But your teaching and enthusiasm, as well as my own exploration of Rome and Europe, convinced me that I was making the wrong decision. I had to do what I loved, and what I love is history.”

2016 International Loess Fest

Schaetzl organizes international meeting on loess. Yes, Loess.

The world was once a very dusty place. Very dusty. That was the overwhelming opinion of the 75 participants - from 10 different nations - that attended the annual meeting of the INQUA Loess Focus Group in fall, 2016, in western Wisconsin. (INQUA is the International Union for Quaternary Research, and loess is wind-blow sediment, mostly silt.) Randy Schaetzl was the conference trip organizer, with help from graduate student Chase Kasmershak, and with generous financial assistance from a number of sources – MSU Geography, NSF and INQUA, among others. All in all, the 4-day meeting was a rousing success, and put MSU on the dusty map of places where loess research is alive and well. To give you an idea of how “into it” Loess Focus Group members are, we often sign our emails “Your dusty friend”. Not kidding.

Meetings of the Loess Focus Group are referred to as “LoessFests”, because there are both loess exposures to view, and plenty of festing to be done. The 2016 LoessFest marked the first such meeting ever held on American soil. In all, 75 participants from 10 different nations were represented. The conference featured two days of paper presentations and posters, followed by two, full-day field trips. Faculty from the University of Wisconsin, both the Eau Claire and Madison campuses, participated in field trip planning and presentation. Participants got to see the beautiful, rolling landscapes of western Wisconsin, which are covered in places with up to 5 m of loess, and got to meet several of the farmers who make their living off the wonderful loess soils.

FYI, the 2017 LoessFest was held in northern Iran, and the 2018 meeting is in Volgograd, Russia. Who’s in?

Yes, that’s water in the pit. Many parts of the field trip route received between 8 and 11” of rain two days prior to the trip. That’s not a typo. Eleven inches. Although this impacted our ability to see loess in a few of the pits, we nonetheless got to see more frogs.
Meet Erin Bunting New Director

In the Fall of 2017, Dr. Erin Leigh Bunting joined the Department as both Assistant Professor and Director of RS&GIS. Throughout graduate school and her career, Erin has focused her research on time series remote sensing applications, especially in semi-arid to arid systems. Erin received both her MS and PhD from the University of Florida Department of Geography where she focused the majority of her research in the fields of climatology, ecology, and remote sensing. For her PhD, Erin worked across five countries (Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Angola) and 16 ecological systems in Southern Africa studying the spatiotemporal pattern of vegetation change under increased climate variability and people’s perceptions of climate change. Prior to joining the faculty at MSU, Dr. Bunting worked for the United States Geological Survey (USGS) at the Southwestern Biological Science Center in Flagstaff, Arizona. At the USGS, Erin worked closely with researchers from the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management using her skills as a remote sensing ecologist to develop drought vulnerability assessments for the major deserts of the southwestern United States. Such work spanned multiple spatial and temporal scales and involved landscape level remote sensing work to highlight critical climate thresholds of key plant species and field-based experiments studying drought tolerances across differing desert systems. Erin’s experience as an analyst, teacher, and researcher within the academic and governmental realms will be put to good use in her new position as a valuable source of knowledge and assistance for researchers, both on and off campus. To achieve such goals, Erin looks to broaden the group’s on-campus research collaborations, develop an RS&GIS Affiliates program to better partner with faculty, and work more closely with students via trainings, jobs, and collaborative research activities. Erin strives to keep her research at the forefront of the remote sensing field and will push RS&GIS staff to be equally advanced in theoretical and development skills in order to assist academics, government bodies, and non-government organizations in an applied nature.

RS&GIS experienced big changes and growth this past year as we expanded our staff and broadened our research and outreach network. With our new director, and in many ways new direction, we look to expand and grow RS&GIS to build stronger connections both on and off campus. Erin looks to move our group in this direction by engaging in more outreach and development projects. A primary service of our Affiliates program is open source mapping services to assist with data management and distribution as well as spatial data archiving. Another change coming to RS&GIS in 2018 is a move to a larger facility in the Nietz Building on campus. This new space, paired with new computer hardware, will provide more resources for RS&GIS to serve the needs of faculty at MSU and other institutions, continue our outreach to state and local government, and provide quality geospatial training opportunities for students, faculty, and professionals.

Joel Lenz - lead of developer team.

RS&GIS is a diverse group, with a wide variety of projects currently in the works. Our developer team, currently made up of three full time staff, have a wide variety of projects currently in the works. Such a software independent application has great potential to help state and local governments, NGOs, and academics in the distribution of their data to the public.

Within Geography, the RS&GIS developer team has active projects in both the day-to-day management and growth of the department and in the research realm. Currently, we are working closely with the faculty and staff of the onGeo program to develop applications related to course management and enrollment. The onGeo program, which oversees all online courses (credited and professional certificate) for the department, is looking to grow and RS&GIS is providing support to assist in this goal. In 2018, the RS&GIS developer group also has several research projects in the works, including a system for the College of Philosophy and the department in the including mobile application development for field data collection.

Over the last year, two of our developers have been working closely with researchers in Veterinary Medicine at MSU in the development of a mobile application that will help herd health managers real-time information on changes in metabolic stress biomarkers. TracMiCow (or MiCOW) will collect, parse, and collage herd data.

RS&GIS is working with researchers at the College of Veterinary Medicine on database design, the web application development, and in application deployment and testing. Currently, we are in the testing stage and RS&GIS has been working closely with researchers to further refine the mobile app so it works to its fullest potential.

Off campus, the developers have working partnerships with USAID, the Michigan Fitness Foundation, Michigan Sea Grant, Ingham County, and the State of Michigan including the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Quality, and Department of Insurance and Financial Services. In one such project, currently in its fourth year, the RS&GIS developer team has been working on a large-scale application development project for USAID, particularly for the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For this project, RS&GIS is contributing to the support, development, implementation, and testing of a system called BiHPerform (BiHP). BiHP is an application that collects and provides information, through a web mapping service, on country activities (funding, staff, etc.). This system is linked to an internal geographic information system (GIS) that uses the BiHP data to create geographic visualizations of program results. Some recent work RS&GIS has been tasked with assisting in the development of BiHP managing / working with the GIS data, and providing in-country GIS trainings.

RS&GIS is excited to work more closely with research faculty and continuing our success in the areas of outreach and training. Information about our staff, projects, and findings can be found on our website: http://www.rsgis.msu.edu.

Joel Lenz - lead of developer team.

Robert Goodwin - lead of analyst team.

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GIS Technology is used in thousands of careers:

By completing this certificate, you’ll be able to:

• Design, aerial image interpretation, and geospatial analysis.
• Ethics, and trends.
• Skills, and expand career opportunities.
• Topics include geographic information, global positioning systems, graphic and map design, aerial image interpretation, and geospatial analysis, ethics, and trends.

Our certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will develop your geographic awareness and geospatial technology skills, and expand career opportunities. Topics include geographic information, global positioning systems, graphic and map design, aerial image interpretation, and geospatial analysis, ethics, and trends.

By completing this certificate, you’ll be able to:

• Create maps to communicate geographic information
• Interpret aerial and satellite images
• Use cutting-edge GIS software
• Apply GIS analysis to real-world situations

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• Apply GIS analysis to real-world situations

Reviews of Our Program

“Thank you so much for offering such a wonderful class. I have never learned so much in one class, and actually gained so many new things, skills in Geospatial technology, it’s an amazing field.”

Cheikh Sidi Elmoctar
Consultant Geologist

“Last Spring semester I took GIS 325. I am now being recognized by multiple teams at the corporation for my knowledge in ArcGIS. Teams are bending my boss to allow me to do work for them!”

Abbey Neerken
Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Mack Lab Conducts Research about Entrepreneurship and Water Affordability

This spring fourteen students (four PhD and ten undergraduates) are working on research about entrepreneurship and water affordability. The entrepreneurship work is sponsored by a grant from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the water work is funded by the National Science Foundation. The students are working on primary and secondary data collection and statistical analyses of these data. Research results will be presented in April at the Association of American Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting in New Orleans and the University Undergraduate Research and Arts Forum (UURAF).

Aside from providing experiential opportunities in research, the lab is also dedicated to helping students advance professionally. This spring students will be designing and participating in professional development workshops. We also try to have a bit of fun via group activities. The photo (to the right) is from a breakout room outing where the students tried to gather supplies to survive a zombie apocalypse. Thank you to all of the students working in the lab! They make the research possible.

Undergraduate researchers have reached incredible achievements working in Dr. Amber Pearson’s laboratory.

Last year, alumnus Ross Bottomley was the 2017 recipient of the department’s Undergraduate of the Year Award. Ross studied children’s exposure to ‘blue’ space (e.g., water bodies) as part of the larger study conducted in Wellington, New Zealand. Ross presented his work at the 2017 AAG conference.

This year, Amber DeJohn, a major in Political Theory & Constitutional Democracy in James Madison College, as well as Economic Geography in the College of Social Science, and minor in Geographic Information Sciences, has developed her research profile. Over the past year, she studied why some communities have high levels of Twitter usage about depression. This interdisciplinary collaboration with the Human Development and Family Studies Department was funded by the Provost Undergraduate Research Initiative. DeJohn prepared and submitted this work as an academic publication. Now, she is studying the effects of neighborhood decline on homicides in Flint (to be presented in New Orleans at the annual American Association of Geographers (AAG) conference). She was recently awarded the Beinecke Scholarship, which will fund her upcoming graduate studies.

Ben Dougherty is an environmental geography major and has been a student researcher in Dr. Pearson’s lab since September 2016. Originally a microbiology major, he decided to make the jump to geography after witnessing firsthand the wide applicability of the discipline to a variety of his research interests. To date, Ben has presented at UURAF, Mid-SURE, and is presenting at AAG in Spring 2018. Mid-SURE and UURAF are opportunities for undergraduates at MSU to display their work with other students, faculty, and general audiences. Largely funded by the Provost Undergraduate Research Initiative, Ben has embarked on a variety of research projects, including modeling mosquito habitat related to Kaposi sarcoma prevalence in rural Uganda, and using Google Street View (GSV) to quantify urban green space. Recently, he co-authored a systematic review that explores the use of GSV in health-related research, submitted to Health & Place. Ben has also facilitated community workshops and bio-measurements, as part of federal grant preparations.

Claudia Allou, a recent addition to the lab, is double-majoring in human biology and comparative cultures and politics. Her research interests include health inequalities related to food access. We welcome Claudia and are excited to see where her research leads her!
Like many geography departments in the nation, we celebrate Geography Awareness Week each November. The purpose of this celebration is to raise awareness about the discipline and its high relevance to society as a whole. We do so through a variety of academic, social, and service activities that typically involve the Undergraduate Geography Club, SWIG, and the Geography Graduate Group (TripleG). TripletG and SWIG kicked off the week in 2017 with a colloquium discussion, hosted a trivia night at Tin Can in East Lansing, represented the department at an information table at the MSU Union, and organized a roundtable discussion linking social justice to research, practice, and outreach. The keynote event was the excellent presentation that Ms. Krista Schlyer gave on Wednesday evening about the borderlands between the U.S. and Mexico.
Undergraduate Student of the Year
Ross Bottomley with award presented by Assistant Professor Amber Pearson.

Recipient of Lawrence Sommers Award - Rajiv Paudel with his field assistant by the Niger River.

Graduate Student of the Year PhD
Victoria Breeze with award presented by Associate Professor Nathan Moore.

Graduate Research Presentation Winners
L to R: PhD students Sara Torres (3rd place), Joshua Vertalka (2nd place), and MS student Amanda Rzotkiewicz (1st place).

Nafiseh Haghtalab was the winner of the Owen Gregg Global Climate Change Research Award (with Professor Jeff Andresen).

Please Join Us in 2019 for the Geography Career Day and Job Fair!
Dee Jordan

2017 was a great year for 4th year doctoral student Dee Jordan, though retired from student government; Dee was still actively engaged and involved in student life at MSU and the Greater Lansing Community.

Dee served on the Diversity Panel for the Graduate Student Life and Wellness Leadership Fellows and contributed to important conversations about navigating MSU as a student of color. She was the Graduate Student Representative on the College of Social Science’s Steering Committee and the Graduate School Dean’s Search Committee.

Over the summer Dee served as a Graduate Student Facilitator for the Summer Research Opportunity Program (SRoP) and journeyed to the Southern Hemisphere, specifically Botswana for the wedding of fellow Geo Grad Mattie Bene in Gaborone, cruised on the Okavango Delta and went on Safari in Maun.

Dee was the Lansing Area Ambassador for the Black Doll Affair Self-Esteem Movement headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia and this year hosted the 1st Black Doll Affair Self-Esteem Party and Toy giveaway for girls 10 years and under from underserved elementary schools in the Lansing Area.

During the fall semester, Dee served as the Graduate Student Representative for the College of Social Science Dean’s Advisory Board for Diversity and Inclusion. She is an active member of the Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate minority recruitment initiative with Dr. Ashton Shortridge, Georgia’s 5th Congressional District! She was one of the Judges for the Alpha of the Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate Board for Diversity and Inclusion. She is an active member of the Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate minority recruitment initiative with Dr. Ashton Shortridge, Georgia’s 5th Congressional District!

Dee is Co-Leading the Department’s underrepresented minority recruitment initiative with Dr. Ashton Shoertridge, contributed to the Geo Blog for the 2017 Geography Awareness Week activities and became a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated.

Dee passed her Comprehensive Exams in December and was selected as the 2018 recipient of the Excellence in Diversity Award in Alpha Sorority Incorporated.

Week activities and became a proud member of Alpha Kappa

Ameen Kadhim

My research interests are using geospatial to measuring and monitoring Sea-level Rise. There is growing debate among scientists on how sea level rise will impact coastal environments, particularly in countries where economic activities are sustained along these coasts. An essential factor in this debate is how best to characterize the environmental impacts over time. This study will investigate the measurement and modeling of sea level rise and has implications on near-coastal riverine regions. The study will use a variety of data sources, including satellite imagery from 1975 to 2017, digital elevation data and previous studies for the river regions.

The main objectives of the study are:

- Examine influences of sea level rise from the geospatial perspective by using a different resolution/accuracy of data.
- Determine sea level rise on near-coastal riverine regions by using (Bathub Inundation Model) to estimate and predict the sea level rise risk in both regions.
- Determine influences of sea level rise on near-coastal riverine regions since 1975 until present.

This research will focus on two regions with important coastal lands: southern Iraq along the Shatt Al-Arab River and the most populated United States in Louisiana along the Mississippi River. These sites are important for both their extensive low-lying land and for the significant coastal economic activities in both regions. This study will investigate the connections between the historic sea level rise and vegetation change in two critical near-coastal riverine regions.

Finally, the global warming represents perhaps the single most significant environmental challenge of our time. There are many consequences, the magnitude of impact will be different in different parts of the planet. This study will discuss the problem of sea level rise by remote sensing and reaching back 40 years to understand how these regions are already changing. Also, will apply error propagation to create spatially autocorrelated surfaces in both regions. This modeling is reducing the effects of digital elevation model (DEM) error on Bathub Inundation Model.

Victoria Breeze

2017 marked off two big milestones for me as a grad student. First, I am officially a PhD candidate now, courtesy of passing both my comp exams and proposal defense. Second, I became a published author with a research update on African students in China with “China tops US and UK as destination for anglophone African students” in The Conversation and the article “Agent-Based Modeling of Temporal and Spatial Dynamics in Life Cycle Sustainability Assessment” in Journal of Industrial Ecology where I helped fellow MSU Geographers on an agent-based modeling project. I also presented “A Systematic Review of Chinese-Language Research on Investment in African Agriculture” at AAG last spring in Boston and look forward to this year in New Orleans. I had so much fun meeting geographers from all over as an AAG volunteer last year that I’ll be volunteering again this year. If you see me in the halls, stop by and say “hi!”

Mattie Bene Kelepile

My name is Mattie Kelepile. I got married to my soulmate Kabelo Kelepile under the beautiful skies of Africa. I look forward to an even better 2018 because I am so close to finishing up my program. Our department is a great place to be, diversity and professionalism are held high. I am so proud to be a Spartan that all my family members have MSU logo t-shirts! Go Green!
Dan Wanyama

Dan Wanyama is a PhD student with research interests in GIS, agriculture, sustainability, and land use and land change. He holds an MS in Geospatial Science degree from the University of North Alabama, Florence, Alabama, and a BS in Environmental Science degree from Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. He has previously conducted research on climate change effects on maize productivity in Kenya, urban heat island effect in Nairobi, and spatial analysis of maize yield patterns in Central Malawi among other projects.

He is currently studying the relationship between land use land cover change and crop yields in two counties in western Kenya. He believes that a better understanding of interactions among people and their environment is handy in both the improvement of people's livelihoods through improved crop production and the sustainability of the environment. It is hypothesized that both goals can be achieved simultaneously with the use of geospatial technologies and spatial modelling. This project is threefold:

Year 1: Understanding land use and land cover change in Bungoma and Trans Nzoia counties

Year 2: Modeling Bungoma and Trans Nzoia farmers’ decision making: an agent-based modeling approach

Year 3: Predicting Bungoma and Trans Nzoia crop yield changes under different scenarios

In his first year, he is using remotely sensed imagery from Landsat to analyze land use and land cover changes and their implications to crop yields. His imagery grant application to DigitalGlobe has recently been approved, and he believes the finer resolution data will greatly improve the project outcomes. Field work is planned for the summer of 2019 both for ground truthing of Year 1 results and collecting data for subsequent analyses.

B.J. Baule

Since starting my doctoral program at MSU in 2016 I’ve had the opportunity to work on developing both my research program and outreach skills working with the Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments (GLISA) and the Michigan State Climate Office. My own research has focused quantifying the characteristics and changes in precipitation across the Midwest and how these changes have affected nitrogen management and prevalence of tree fruit diseases. I’ve had the opportunity to present preliminary results at the American Meteorological Society Applied Climatology Conference and the American Association of State Climatologists Annual Meeting in Asheville, NC. I am also planning on presenting more results at the upcoming Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers in New Orleans, LA. My plans for the upcoming summer include field work at multiple locations around Michigan to collect data on nitrogen loss in corn agro-ecosystems. In addition to my own research, I’ve also had the opportunity to help with the construction of instrumentation towers to observe atmospheric temperature inversions over fruit orchards with Dr. Jeff Andresen.

I’ve also had the opportunity to further develop my scientific communication and outreach skills. Over the past year, I’ve delivered presentations on climate change and adaptation to Michigan Green Cities, the National Environmental Health Association, and extension educators from across the Upper Midwest, and Kalamazoo Public Schools. I am also coordinating a group of climate scientists in the development of quarterly and annual climate summaries for stakeholders and decision makers in the Great Lakes region. This group involves scientists from Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Clayton Queen

Clayton Queen is a physical geography Masters student, spent the summer working on his thesis research in Alaska and British Columbia. His thesis focuses on a periglacial landform called cryoplanation terraces. The project focuses on large-scale mapping and geomorphometry to determine whether the features are formed through climatic processes associated with late-lying snow. Field work for this project took him to several sites across Alaska and into British Columbia. In addition to his own research, Clayton is also involved with Dr. Fritz Nelson’s NSF-funded Circumpolar Active Layer Monitoring Program (CALM) on Alaska’s North Slope. Back in Michigan, he spent the last year working for Dr. Arbogast on a project mapping Michigan’s Coastal Dunes.

Ryan Nagelkirk

I am in the third year of my PhD program, advised by Dr. Kyla Dahlin. My research centers on a bizarre ecological phenomenon: in Africa, savanna elephants push over mature trees, some taller than 30 feet. Growing evidence suggests that elephants are the primary disturbance in African savannas, creating the iconic, sparsely wooded landscapes. To test that hypothesis, I am doing a regional analysis of the dominant disturbances of woody cover in protected ecosystems across eastern and southern Africa.

My work heavily relies on scripting and remote sensing, and I work mostly in R and Go. I am familiar with GeoPandas, GeoJSON, and the raster package. I have taken Python and JavaScript courses on Udacity, and in my free time I play video games. I also enjoy playing the ukulele and spending time with my cat. I am currently looking for summer research opportunities. I am interested in working on R, JavaScript, or Python-related work or software development.

Kelsey Nyland

Kelsey Nyland is a third year PhD student and recent recipient of a NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement grant. For her dissertation Kelsey is testing a more than century-old hypothesis that late-lying snowbanks in periglacial regions can lead to the formation of large elevated terraces known as cryoplanation landscapes. In addition to her own research she is an active participant in the NSF-funded Circumpolar Active Layer Monitoring (CALM) Program monitoring permafrost change in northern Alaska. In conjunction with data collection for the CALM program, Kelsey is the United States Young National Correspondent in the Global Terrestrial Network on Permafrost (GTN-P) where she assists in maintaining their open-access database for permafrost related data from around the world.

Clayton Queen

Clayton Queen, a physical geography Masters student, spent the summer working on his thesis research in Alaska and British Columbia. His thesis focuses on a periglacial landform called cryoplanation terraces. The project focuses on large-scale mapping and geomorphometry to determine whether the features are formed through climatic processes associated with late-lying snow. Field work for this project took him to several sites across Alaska and into British Columbia. In addition to his own research, Clayton is also involved with Dr. Fritz Nelson’s NSF-funded Circumpolar Active Layer Monitoring Program (CALM) on Alaska’s North Slope. Back in Michigan, he spent the last year working for Dr. Arbogast on a project mapping Michigan’s Coastal Dunes.

Nafiseh Haghtalab

My name is Nafiseh Haghtalab. I am in the third year of my PhD in Geography, Environment and Spatial Science. My main research focuses on land use/land cover change interactions with climate. I have focused on east Africa, as that region is vulnerable to any changes in climate. Most people rely on rain-fed agriculture for feeding. When there is a slight change in precipitation amount, intensity, distribution, or timing, they may lose their yield. Theoretically, there is a strong coupling between LULC change and climate through energy and water budget. When any of those parameters of energy and water budget like soil moisture or sensible and latent heat fluxes change, there would be a significant feedback to the climate and change the climate features dramatically. Actually, there is a strong coupling loop between atmosphere and land, in which any changes in any part of the loop can propagate throughout the whole system. As soil moisture and precipitation are two essential factors in success or failure of the farming season, any perturbation in any of them will change the productivity. Considering food security in Africa, having productive agriculture would assure that. Therefore, in my research I am going to investigate the land-atmosphere coupling and interactions in east Africa to address food security in that region. I am doing this research under supervision of Dr. Nathan Moore who is an associate professor in the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Science.

Recently, Nathan and I have submitted an interesting paper entitled “Precipitation Pattern Analysis and Rainy Season Change Detection over Malawi”. In this paper we talked about inter-annual variability of rainy season indices over Malawi. All previous studies found no significant changes in rainfall season using station data. However, using gridded dataset, we found that there is a robust change in the onset, cessation, and length of growing season, as well as drought and flood events, which is consistent with the farmers’ claim of changing the climate.

As this work can be very beneficial to many people especially in poor countries, I am planning to continue my research in this field after graduating from this degree, looking at the impacts of those changes on farmers and productivity of farms. Also, I am interested in academic environment and will try to continue this research as a faculty in a credible university. However, in short time after graduation, I prefer to improve my research experience as a research associate under a postdoc position before applying for a faculty position.
**Graduate Student News**

**Chase Kas cher ak**

This past fall semester, I spent a lot of time in the ground, or rather in soil pits. Dr. Phil Robertson, the director of the Great Lakes Tattoo and Research Center at MSU, asked me to characterize soils at each of their research stations. There are currently 6 sites in total – 3 in Wisconsin and 3 in Michigan. These research stations are part of a long-term study on utilizing ‘non-arable’ lands for bioenergy crop production. Until now, the soils at most of these sites had not been described. With the help of an undergrad- uate student, Jeremy Rapp, and my advisor, Randy Schaetzl, I was able to describe, characterize, and sample all 6 sites this past fall. Side note, I did this while taking two of Dr. Schaetzl’s courses, which were also very field intensive. All in all, I spent 13 days in the field this past fall semester.

A few years ago, Randy Schaetzl and David Rothstein, a professor in the For- estry Department, researched seasonal variations in aluminum, iron, and dissolved organic carbon fluxes in forest soils in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. I plan to use some of these same sites for one of my dissertation chapters. Specifically, I will be collecting water samples from O, E, and B horizons daily between 2019 spring snowmelt in. In preparation for this high temporal resolution sampling next spring, Dr. Schaetzl and I traveled up to the UP to empty the water collection bottles and deter- mine which sites I should use for my dissertation. This was long, but very productive day in the field, and was a terrific way to end my 2017 field season. We traveled up there on December 1st, and to both of our surprises, there was no snow on the ground! We will be returning after the spring 2018 snowmelt to empty the collection bottles. Hopefully we will have nice weather again.

Dr. Schaetzl enjoying some soil leachate in the woods. He claims, “this is the best water you’ve ever tasted.” I think I will have to take his word on this one.

**Aaron Kamoske**

Aaron Kamoske is a second year PhD student in Dr. Kyla Dahlin’s Environmental Remote Sensing and Modeling Lab (ERSAM). Aaron received his Bachelor’s degree in Natural Resource Conservation and a certificate in GIS Science and Technologies from the University of Montana’s College of Forestry. During and following his undergrad- uate work, he worked on vegetation monitoring projects in the Northern Rockies and as a cartographer for an international NGO. Aaron’s current research examines the influences of environmental and anthropogenic variables on closed-canopy forests through the use of hyperspectral and LiDAR remote sensing, spatial statistics, eco- logical modeling, and field sampling. This past summer he traveled to the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Maryland and Harvard Forest in Massachusetts to collect foliar samples for chemical and spectral analysis. He is looking forward to collecting more samples this summer at other sites throughout the Midwest and East Coast.

(Lef t) Jeremy Rapp digging a soil pit on the last day of a four-day field work stint around lake Michigan. Notice the bandages around his hands- digging soil pits indeed builds character. (Right) Chase describing a soil pedon.

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**Cheyenne Lei**

In Fall 2017, as part of a class focused on Micrometeorological Instrumentation taught by Dr. Jiquan Chen, an eddy covariance flux tower was constructed on Baker Hall, next to the Geography building. This flux tower was constructed to measure surface-atmosphere fluxes of energy, metro- logical data, and trace gas over the urban ecosystem of Michigan State University. Variables mea- sured included temperature from a sonic anemometer, density of water vapor, CO₂, and CH₄ from gas analyzers, precipitation, incoming and outgoing radiation from a net radiometer, and 3-dimensional wind components from a sonic anemometer. These data are subsequently were then processed using flux computational software.

Of the four students in the class, each was given a specific task to complete in the process of col- laborating the design and construction of the flux tower which included computer coding, inventory, physical design, troubleshooting and equipment testing. The final product was demonstrated in front of the geography department for one week during October 2017, where interested students and faculty could interact with the class on development. The completed flux tower can still be seen the north west roof of Baker Hall, and persons interested in current data can contact Dr. Jiquan Chen, Cheyenne Lei, William Baule, Gabriela Shirkey or Chase Brooke.

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**Pouyan Hatami**

Pouyan Hatami joined the Department of Geography in Spring 2017 as a PhD student. He earned his bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering at Shirazu Univer- sity, Iran. He has two Master’s degrees in Engineering; one in Civil and Environ- mental Engineering from University of Tehran, Iran and another in Biosystems Engineering from Michigan State University. His research area lies in the applica- tion of data mining and machine learning in Geography. He is currently working on developing a real-time crime prediction framework in large cities with the intent of making it publicly available as an application on cell-phones. Field work is planned for the summer of 2019 both for ground truthing of Year 1 results and collecting data for subsequent analyses.

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Even with all the research-related excitement 2018 is sure to bring, on a more per- sonal note my Husband and I are most excited about our family growing again. We’ll be welcoming another son (our first, Ezra is two years old) in late January.

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**April Frake**

Looking back over 2017, it can best be described as the year of getting things done. I started the year as a newly minted ABD. With my coursework, proposal defense, and comprehensive exams behind me it was time to return to Malawi for my third and final trip to finish collecting data. In March, my lab mate Leah Mungai and I made the journey to Malawi together. I’d previously always traveled alone, so having Leah with me for part of the trip was a real treat. Together we shared several meals and late evenings swapping stories from the field that day. I recall our time fondly, remembering how patient Leah was with me as she assisted me in keeping up with Swahili studies while we were away!

Since returning from the field my attention has been directed at preparing various manuscripts, processing, analyzing, and writing up my findings. I recently presented a portion of my work at the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) conference in Baltimore and now am in the final push towards completing my dissertation and defending later this year. As such, I’ve been winding down my service commitments to the department. Looking back, I’m most encouraged by my work as Co-President of Supporting Women in Geography (SWIG). Our chapter has seen tremendous outcomes over the past year: a thriving, weekly writing sup- port group, an established undergraduate-graduate mentorship program that through partnership with the Alumni Advisory Board is expanding (be on the lookout for details on getting involved!), and the development of the SWIG Scholarship Fund. This Spring, we’re excited to represent our chapter and department at AAG on a SWIG-sponsored panel.

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Even with all the research-related excitement 2018 is sure to bring, on a more per- sonal note my Husband and I are most excited about our family growing again. We’ll be welcoming another son (our first, Ezra is two years old) in late January.
A Geographer’s Career Perspective

Reflecting on my career in regional planning and public service administration in Michigan, Florida and Virginia; I find it interesting how geography’s broad perspective on man-land relationships and systematic analytical approach proved so relevant as background to my diverse regional planning and public administration career. I summarize below how some geography (and other social science) classes contributed substantially to projects and work responsibilities throughout my planning career.

Population Geography & Demography: Several positions challenged me to produce population estimates and projections for many units of local government to provide either a specific project or larger regional policy framework. Regional planning jobs in Lansing, Miami, Richmond and Fredericksburg helped in broad understanding of demographic methodology. Local and regional comprehensive planning is rooted in serving a community’s current and future population. A position as “Aging Demographer” for the Virginia Dept. for the Aging gave me the platform to work with State demographers to forecast the impact of an aging population for local and regional social workers, gerontologists and long-term care providers.

Transportation Geography: This class gave me a systematic understanding of transportation networks, and the rudiments of transportation system planning. This background proved useful when thrust into the role of working with local and regional transportation planners and traffic engineers on large-scale land development in the process of reviewing “Developments of Regional Impact (DRI)”. Also this background helped me support regional long-range transportation planning done by the metropolitan planning organizations in Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Richmond, Fredericksburg and Washington D.C. Moreover, these positions also drew heavily on an understanding of secondary data sources to help develop and refine small area socio-economic estimates and projections important to the modelling of future land use and performance.

Physical Geography and Ecology: The understanding of the forces that shaped the Earth’s form and the influence of the land’s physical characteristics (e.g. soil, slope, land cover, hydrology, etc.) helped tremendously when evaluating sites and landscapes for suitability for development or retention value to natural ecological systems. This understanding proved very relevant to reviewing development impacts in South Florida and advocating the retention of forest cover in Virginia and Pennsylvania to mitigate the long-term impact of urban impervious surface development so highly correlated with population and economic growth and help clean up the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Economic Geography & Basic Economics: Exposure in these courses to regional input-output models, shift-share and fiscal impact models, economic base theory and other topics were all helpful to understanding the regional economic impact of major public infrastructure and private land developments. With governments’ focus on sustaining a growing economy to generate tax revenues to meet the expanding cost of government services, it was very useful to understand how to analyze the differential impacts of economic sector growth and influence economic development practitioners.

Cartography, Computer Mapping & GIS: The ability to construct a map to illustrate spatial information has been a fundamental and invaluable skill throughout my career. Much of this skill has been gained through on-the-job training to keep up with the rapid evolution of GIS technology. Related project experiences included (to name only a few):

• updating regional geographic base files for the Census Bureau for the 1980 Census,
• hand-drawing transportation network maps for a regional transportation policy plan in South Florida,
• producing thematic maps of small area population, housing and business growth and demographic and economic characteristics using desktop GIS software,
• analyzing raster map datasets to identify temporal changes in land cover,
• mapping university solid waste and recyclable generation and designing collection routes to efficiently recover recyclable materials, and
• working with GIS consultants to build a regional land use scenario modelling system.

For all of these (and many, many more), the ability to use GIS software (or work closely with a GIS analyst) proved fundamentally important to work with spatial data to identify trends and data inter-relationships and explain these patterns (and their implications) to the general public, as well as policy makers faced with making public resource allocation and regulatory decisions.

Declaring Geography as my undergraduate major was largely an unexpected outcome of being able to waive a language requirement at MSU, thanks to living abroad and picking up fluent Spanish. Thus I had the freedom to explore many Geography classes as elective courses and “back-in” to a Geography major. By the time I entered the planning community workforce while writing Masters’ thesis, I (and my employers) realized the relevance of a geographer’s skillset in the planning arena and embraced my academic background. Of course, another skill learned relevant to an urban and regional planner. Knowing of my diverse planning career, some planning colleagues refer to me as a “Renaissance Planner” without realizing the important contribution of my Geography background. To all my past professors, many thanks for giving me such a practical and relevant way of trying to make the world a better place!
Alumni News

Marianne Cardwell (Van Kerckhove)

After graduating from MSU in ’98, I moved to the Washington, DC area where I lived for 8 years. During that time, I obtained my Masters in Geographic and Geographic Sciences from George Mason University and worked for Parsons and then SAIC as a GIS Analyst and a GIS Programmer. In 2007, my husband, sons, and I moved to the Indianapolis area to be closer to family. I’ve been working for Woolpert since as a GIS Programmer and Team Lead. I recently moved into a Project Manager role specializing in the aviation market. Airports are like small cities and towns combined, with FAA regulations thrown in for good measure. It’s a fascinating field and there’s never a dull moment!

In my free time, my family enjoys karate and traveling. We try to visit Belgium every other year to visit my family. Last summer, I crossed a trip off my bucket list as we visited a number of national parks including Badlands, Yellowstone, and Grand Teton. It was an amazing trip that I won’t soon forget! We are already thinking about our next trip, maybe exploring the southwestern United States.

The above picture shows us in Badlands NP.

Dan Cole

During 2017, I presented talks at the following academic conferences: “A Cartographer’s History and Analysis of Indian-White Relations in the Great Plains” at the 2017 Great Plains Symposium, Lincoln, Nebraska; “Exhibiting the Interconnections between Inuit, Narwhals, and Climate Change” at the AAG conference in Boston; and “The Outbreak of Epidemics in a Connected World: Exhibiting Maps of Contagious Diseases - The Spanish Flu to the Zika Virus” at the International Cartographic Conference (ICCC2017), in Washington, DC. While at the AAG, I transitioned from vice-president to president-elect of the Cartography and Geographic Information Society (CaGIS). Meanwhile, I was involved in research and map design for exhibits at the Natural History museum dealing with Narwhals, Inuit and Climate Change, and at the Suckler Asian Art museum on Buddhist cultures in Asia. And on the side, I serve as a judge for the annual CaGIS Map Design competition.

Harry Colestock, III

After retiring from the military in 1991 and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management in 2011, my wife and I have retired to a life of community and other volunteer involvement along with enjoying sunsets on the York River in Gloucester, Virginia.

Hannah Deindorfer

I graduated MSU Geo Department in Spring 2015 and since then have been working full time at Esri in Redlands, CA. I was originally hired as an intern and went full time after 3 months. The past few years I’ve been working specifically on ArcGIS Pro, helping build their external facing websites, write blogs, test the software, perform usability research, and more. 2017 was a great year for me. This year, my blog was featured in the Esri news magazines ArcWatch and ArcUser, and the Esri Facebook page. In 2018, I’ll be transitioning to a lead position on a new product (which I’ll be happy to share with you when it’s “not top secret”).

In 2017, I also started my own side business creating websites and logos for small businesses. Here’s my business website: http://hannahdeindorfer.com/.

Mike Cousins

Greetings MSU GEO, 2017 has been a hell of a ride. On January 26th, my wife and I welcomed our daughter Morgan Cousins. This little Sparty is the newest face of Michigan State University and we couldn’t be more proud! It’s been an amazing year as we visited a number of national parks and a number of other places. We try to visit Belgium every other year to visit my family. Last summer, I crossed a trip off my bucket list as we visited a number of national parks including Badlands, Yellowstone, and Grand Teton. It was an amazing trip that I won’t soon forget! We are already thinking about our next trip, maybe exploring the southwestern United States.

The above picture shows us in Badlands NP.

Paige Gebhardt

It’s been an exciting year for me! I was hired into the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in January 2017. I work with all kinds of GIS projects in the DNR, including static maps, story maps, data management, and training others in GIS. I was lucky enough to go to the ESRI User Conference in San Diego, California in July, where I smiled all week amidst my fellow map lovers. I continue to meet amazing people and learn as much as I can.

Cheers to a new year! The photo above is of me with Smokey Bear while I was volunteering this past summer at Detroit River Days with the DNR Forest Resources Division.

Owen Gregg

BA-Geography (1964)

Hello to everyone in the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences. Sometimes I feel like I’m probably the oldest geography grad (BA, 1964) to still be contributing to the newsletter; maybe not. I distinctly remember being in the cartography lab on the top floor of the Nat Sci Building when Kennedy was shot in Dallas. We had the radio on, and we all stood around shell-shocked at the news.

I continue my keen interest in the understanding of climate change, and its effect on us. When Jeff Orlowski showed his film, Chasing Ice, a few years ago, I became intrigued with his filming/photographing. Earlier in 2017, Jeff released his second film, Chasing Coral. He entered it in the Sundance Film Festival, where it received the Audience Award - Documentaries. As I had mentioned to Dr. Argobast a few months ago, I would be happy to help investigate setting-up a small environmentally-orientated film festival at MSU in the near future.

Secondly, I have been involved with Dr. Joseph Long of the St. Petersburgh, FL Coastal & Marine Science Center (US Geological Survey), in setting up cameras to monitor turtle incursion on the Barrier Islands of Pinellas County, Florida. This is a challenging project, but a necessary one as Hurricane Irma did significant damage to our beaches here, but we had a good idea as to where the damage would be the worst so early evacuation residents could take place.

My wife Kay and I continue to make our permanent home here in Clearwater, but also have a home on Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota. Best of both worlds, I guess, although as we get older, harder and harder to maintain. I love MSU-GEO, and hope to become involved with the Alumni Relations Committee in the near future.

John Harrington, Jr.

BS 1972

PhD 1980

For the past 24 years, I have been teaching and contributing scholarship to the geography program at Kansas State University. I am now working with my last 2 PhD students to get them finished in 2018. K-State has been a good place to wrap up a lengthy career. It was a huge honor last year to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award from the AAG Climate Specialty Group. My wife Lisa and I have plans to relocate to NW Oregon or SW Washington during the second half of 2018.

Dennis K Hauser

Class of 1969

My status has changed. My wife and I retired in 2003. She was a teacher and I was a medical auditor.

Our significant current event is we’re joining the MSU Alumni tour going to Australia/New Zealand on Jan 21st. It’s to celebrate our 70th birthdays and 50th wedding anniversary.

Jen Holmstom

MA 2008

I work for an environmental firm called WSB and Associates based out of Minneaplis. I’m responsible for building a new geohazard risk assessment business line for WSB. My group uses geomorphic methods to assess the risk of natural hazards to infrastructure, primarily transportation infrastructure and oil/gas assets. Currently, we are designing from a model for Minnesota DOT that will rank slope vulnerability along trunk highways, allowing them to objectively prioritize mitigation actions and capital expenditures. For oil/gas clients, we help them manage risks to pipeline integrity—floods, slope failures, freeze/thaw cycles, etc.

Most of my time is spent managing my group, securing new clients, serving on industry committees, teaching classes, and giving presentations.

Lauray Johnson and
Nick Perdue

Nick Perdue (12) and Laura Johnson (16) are faculty members in the Department of Geography at Humboldt State University. Nick obtained a tenure-track position in 2016 and has been teaching cartography and topological courses such as Urban Geography and Geography of the American West. He is working on place-based cartography on local experiences of sea level rise. Laura, now faculty in the Department of Geography, has also taught courses in departments of Sociology, Anthropology, and Environmental Studies at HSU, including a capstone Community Action Research course and several topical courses centered on power/privilege and environment. On a personal note, Laura and Nick are getting married this June on the summer solstice and are grateful to MSU’s Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences for bringing them together!
Fatimah Adebiyi
I am currently doing an MA (Education) in Training and Development program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI. I plan to integrate GIS in my work as a curriculum designer in the future. My knowledge and skills in GIS are very relevant to my future career goals as far as location and education are concerned.

Jim Root
I’m a 1970 graduate of your department as well as a Masters at Western Michigan University and a PhD at the University of Cincinnati. I’ve spent my career as an applied geographer doing location research. Shortly after retiring from MapInfo Corporation, I joined Thompson Associates, I started another location based company called Competitive Analytics, my current company. We develop location based restaurant and shopping center location databases in the USA and Canada and develop tools to process MMD-massive mobile data (location surveys compiled from cell phone usage). To do this, we have developed a virtual company with associates in Canada, Cyprus, Vietnam and Russia to help manage the continuous updating process. One area in which we constantly need help is the review function, insuring that the content we are creating is both thorough and professional and job. We therefore need to recruit geographic professionals to work part time. Our work these days is largely done in our cloud-based systems, so the work can be done anywhere there is an internet connection and at any time. This may be an outstanding part time position that is both rewarding and professionally relevant. I myself didn’t discover that there was a world, applied geography outside of academia and government until I was working on my PhD. If you think your students might have an interest in any such employment, I would be glad to talk with you further and could be available for an on-campus visit after the holidays.

Michael R. Talbot
Tucson, Arizona
MSU Geography 1992
WMU Geography 1988
Greetings Friends, Faculty, and Alumni of MSU Geography.

Steve Schultz
I’m a tenure-track professor at the University of South Alabama. Currently my research focuses on the effects of micro-climates on specialty crop production in the South. I’m working with colleagues from Auburn to look at the effects of frost on blueberry, kiwi, and peach production. Should all go according to plan, we are looking to develop a real-time, in-field, frost warning phone app for growers in our region based that. But that kind of boring, so I started development on a variety trial for beer hops in our region which we’re also going to offer as a class this year. I’ve also accepted the position of Program Director for the University’s GIS program. This May, I’ll be taking students up to the Sugar Bowl for 2 weeks. We’ll be staying in Berrien Springs, Ludington, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Old Mission Peninsular, and Traverse City. We’ll be doing research on the location of Tahquamenon Falls, Downtown Detroit, and even East Lansing. See you in NOLA. Steve.

Cherished 2018 graduates and friends,

Happy New Year, everyone in Geography at MSU. I got my Master’s in Historical Geography under the direction of Jim Ross and spent 35+ years in the history museum field. I retired in 2007 and immediately started a new career as a screenwriter in the movie and TV industry. I am now Consulting producer and Screenwriter of a feature film titled “Baby Harry’s Hollywood”. That should go into production early in 2018 and with any kind of good luck, I’ll be on location in the People’s Republic of China writing and producing “Chongqing Days. Tucson Nights”.

Michael R. Talbot
Tucson, Arizona
MSU Geography 1992
WMU Geography 1988
Greetings Friends, Faculty, and Alumni of MSU Geography.

Since graduating in 1992, I moved on to Western Michigan University to pursue my MA in Geography while working for a short time with GIS. I also got my wet teaching a course in Geographic Information Systems then relocating back to Arizona where my wife is from. Not long after arriving in Tucson, I was brought on as an adjunct at the University of Arizona as a GIS and cartography instructor. In 1998 an opening to teach Geography full time opened up at Pima Community College here in Tucson and that is where I’ve been ever since. Technology has made a tremendous improvement in our discipline and I try to enlighten all students who come my way on the possibilities of Geography as a major and career choice. I truly enjoy teaching much more than I ever thought was possible and have no plans to ever stop doing something that doesn’t seem like WORK. Good luck to all who opt for MSU Geography. I left a piece of heart on the ‘Trash of the Red Cedar,’ and I’m sure many others have as well.

Josh Watkins
It has been a very eventful year! I completed my PhD from the University of California, Davis and started a new position at Texas A&M University as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Geography. Most importantly in January 2018, my wife and I welcomed a newborn into our family. I want to thank everyone at MSU Geography for their help along the way and wish you all a great 2018.

Richard Welch
Christmas and Happy New Year, everyone in Geography at MSU. I got my Master’s in Historical Geography under the direction of Jim Ross and spent 35+ years in the history museum field. I retired in 2007 and immediately started a new career as a screenwriter in the movie and TV industry. I am now Consulting producer and Screenwriter of a feature film titled “Baby Harry’s Hollywood”. That should go into production early in 2018 and with any kind of good luck, I’ll be on location in the People’s Republic of China writing and producing “Chongqing Days. Tucson Nights”.

Charles Gichana Manyara
PhD, 2000
I am currently stationed at Radford University, Radford Virginia. I am the Chair of the Virginia Institute of Geomatics and Remote Sensing. When I moved down here in southwest Virginia like any young faculty, I taught a wide range of courses. Presently I teach technical courses mainly geospatial data, applied GIS, remote sensing and surveying techniques (LiDAR and Surveying). About ten years ago, together with three colleagues from Ohio, Alabama and Washington State we formed the Kenya Scholars and Studies Association (KESASSA) (see, www.kessa.org). The association’s strength has been its annual conferences, the publication of an online journal and edited books. Last year I edited two published book volumes. I have a chapter in one of the books (Kenya After 50: Reconfiguring Education, Gender, and Policy (African Histories and Modernities), ISBN: 978-1137574626) on road traffic accidents (RTAs) in Kenya. This will be my last year as treasurer and web manager for KESASSA.
Debbie Sadler Johnson 1984

Debbie (Sadler) Johnson 1982 and MMLS Wayne State 1999, recently retired and are now residing in Kroner, NE. We both worked in federal, state and local government GIS, focusing on our respective geographic positions in Salt Lake City, Tucson and Ann Arbor. Debbie retired from the City of Ann Arbor after nearly 25 years with a total of about 34 years in GIS. Debbie retired following nearly 20 years as a public librarian. Please contact us at sjohnson32@gmail.com

Julia Flagg Affolder MA 1969

Currently living in the Chicago suburbs with my husband Ryan. I work as a Senior Technical Instructor for Videotex Technologies, Inc. working with industrial lasers. Also involved in the research and development of our product. Teaching a remote sensing lab section while at MSU was what really led me go my current career as I discovered a love of both teaching and technology.

Geoffrey Dynnik

I am a retired teacher from the Middle Years Program at MSU in 1993 and further education at MSU. My career path took me to many wonderful places both within the United States and internationally for work and for fun. Heading to New Zealand last spring this after travelling to Singapore, Cambodia, Peru, and Germany in the past two years.

Heather Hoppell

I passed the US Customs Broker License Exam in April 2017 and my Customs Broker License application is pending (Houston office has been taking a loooong time to get through them). Still working in Global Trade Compliance for Chevron Phillips Chemical focusing on auditing and continuous improvement.

Jennifer Fisher

I don’t have much to share still working for Consumers Energy in their GIS department doing specialty maps for internal departments. I did get to go to the ESRI UC this past year though and ran into Jay (Strahan)!

Peter Busalacchi

Just a day before receiving the most recent communication in my inbox, I was telling my girlfriend the story of our field trip to Kansas when our tour was derailed by patch of tornadoes, leading to the flooding of our camp site. GREAT timing after graduating from MSU in 2003 with a degree in Geography (Specializing in GIS), I began my career as a Real Estate Strategy Consultant with Thompson & Associates in Ann Arbor. There, I primarily worked on the Home Depot account; evaluating the net impact of adding or subtracting stores from a market, preparing overall market strategies and developing a spatially analytical mindset with an economic lens. This experience led me to an opportunity to practice geographic analytics professionally. In 2007, I transferred to The Dimasi Group in Melbourne, Australia (both the Thompson & Associates and The Dimasi Group has been purchased by MapInfo). After a year in Australia, I decided to return to the US and continue to develop skills in spatial analysis and analytics. I accepted a position with Chico’s FAS, an apparel company in Florida, in 2010. I had the opportunity to help grow 4 retail brands across the United States and Canada. This company has data. They incentivize their customers to participate in their rewards programs, which allowed us to geocode where they live. From there, we model their transaction behavior and generated client profiles. These profiles were in turn used when scanning the country for additional opportunities. Currently, I am a manager within the Real Estate Research team. In this role, I have been tasked with managing our existing chain wide expansion for Sephora. This position has provided me access to all executives, taken me to many trips, and given me the opportunity to develop the tool box for a successful expansion strategy at one of the worlds top performing retailers.

Timothy Ned Caywood

Nothing to share. My career path took me in a different direction but still think fondly of my time in the department. Several professors left a lasting impact on my life here at MSU (Dr. Sommers). With my education and experiences at MSU I have gone on to a satisfying life. Thanks for staying in touch.

Robert L. Brown

Graduated with a Geography/Secondary Degree in 1973. Jobs were scarce so I was a substitute teacher in Jackson County for a year then went back to State for 16 months and got my second degree in Elementary Education. Worked as a high school teacher for one year on the Standing Rock Native American Reservations in LaCaugain, South Dakota then moved to Watertown South Dakota where I taught fifth grade for six years. I received my Master’s Degree in Elementary Supervision to become a principal, but never used it, I enjoyed being in the classroom too much. After my six years in Watertown I moved to Baltimore, Maryland where I taught fourth and fifth grades for 7 years then taught reading and writing in sixth grade in a middle school in Catonsville, Maryland outside of Baltimore for 13 years. I moved to Gulf Shores, Alabama where my parents from Jackson had retired so I could be near the beach and not see any more snow. I taught middle school Math and Science for four years at a Catholic school before retiring for good. I meet a lot of ‘snow birds’ down here during the winter months, most from Michigan. Always chat wanting to know where they are from. One couple has a son that is teaching Math at the same high school I went in to Michigan Center, Michigan outside of Jackson. Still a big ‘Sparty’ fan and have my alumni license frame and a large Spartan head on my back windshield. Get some catcalls from those people who went to that other school in Michigan in Ann Arbor and I just remind them about the past ten years of football games. I loved my Geography classes and I was on scholarship from my high school when before my senior year I received a call that my scholarship had run out of funds but because I was so close to graduating I was going to pay the last year of my tuition. Will always be grateful for that.

Donna Batch

After graduating from the MSU Geography Department in 1975, I earned an MS degree in Geography from Oregon State University. During my tenure at MSU I continued to have an assiduousness and maintained a cartographic lab under the direction of my major professor. In 35 years, I worked in the field of Community and Economic Development for a variety of organizations at the local, state and federal level. The last nearly 18 years of my career were spent at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). My final year HUD, I served in the Director’s Office as the HUD Regional Administrator for the Northwest Region, overseeing work in a four state region with over 250 employees. I retired from HUD on Jan 20, 2017 but continue to work part time as a consultant. I reside in Seattle, WA with my husband. Our son is a teacher and works for the University of Washington. I have fond memories of my time in Geography at MSU, particularly the field trips taken under the direction of Dr. Jay Harman. I am grateful for the foundation that Geography provided, which led me to a rewarding and exciting professional career.

The MSU (1) – MSU (2) Connection

By David Castillio

The Michigan State University (MSU-1) – Missouri State University (MSU-2) connection involves The Departments of Geography at each university. The connection started in 1973 when the graduates from MSU (1) moved to MSU (2) Southwest Missouri State University (name changed to Missouri State University in 2005). Five MSU(1) graduates began Teaching and Research at MSU(2).

Name

MSU(1) MSU(2) Retired Emeritus Professors

David A. Castillon PhD 1972 1973


John C. Catau PhD 1978 2012

William T. Corcoran PhD 1981 2014

Debbie B. Corcoran PhD 1980 1995

Still Active Teaching Senior Instructor

Administrative Positions in MSU(2)

David A. Castillon Geography Department Head 1997-2000

William H. Cheek Assistant Dean CNAS 2003-2007

John C. Catau Assistant Director of Assessment 2000-2012

Michigan State Graduate Research Assistantships were authored by this group of Michigan State graduates. We were all blessed with an outstanding graduate education at Michigan State (Department of Geography).

Darren Graufis

Darren Graufis (graduated 2005) has been continuing his postdoctoral research in the United Kingdom, and is now working at the University of Sheffield focusing his research on using spatial modeling expertise to a project focused on understanding the potential of urban green infrastructure to produce food and biofuels, and hopes that this work will help contribute to sustainability goals and help make cities more liveable and self-sufficient.

Brandon Lamrix

I conduct public outreach for the GIS Unit that allows us to maintain visibility and maintain Esri e-Learning for onlinelector applications to display and capture MDOT assets for different regions of the state.

Julia Flagg Affolder

I am currently a Transportation Planner within the GIS Unit at the Michigan Department of Transportation. My responsibilities include:

Creation of static maps displaying MDOT assets for different regions of the state.

Utilizing ArcGIS Online for the creation of story maps, web applications, and collector applications to display and capture information about MDOT assets.

I work with R&G GIS at MSU to get MDOT employees training with GIS and maintain Eris e-Learning for online training for MDOT employees.

I conduct public outreach for the GIS Unit that allows us to maintain visibility at various job fairs and GIS events.

Merle Johnson MA 1982

Merle Johnson, MA 1981, and Debbie (Sadler) Johnson, MA 1982, have been living in North Haven, CT and spends his time researching and writing spiritual books. His latest is titled: “The Secrets of the Lord.” He is currently working on one titled: “The Fruits of the Spirit and More” which will be published in 2019.
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.

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Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences
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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.

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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 Undergraduate Scholarship
$_________Marjorie & Lawrence Sommers Int’l Rsch
$_________Owen Gregg Endowment-Global Climate Chg

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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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