

Volume 14: Winter 2018

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Message from the Chair

Hello from the Geography and Planning Department! I hope you enjoy this latest volume of our newsletter.

As usual, this newsletter highlights what faculty and staff have been doing for the past year. Our department is fortunate to have people so dedicated to teaching, research, and service. The newsletter also has a few feature stories covering new programs that we are now offering, faculty research projects, and student commencement and award recognitions.

I want to mention that two faculty members, Dr. Stephen Vermette and Prof. Vryan Vermette recently celebrated their 25th anniversaries at Buffalo State! As so many students can attest to, Stephen and Vryan are outstanding faculty members who we have been lucky to have at the college for so long.

And, speaking of excellent colleagues, I am thrilled to announce that Mr. Jim Bensley was awarded the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Adjunct Teaching. Jim consistently demonstrates superior teaching at the undergraduate level and he is an integral part of our Urban and Regional Planning program. The best professional planners teaching in our program over the years have brought their passion for the discipline and real world experiences to the classroom and Jim has been doing this since he started teaching at Buffalo State in 1997. Congratulations, Jim!

Please keep reading to see more of what the Geography and Planning Department has been doing!

Dr. Kelly Frothingham



Fall foliage along Scajaquada Creek near campus.

Exciting New Programs!

Last year we were very busy working on a couple of exciting curriculum initiatives, which have now been fully approved and they're up and running.

The first initiative was the development of a new [Environmental Geography B.S.](#) program. The department has a long history of offering excellent environmental geography courses, but that strength was somewhat hidden as a concentration in the Geography B.A. We were able to pull out the concentration to create a stand-alone major that we expect will attract students to Buffalo State

and our department. The B.S. in Environmental Geography provides students with the opportunity to study how humans impact, manage, and conserve the natural environment, including landforms, water and soil resources, climate, and plant and animal communities. Courses in the program focus on applied, hands-on experiences for students, as well as quantitative analysis and the use of GIS and remote sensing techniques.

Speaking of GIS, the second curriculum initiative was creating a [certificate in GIS](#). This is a SUNY-registered certificate that degree

and non-degree students at Buffalo State can earn. The GIS certificate will provide students with a background in spatial thinking, analysis, and mapping skills, plus because spatial data is so widely available and applicable to many careers and disciplines, students will learn about the application of geospatial technology to their discipline or career path. The geospatial skills and technology emphasized in the GIS certificate will enrich analysis and improve decision-making across disciplines.

Students can enroll now in these two programs!



Prof. Mary Perrelli

Prof. Mary Perrelli

It's been another busy year with stormwater and tree inventory updates. The campus canopy was devastated by the Emerald Ash borer and roughly 150 Ash trees were lost. This summer I worked with the campus arborist to update the GIS inventory to include the many new trees that have been planted on campus which include a variety of evergreen species. The Village of Williamsville also reached out to me to for an update to their

GIS tree inventory that was conducted several years ago. On the stormwater front, I began resampling the campus stormwater pond started this spring to see if there have been improvements /changes in the quality of the effluent. More data still needs to be collected and I will resume sampling this spring. I am still working with Mary Rossi and the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning to support stormwater mapping and analysis.

Several students have been working in the field with EC-DEP to continue the updates to the original data collection that started in 2012.



Dr. Camille Holmgren

Dr. Camille Holmgren

Over the past year Dr. Holmgren has continued to focus on innovative teaching. She developed a section of GEG 101 World Natural Environments as part of the "One Green Planet" Linked Learning Community. Students in this learning community take GEG 101 as well as BIO 104 Environmental Biology during the fall semester and PHI 111 Ethics for Scientists in the spring. Faculty in these courses collaborate to help students explore a common theme from different disciplinary perspectives

and make connections among the courses.

Dr. Holmgren also had a grant funded to study past vegetation at an archaeological site in Colorado (see feature story). In addition to fieldwork in Colorado, Dr. Holmgren traveled to Ottawa to attend the American Quaternary Association (AMQUA) meeting where she presented a poster on the changing distribution of creosote bush ploidy levels along the Chihuahuan-Sonoran Desert border. She was also elected as an AMQUA councilor and is excited

to serve the organization.

This fall Dr. Holmgren is filling in as Interim Chair while Dr. Frothingham is on sabbatical. It's been an enjoyable experience and she's learning a lot!



Dr. Jason Knight

Dr. Jason Knight

In 2017-2018, Dr. Knight and his students from the Spring 2017 Planning 431 – Planning Practicum were awarded a Western New York Chapter of the American Planning Association Annual Award for Public Outreach for their efforts working on multiple planning projects in support of the City of Tonawanda. He presented his research at the 2018 American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting in New Orleans and the 2018 Annual

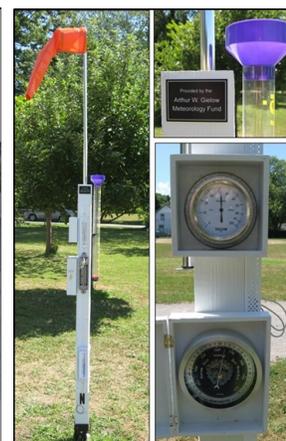
Conference of the American Planning Association in Buffalo. He was also invited to present his research on walkability in Buffalo at the "Building a Healthy Buffalo and WNY Walkability and Activism: A Look at How the Walking Movement Impacts Grassroots Action" hosted by the Wellness Institute of Greater Buffalo. He was among the invited local and national experts that focused on next steps to move Buffalo-Niagara forward in the

21st century at a summit hosted by the University at Buffalo. He continues to remain actively engaged in planning in the region, working with communities such as the City of Tonawanda and Town of Cheektowaga. He is also an active member of the Habitat for Humanity Buffalo Site Selection Committee and the President of the Board of Directors for the City of Tonawanda Local Development Corporation.

Dr. Stephen Vermette

My sabbatical during the Spring '18 semester allowed me to dive into a number of projects, including writing the bulk of a new book, titled "The Face of WNY's Weather". Another project is organizing WNY's 250th anniversary celebration of explorer/scientist Alexander von Humboldt's birth – continuing a tradition that began 150 years ago in Buffalo. The Buffalo Museum of Science, the Niagara Aquarium, among others, are joining in on the party. Watch for it in fall 2019. The "Weathering Change in WNY"

project continues where, working with the NGO "Designing to Live Sustainably", we are assessing WNY's climatic 'responses' and 'nonresponses' to a warming world. Lastly, I'll share a photo of the 'Weather Post' I designed and built for the Hamburg, NY "Giving Garden".



The cover of Dr. Vermette's new book (left) and the "Weather Post", in memory of Arthur W. Gielow (right).

Dr. Kelly Frothingham

Dr. Frothingham spent the summer continuing field work monitoring stream restoration projects installed by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper.

In the fall, she embarked on a sabbatical project to begin a program to use Scajaquada Creek as an experimental watershed. The watershed will essentially be an outdoor laboratory that will facilitate her research in the area of human impact on streams, provide

instruction opportunities to benefit both undergraduate and graduate students, and increase community engagement possibilities by expanding her involvement with community partners and connecting students to off campus experiences to enhance classroom learning. She is looking forward to next year when her work can be used in two watershed-based courses.



Dr. Frothingham on a recent field visit to Scajaquada Creek to check out on-going restoration work being done in Forest Lawn Cemetery.

Dr. Tao Tang

In collaboration with Director of GIS Service Ms. Matthies-Wiza and Senior GIS Analyst Mr. Gangemi at the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, Dr. Tang facilitated the students in GEG428/528 class to conduct a total of seven service-learning GIS projects.

Dr. Tang published a research [paper](#) "Time scale sensitive sensor applications in collecting and analyzing geographic event data" on the Annals of Geographic

Information Science (GIS) with former graduate student, Ms. Jiazhen Zhang. Dr. Tang also presented a research paper "Spatial statistic interpolation of morphological factors impact limestone pinnacle development in the Lunan Stone Forest National Park, Yunnan, China" at the 26th International Conference on Geoinformatics, Kunming, China. After the conference, he conducted a field exploration on the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau and collected

additional materials for teaching the introduction to physical geography class (GEG 101).

During the late summer of 2018, Dr. Tang successfully accomplished the SUNY certificate programs of both "Online Course Development Specialization" and "Online Advanced Course Development Specialization", developed one online introduction to physical geography class, and offered it during the fall 2018 semester.



Dr. Tang in China on the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau.



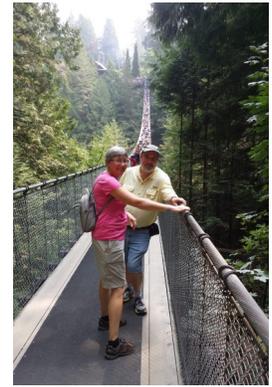
Prof. Veryan Vermette
(with Polish participants)

Prof. Veryan Vermette

A month in Poland as an English-language volunteer provided the opportunity for me to develop friendships with a few dozen Polish adults. Such cultural immersion is enriching in untold ways. The knowledge I gained and the stories of my experiences and adventures likewise enrich the courses I teach. During my stay, Poland recorded their first-ever day(s) of 100°F - the hottest of them hitting 104°F - and this in a country with almost

no air conditioning.

Immediately on the heels of my return from Poland, a trip to British Columbia refreshed my Canadian cultural roots. Though views were inhibited by thick smoke from hundreds of regional forest fires, the mountains and oceans remained inspiring in their majesty and agelessness.



Capilano Suspension Bridge
near Vancouver, BC.



Dr. Vida Vanchan

Dr. Vida Vanchan

Dr. Vanchan co-authored and published an article in an international peer-reviewed journal that provides timely and great insight into the geography of production focusing on the reshoring or repatriation of manufacturing production to the U.S. and UK. She also presented a paper and served as chair, co-organizer, discussant, and panelist for three sessions on 'Dynamics and Evolving Global Geographies of Manufacturing, Offshoring, Reshoring, Robotics and Autonomous Sys-

tems and Global Production' at the 2018 AAG Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. In addition, she authored a blog published by the University Birmingham, UK on 'Ordinary cities, extraordinary things, and the evolving geographies of manufacturing.'

For the seventh consecutive year and in collaboration with various departments on and off-campus, Dr. Vanchan successfully curated another Southeast Asia Week in

March 2018. The week featured lectures, a panel discussion on local and regional perspectives on trade, investments and development; and student research presentations.

Dr. Vanchan served as reviewer for two international refereed journals and as one of the interviewers for The NYS Master Teacher Program finalists that are part of the 2018 cohort of STEM Master Teachers.



Dr. Wende Mix and Mary Perrelli at the BSC Sponsor table at NY GeoCon in Lake Placid.

Dr. Wende Mix

2017-2018 was all about data, data quality, and python, html, css, and javascript programming for Dr. Mix. She continued to support the Data Science and Analytics MS degree and the recently approved Data Science and Analytics Certificate.

Dr. Mix presented her work at the Faculty and Staff Research and Creativity Fall Forum, the NYS GIS Conference in Lake Placid NY entitled "Geospatial Programming in GIS Education", the DAAD Mini-Symposium in December on "Geospatial Programming with Python: Practices and Pitfalls (presentation and hands-on lab), and the WNY GIS Users Group Spring 2018 Learning Event in May on "Open Data and Spatial Analysis".

Dr. Mix added many examples to her [python](#) and [web mapping](#) websites that include using the Google API, the ESRI Javascript API, and the SODA API. These websites are used in GEG 584 and GEG 485/585 to supplement Blackboard materials.

Commencement 2018

The photo on the right shows many, but not all, of the graduates who walked in the May 2018 commencement ceremony. This photo was taken on the Ice Arena floor just before graduates marched into the Sports Arena to receive their hard earned diplomas.

If you are graduating this May, be sure to [apply](#) by the February 2, 2019 deadline. Your fellow students, plus department faculty and staff, look forward to celebrating your graduation at commencement!



Colorado Project Includes Several Students

Dr. Holmgren had a grant funded to produce a fossil packrat midden record for the La Botica archaeological site in Colorado's San Luis Valley. Middens are deposits created by packrats that can be radiocarbon dated and the plants identified, thus providing snapshots of vegetation for various periods in the past.

Three Buffalo State students (Chloe Mokadam, Nicholas Quilty-Koval, Austin Smith) accompanied Dr. Holmgren into the field in June. They had the opportunity to learn how to collect middens, identify vegetation, core trees for a tree ring study, participate in an archaeological field survey, wade in the headwaters of the Rio Grande, and climb the dunes at Great Sand Dunes National Park.

The grant also funded two student lab assistants (Gregory Bream and Marian Rizzo), who learned to clean, sort, and identify midden plants. Greg Bream is continuing his lab work as a GEG 495 Special Project and GEG 430 Senior Thesis.



The Colorado field crew: Austin Smith, Nicholas Quilty-Koval, Chloe Mokadam, Dr. Holmgren, and Dr. Potts (Biology)

Student News

Student award winners from May 2018:

National Council for Geographic Education—outstanding student in geography:

Emily Burch

Katheryne Whittemore Award for Outstanding Geography & Planning major: *Zachary Neudeck*

Congratulations to our 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.



2018 Student Award Winners

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