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## Message from the Chair

Welcome to the Winter 2015 edition of the Geography and Planning Department newsletter. This past year has been a busy one and I hope you enjoy reading about what has been going on in the department.

Keep reading and you'll see that our students have been involved in many applied learning activities. Several students have honed their GPS and GIS skills mapping municipal street trees, others have attended and presented at regional conferences, and students have been running a weather radio show on Buffalo State's station, WBNY, as well as promoting a weather-ready campus through WxBUFFWarn. Summer opportunities included Paula Jones' Undergraduate Summer Research Fellowship Program project in Buffalo's West Side community, and Justin Blicharski's acceptance into the National Weather Services (NWS) Volunteer Program.

Faculty have been busy with scholarship, which has included presenting research at regional and national conferences and publishing journal articles and books. Faculty members have also worked on curriculum development to support our programs here in the department and larger initiatives, such as the NSF-funded InTeGrate program and the New York Geographic Alliance (NYGA).

We made one change to department infrastructure—our GIS Teaching Lab was upgraded to 18 seats from 15 seats. This change will allow us to serve students better.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that our department was nominated by the Middle States Division of the AAG for the 2016 AAG Award for Bachelors Program Excellence.

*Dr. Kelly Frothingham*



Buffalo State undergraduate and graduate students at the Middle States Division AAG annual meeting.

## Students Conduct Municipal Street Tree Inventories

In the summer of 2015 four students from the Geography & Planning Department, Emily Boivin, Mike Borrelli, Keith House, and Scott Thompson, assisted the Town of Tonawanda and Village of Williamsville in conducting street tree inventories. In the Town of Tonawanda the data collection was facilitated through a custom

ArcGIS online application using iPad devices. The students mapped 23,000 trees in Tonawanda. In the Village of Williamsville 4,000 trees were inventoried using a Trimble GeoXT GPS unit with a custom ArcPad data collection application. Tree mapping will continue again this summer in the Town of Lancaster.



Planning major Scott Thompson mapping trees in the Town of Tonawanda.



Ben, Sarah, and Paula visiting a site in Detroit, MI.

## Majors Attend Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference

Over the summer, three Geography and Planning students, Paula Jones, Sarah Gatti, and Benjamin Brown, were given the chance to explore and learn at the 2015 Center for Community Progress Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference in Detroit Michigan. Public officials, community leaders, and planning practitioners were all on hand to share experiences on combating vacant properties in their respective communities. All the students found the conference valuable. Paula attended a lecture on conduct-

ing community parcel surveys, which helped her implement her Undergraduate Summer Research Fellowship Program project in Buffalo's West Side community. Sarah enjoyed the progressive and forward thinking ideas presented by speakers and participants. Benjamin found the keynote speech by Detroit mayor Mike Duggan and Kresge Foundation CEO, Rip Rapson, especially motivating. Aside from conference activities, the students were able to visit numerous historic buildings in Detroit's down-

town core. All three would agree that one of the highlights of the trip was viewing the famous Diego Rivera murals at the Detroit Institute of Art. They also had a unique opportunity to view the Heidelberg Project on Detroit's East Side, an art installation covering two city blocks which offers a surreal experience to its viewers on how art can help combat vacancy and urban decay. Financial support from the Katherine Thomas Whittemore Travel and Research Award made this trip possible.



Dr. Camille Holmgren

## Dr. Camille Holmgren

Dr. Camille Holmgren is working as part of a team with two colleagues from the University of Pittsburgh and Wright State developing a series of classroom materials. The module, entitled The Changing Biosphere, is part of InTeGrate, an NSF-funded program that seeks to create materials for introductory geoscience courses that will be freely available to educators online. The Changing Biosphere materials are de-

signed to make students aware that organisms and the environment are intertwined and have been since life began on our planet. The module provides a long-term perspective on the role of humans in altering our biosphere. She has been busy pilot testing materials in her classes this fall. Dr. Holmgren also continues to serve as a Data Steward for the Fossil Rodent Working Group of NEOTOMA, an NSF-funded paleoecology database, and will travel

to the University of California, Berkeley for a workshop this winter.

Dr. Holmgren will be on sabbatical during spring 2016. She will travel to Arizona and southern California to investigate the temporal and spatial distribution patterns of both modern and fossil creosote bush polyploids in the Sonoran Desert, expanding on and filling gaps in prior research.



Dr. Jason Knight

## Dr. Jason Knight

Dr. Jason Knight organized and chaired a session on shrinking cities at the 2015 Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting in Chicago and he will do so again for the upcoming AAG Annual Meeting in San Francisco. His interests remain focused on planning policy in shrinking cities, in particular as it relates to demolition, tax foreclosure, and housing programs. He was an invited panelist for the session "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know

About Land Banks But Were Afraid to Ask" at the 2015 American Planning Association's Northeast Planning Conference in Saratoga Springs. He is currently completing a book with three co-authors on urban decline and shrinking cities that will be published in late-2016. He remains committed to keeping up to speed on local planning efforts and when an opportunity arises, engaging in professional planning projects. He was invited to teach a ses-

sion titled "The Way We Plan Today: Planning in Buffalo-Niagara" at Citizen Planner's School as part of the One Region Forward Regional Sustainability Plan. Additionally, he has worked with a local team of professional planners in the development of a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan for the City of Tonawanda, where he is also a member of the City's Community Development Board.

## Dr. Stephen Vermette

Work with the New York Geographic Alliance (NYGA) continued with a newly funded NOAA project: 'B-WET Upper Susquehanna Project'. The project's focus was on the Susquehanna watershed, and Dr. Vermette's role was to develop water quality sampling kits, and to train teachers on their use. *Weather Event*, an exhibition of Dr. Vermette's meteorological interpretation of Charles E. Burchfield's watercolors, traveled to a third venue: the Ellen Noel Art Museum, in Odessa, Texas. Buffa-

lo's 'Snowember' lake effect event offered the opportunity to present a paper at the '40th Northeast Storm Conference', along with researchers from the Buffalo Office of the National Weather Service; as well as to publish an article in the journal *Weatherwise*. It was a busy year working with elementary students, which included weather-related presentations to a number of kindergarten and sixth grade classes. One student-based project that has taken on a life of its own is WxBUFFWarn. Designed by

interested meteorology & climatology students, it was created to inform and prepare students for potential severe weather scenarios on campus—promoting a weather-ready campus—banners, lawn signs, and postcards were displayed and distributed across campus. To learn more go to <http://weather.buffalostate.edu>, then click on the WxBUFFWarn icon. Lastly, it was a year of field courses, as both 'Bahamas Field Experience' and 'Cavern Studies' were successfully offered by Dr. Vermette.



Dr. Stephen Vermette

## Dr. Kelly Frothingham

Dr. Kelly Frothingham spent another summer field season monitoring riparian conditions at sites in the Niagara River Greenway. She and Dr. Dan Potts (Biology) worked with graduate students surveying site conditions at two sites where riparian restoration will be implemented by Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper (BNRK). This work involved surveying topography, canopy cover in certain vegetation height classes, and streambank stability.

Dr. Frothingham presented the results from the pre-construction surveys at the Middle States Division of the AAG annual meeting in October. She also presented this work, plus some of her other stream monitoring research, at an invited talk that was part of the English Department's Conversations In and Out of the Disciplines Lecture Series. Dr. Frothingham published an article entitled "Stream Structural Limitations on Invasive

Communities in Urban Riparian Areas" with Drs. Potts and Warren (Biology) in the journal *Invasive Plant Science and Management*. Dr. Frothingham continues to serve as department chair and as program coordinator for the Great Lakes Ecosystem Science master's programs. She also serves on the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors and on a few BNRK technical advisory committees.



Graduate students surveying pre-construction riparian conditions at a site on the Niagara River.

## Dr. Tao Tang

1). Dr. Tao Tang presented the research paper 'Spatial and temporal changes of parking lot land use at SUNY Buffalo State applying unmanned helicopter remote sensing' at the GeoCon – New York State 2015 GIS Conference with graduate student Jiazhen Zhang.

2). Dr. Tang was elected a board member of the New York State GIS Association during the GeoCon – New York State 2015 GIS Confer-

ence.

3). Dr. Tang led a group of five visiting scholars from the Capital Normal University (CNU) of China to conduct the demonstration vehicle-based ground LiDAR 3D data collections for the Town of Amherst, Erie County, New York.

4). Dr. Tang was awarded a grant for the research project "The use of low-altitude unmanned helicopter remote

sensing to detect invasive plant species in the Erie Canal System: method development applied to water chestnut" with Dr. Christopher Pennuto at the Biology Department and Ms. Mary Perrelli. The grant was offered by the New York State Great Lakes Research Consortium and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Dr. Tang with CNU colleagues working on a field LiDAR survey.





Dr. Vida Vanchan

## Dr. Vida Vanchan

Dr. Vanchan recently published a co-edited book titled 'Handbook of Manufacturing Industries in the World Economy.' This book is a critical and multi-disciplinary review of current manufacturing processes, practices, and policies. It broadens our understanding of production and innovation in the world economy. She continues to contribute to her profession by organizing and chairing sessions on critical and emerging topics in her discipline at national and international conferences. In August of

2015, she successfully co-organized an invited session on new geographies of production and presented a co-authored paper titled 'From East to West? New Global Geographies of Manufacturing and the Reshoring of Production to the United States and United Kingdom' at the Fourth Global Conference on Economic Geography at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom.

In April of 2015, Dr. Vanchan presented a paper titled 'Manufacturing, Fate, and Eco-

nomics Recovery: A Chronological Study of Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Area,' at the 2015 Annual Meeting of Association of American Geographers in Chicago. At the campus level, Dr. Vanchan continues to promote engagement, diversity, and educational enhancement by successfully organizing the Fourth Annual Southeast Asia Week in March of 2015 featuring lecture presentations on Vietnam, Indonesia, and Cambodia.

## Prof. Veryan Vermette

For a month in late spring 2015, my daughter and I walked the 500-mile Camino Frances pilgrimage route from St. Jean Pied-de-Port in southern France, over the Pyrenees and other mountain ranges, across the vast meseta of the Iberian Plateau, and through four climate zones, to end at Santiago de Compostela in NW Spain.

'Livin' la vida geographica!'



Photo Credit: Dasol Kim, 2015

## Big Showing by Students at the MSDAAG Annual Meeting

The Middle States Division of the AAG annual meeting was held in Binghamton, NY October 2-3, 2015. Six students attended the meeting with Drs. Frothingham, Tang, and Vermette. Five of the attending students presented posters, including Keith House who won second prize in the student poster competition for his work (with student co-author Nate Mroz) on a campus bicycle activity survey. Paula Jones gave an oral presentation on

her senior thesis investigating walkability in Buffalo and won first prize in the student paper competition. Seth Atkinson was a panelist in the session 'Student Engagement in Geography Programs'.



The students also made up the first-ever Buffalo State Geography Bowl Team! Congrats to the team and award winners Keith and Paula!

## WeatherBUFF Radio



As a student run radio station, 91.3 FM WBNY is Buffalo State's original alternative radio station since 1982. A collaboration between the Department of Geography & Planning's Meteorology and Climatology Program and WBNY has produced Buffalo's only weekly weather talk show, known as 'WeatherBUFF'. The hosts of WeatherBUFF are students from the Department's Meteorology and Climatology Program. For the student hosts, the show offers the opportunity to hone both their weather knowledge and communication skills, as well as to operate the controls in a studio - tested and certified to produce a radio show. Over the past year, Shannon Graves, Justin Blicharski, and Seth Atkinson have hosted Weather-BUFF radio. Go to <http://weather.buffalostate.edu/products> to listen to a sample show. The shows Alumna include Samantha Thomas, who recently was awarded an Emmy as a broadcast meteorologist.

## Student and Alumni News

### Student award winners from May 2015:

National Council for Geographic Education—  
outstanding student in geography:

*Spencer Podsiadlo*

National Council for Geographic Education—  
outstanding student in planning:

*Tim Hurysz*

WNY American Planning Association:

*Mike Bly*

Katheryne Whittemore Award:

*Paula Jones and Alexandra Santora*

### Congratulations to all our award winners!



2015 Student Award Winners

Geography & Planning alumna Samantha Thomas, '13, received a 2015 Heartland Chapter Emmy Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences as the morning/noon meteorologist at KGWN-TV in Cheyenne, Wyoming. "Attending Buff State was the best decision I ever made," said Thomas. "I had so many great professors and mentors."

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.



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