

Volume 10: Winter 2014

Inside this Issue:

Message from the Chair	1
New Urban Planning Program	1
GIS Tech Hub Unveiling	2
Dr. Camille Holmgren	2
Dr. Jason Knight	2
Dr. Stephen Vermette	3
Dr. Kelly Frothingham	3
Dr. Tao Tang	3
Prof. Veryan Vermette	4
Dr. Vida Vanchan	4
Dr. Wende Mix	4
Middle States Annual Meeting	5
Student and Alumni News	5

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the Winter 2014 edition of the Geography and Planning Department newsletter. Those of you that have received previous versions of the newsletter will notice a bit of a format change, as we are trying something a little different this year. We hope you like the new format and would love to hear your comments about it!

In addition to the newsletter format change, we have had a significant change in department personnel. After 26 years at Buffalo State, Dr. Kim Irvine resigned and accepted a permanent position at National Institute of Education (NIE), an institute of Nanyang Technological University, in Singapore. Kim started at NIE in 2012 while he was on sabbatical, which led to an extra year in 2013-2014, and finally a permanent offer. This was an opportunity for Kim to pursue his passion of working in Asia, but a big loss for our de-

partment. Kim was a popular teacher that offered our students experiences outside of the classroom, his research record was unparalleled, and he provided outstanding service to the department, college, and the WNY community. The good news is that Kim has adjunct faculty status in the department and he is bringing 22 NIE students to Buffalo this summer to do research in the Buffalo River watershed and work with some of our majors. Kim's commitment to the department continues and we are grateful for his past and continuing service.

I hope you enjoy seeing what other changes have occurred since last year. As always, it has been a busy year for faculty and students and some of our accomplishments are highlighted here in our newsletter.

Dr. Kelly Frothingham



Kim Irvine doing research on the Buffalo River, where he will be working with NIE students during the 2015 summer.

A New Urban Planning Program in the Works

Our BS in Urban-Regional Analysis and Planning was introduced in 1975 and the program had not seen a significant revision since it started. That has now changed. Over the past year, the department, led by Dr. Jason Knight, has been working on a new program that builds on our current strengths and continues to rely on our plan-

ning professional adjunct faculty members. An emphasis on the fundamentals of land use planning will be maintained and strengthened, as will hand-on learning opportunities, like internships and class projects. Courses in urban revitalization and sustainable planning and a two-part sequence in transportation planning are new additions to the program. Several

new course proposals were developed and previously-taught courses were revised. That hard work is now complete, so the program revision was recently submitted to be approved locally at Buffalo State and by SUNY. The new program will be called Urban and Regional Planning and we anticipate a fall 2015 start date.

**“Create a
better
future with
GIS”**

GIS Tech Hub Unveiling

In Spring 2014, Mary Perrelli (with Drs. Wende Mix and Kelly Frothingham) was awarded a SUNY Innovative Instruction Technology Grant (IITG) to develop a GIS Tech Hub. The GIS Tech Hub project aims to create a new centralized resource for teaching, sharing, and collaboration using GIS technology. It will provide Buffalo State with a platform to expand GIS research, create a network of student internships, increase grant potential and develop GIS training courses for students and profession-

als. A new GIS Tech Hub website was developed for the project (<http://gis-techhub.buffalostate.edu/>).

The website was revealed at our GIS Day celebration held during Geography Awareness Week. Other GIS Day activities included a presentation entitled “Create a Better Future with GIS” by John Lenahan, from ESRI.



John Lenahan, ESRI, presenting to our students.



Dr. Camille Holmgren

Dr. Camille Holmgren

Dr. Camille Holmgren was the lead author on a new paper entitled “Evidence against a Pleistocene Desert refugium in the lower Colorado River Basin” published in the *Journal of Biogeography* along with her coauthors from institutions in the US and Mexico. She also shared her research on Sonoran Desert biogeography with the campus community as part of the Buffalo State English Department’s Conversations in

and out of the Discipline Lecture Series.

Dr. Holmgren continues to work on developing innovative materials for her courses. This year her teaching exercise “Lost at Sea” was awarded Exemplary status by the National Association of Geoscience Teacher’s On the Cutting Edge program. In addition, she and two colleagues from the University of Pittsburgh and Wright State recently had their curricu-

lum development proposal “The Changing Biosphere” accepted by the InTeGrate program. InTeGrate is an NSF STEP program that seeks to create a series of modules for introductory geoscience courses. Dr. Holmgren has also been busy serving as a Data Steward for the Fossil Rodent Working Group of NEOTOMA, an NSF-funded paleoecology database, and traveled to Penn State this summer for a workshop.



Dr. Jason Knight

Dr. Jason Knight

Dr. Jason Knight organized and chaired a session on shrinking cities at the 2014 Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting in Tampa, Florida and has done so for the upcoming AAG Annual Meeting in Chicago. He continues to focus on vacant and abandoned property and was an invited panelist for a session titled “Land Banks: Successful Policy Programs in Addressing Vacant and Foreclosed Properties” at the 2014 American Planning Asso-

ciation National Planning Conference. He worked with the New York State Land Bank Association to prepare the report *New York State Land Banks: Combating Blight and Vacancy in New York Communities*. He was a Research Advisor for a new national report titled *Take it to the Bank: How Land Banks Are Strengthening America's Neighborhoods* by the Center for Community Progress, a national organization working to address the vacant, aban-

doned, and distressed property problem in American communities. He is collaborating with three other authors on a book on shrinking cities. He remains engaged in local planning efforts and is a member of the Land Use and Development Working Group for the One Region Forward Regional Sustainability Plan and was invited to teach a session at Citizen Planner’s School titled “The Way We Plan Today: Planning in Buffalo-Niagara.”

Dr. Stephen Vermette

Travel to Cambodia, at the invitation of the National Institute of Education (NIE), provided an opportunity to give a number of presentations to pre-service teachers on geography and meteorology-related topics. A trip to Newfoundland and Labrador offered the opportunity not only to experience an extraordinary land, but to gather information and specimens for my Arctic Geography course (GEG 359). Closer to home, I was involved with the 'Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative', which was run by the

National Geographic Society, and the New York Geographic Alliance, and funded by NOAA. On this project I developed the program's water quality kits and assisted in training teachers for water quality sampling in the Susquehanna watershed. Elements of *Weather Event*, an exhibition of Charles Burchfield's watercolors from a meteorological perspective, were reborn as a published article in the magazine *Weatherwise* under the title 'Wind, Sunshine, and Sky: A Meteorologist's Interpretation of Charles E.

Burchfield's Watercolors'. The 'Powell-Vermette equation' (the first name is in reference to one of our geography majors: Connor Powell), was published in the *National Speleological Society News* under the title 'The Powell and Vermette Equation: Calculating American Cave Temperatures'. The equation is used to calculate dark zone cave temperatures. In the classroom, the Atmospheric Science (GEG 384) class assisted in the launch of an upper air balloon with a payload of meteorology-related experiments.



Dr. Stephen Vermette

Dr. Kelly Frothingham

Dr. Kelly Frothingham spent the summer working on another Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper-funded project. She and Dr. Dan Potts (biology) worked with three graduate students monitoring riparian restoration projects that were installed in 2011 and 2012. The team evaluated plant survivability and measured growth indicators, as well as assessed stream conditions at each site. The field work was enjoyable thanks to perfect weather and an excel-

lent field crew.

Dr. Frothingham got to continue field work in the fall semester because she taught her watershed analysis course. There were 21 students enrolled in the course this fall and they worked on a project in Spring Brook in southern Erie County. The students spent a day in the field working in groups assessing stream conditions in six reaches of the creek. Each group wrote a

report and presented their results during the last week of classes. A final report will be submitted to the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District.



Graduate students assessing riparian vegetation at a site on the lower Niagara River.

Dr. Tao Tang

Dr. Tao Tang initiated the 3+2 international graduate educational program with the Dean's Office of the School of Natural and Social Sciences, SUNY Buffalo State. In the spring of 2014, Dr. Tang participated in a delegation visit to China led by the Dean, Dr. Mark Severson. During this visit, SUNY Buffalo State and Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China signed the agreement. The 3+2 program admits senior undergraduate students from the agree-

ment signing universities to our pre-graduate programs. The students would take both undergraduate and graduate courses the first year. Then, the students would graduate from their home university with Bachelor's degrees. SUNY Buffalo State formally admit these students in the second year of their study as graduate students. Then, the students would accomplish their master's degrees at SUNY Buffalo State. This model contributes

to both the international collaboration and the educational exchange of resources and revenues. Dr. Tang currently has three 3+2 graduate students studying for their Master's degrees.



Graduate students are doing field data collections using an unmanned helicopter.



Prof. Veryan Vermette about to teeter on one corner of the “Flat Earth”.

Prof. Veryan Vermette

A friend recently confided her dream of visiting a UNESCO World Heritage site. I realized I had serendipitously visited nearly a dozen just this summer! During three weeks in Korea, my daughter and I visited culturally-significant sites such as temples, palaces, ancient capitals, and fishing villages; and physically-significant sites including rainforests, lava tubes (world’s longest), lava columns, and mystic mountains. In fact, the entire island of Jeju IS a UNESCO site, and we spent many days exploring it.

The wonders (including UNESCO sites) continued as Stephen and I spent an amazing month in Newfoundland-Labrador, Canada. Our stops included Hopewell ‘Flower Pot’ Rocks, Joggins fossil palm forests (world’s best), exposed mantle rock in Gros Morne, glacial fjords and patterned ground, the defining rock layer separating Cambrian and Ordovician periods, huge lithified thrombolites, 1000-year-old Viking settlement at L’Anse Aux Meadows, 400-year-old Basque whaling station in Red

Bay, Paleoeskimo burials and soapstone quarries, Brimstone Head “Flat Earth” corner, Dover Fault remnants of Laurasia and Gondwanaland, half-billion-year-old fossils of the earth’s first multicellular organisms (found only at Mistaken Point), Cape St. Mary’s Bird Sanctuary, world’s longest covered bridge. Excellent weather, scenery, flowers, glaciers, wildlife (whales, puffins, moose, caribou, ponies), music, food, pot-holes, and company.



Dr. Vida Vanchan

Dr. Vida Vanchan

Dr. Vanchan, in collaboration with professors of Nanoecology and History at the University of Albany, submitted a grant proposal titled, ‘A multi-disciplinary study of NY State’s industrial innovation clusters.’ This proposal aims to study the ecosystems that arose in three industrial high-tech clusters that have been important to the economic development of Upstate New York. She also continued to serve as lead

international liaison and principal investigator of an ongoing funding proposal aimed to provide assistance to the National Institute of Social Affairs (NISA) in Cambodia. Dr. Vanchan continues to contribute to her profession by organizing and chairing sessions on emerging topics in her discipline at national conferences. This past year, Dr. Vanchan served as chair, co-organizer, and discussant on topics of

redistributed manufacturing and the emergence of new economic geographies: innovation, energy costs, sustainability, reshoring and digital fabrication; at the Annual Meeting of Association of American Geographers in Tampa, Florida. She also successfully organized the Third Annual Southeast Asia Week at Buffalo State in March of 2014 featuring presentations on Singapore, Burma, and Indonesia.

Dr. Wendé Mix

Dr. Wendé Mix continued working with Mary Perrelli developing and testing mobile field data collection techniques. Additional samples were obtained from students in GEG/PLN 325 during the Spring 2014 semester. Also, another data collection approach, off-site location identification, was compared to the manual and GPS approaches for a pilot study for the Town of Tonawanda. Dr. Mix and Ms. Perrelli assisted the town in

obtaining a grant to inventory their trees. They are completing the online app so that eight (paid) students will spend their summer collecting data for the town using iPads with 4G.

Dr. Mix currently has a student working on a GIS analysis of Buffalo Carshare data and has completed her 4th grant from the Center for Development of Human Services on geographic data for child welfare. She continued to chair the Parking and

Transportation Committee for the College. This year the group worked with a consultant to develop a Master Bike Plan for the College. Dr. Mix is pleased that the Master Plan recognizes the importance of coordinating with the City, and their forthcoming Master Bike Plan, in order to promote active transportation alternatives for the campus community. The plan has received favorable responses from the College.

Middle States Division Annual Meeting

The department has a long history of attending the Middle States Division of the Association of American Geographers annual meetings and this year was no exception. The conference was held in York, Pennsylvania on October 24th and 25th. Drs. Frothingham, Tang, and Vermette took six students to the annual meeting and our Buffalo State group gave a total of eight presentations. Presentation topics included the impact of environmental pollution on health effects, using remote sensing data to investigate parking on campus, analyzing riparian restoration plant survivability, and examining atmospheric data from a balloon launch, to name just a few. The students who attended were undergraduates in geography and a few graduate students from the Great Lakes Ecosystem Science program who are working with principal advisors from our department. One undergraduate student, Megan Klein, traveled to the conference after winning the Katheryne Thomas Whittemore (KTW) Travel and Research Award. She presented preliminary results from her senior thesis research on the impact of riparian zones on water quality and streambank stability.

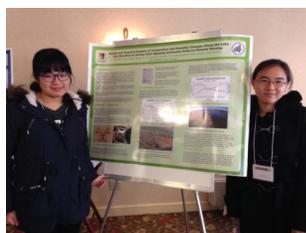
The Middle States Division annual meeting is being hosted by Binghamton University next year. We look forward to taking another group of students to that conference.



Justin Blicharski,
geography major



Megan Klein,
geography major and KTW
Travel & Research Award
winner



Yingyu Zhang and Lily Jiang,
Great Lakes Ecosystem
Science graduate students

Student and Alumni News

Student award winners from May 2014:

David Bullough Memorial Award :
Thomas Lampo

National Council for Geographic Education—
outstanding student in geography:
William Matalonis

National Council for Geographic Education—
outstanding student in planning:
Mark Hitchcock

WNY American Planning Association:
John Long

Updraft Award for Excellence in Meteorology
and Climatology:
Christine Spencer

Snowspotter recognition:
Justin Blicharski

The Department's new **Friend Award** was presented in Spring'14 to **Jack Kanack** in recognition of his continued support to the Department.

Congratulations to all our award winners!



2014 Student Award Winners

Alumni—we want to hear from you! Where are you? What are you doing? Please contact a department faculty member so you can be featured in our next newsletter.

SUNY Buffalo State
Geography & Planning Department
1300 Elmwood Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14223

Phone: 716-878-6216
Fax: 716-878-4009
E-mail: kortapj@buffalostate.edu

We're on the web!
geography.buffalostate.edu

Facebook
buffalostate.geography.planning



BUFFALO STATE
The State University of New York