

Department of Geography & Planning Newsletter



Volume 8: Winter 2012

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Message from the Chair

Welcome to another volume of our department newsletter! We have reached a milestone that I'd like to share with everyone: we currently have 83 majors between the Geography and Planning programs. It has been a department goal for a number of years to reach 80 majors and we are very pleased to have met that goal. We had seven new freshmen and five transfer students join us this fall. These new majors participated in orientation events in

August and we hope they're all doing well this semester. We also hope that recent (and not-so-recent!) alumni are reading this newsletter and enjoying their lives post-graduation. Remember, alumni, we'd love to hear from you!

In other big news, we are in the process of searching for a new urban planner. We are currently searching for someone with research expertise in sustainable urban planning. We expect that the new planner will be interested in content areas such as community and regional development, land use and livability, urban revitalization, or collaborative planning. We will be interviewing candidates during the spring semester and the new faculty member will start in the department this fall.

Finally, we celebrated Geography Awareness Week for the third consecutive year (see photos). The theme this year was *Declare your Interdependence*, which we also linked

to the College's *Year of the City* theme. Linking interdependence within cities meant that our events focused on human interconnectedness with ecological and geophysical systems in urban environments. As you can see in the photos, we hosted a number of events and had a very successful Geography Awareness Week.



Dr. Camille Holmgren announced the photo contest winners at the lunch. Ms. Britney McClain (above), a Buffalo State graduate student, won first prize for her photo entitled "Clandestine".

Department News

Geography Awareness Week

The department celebrated Geography Awareness Week (Nov 12 – 16) with a variety of special events. Dr. Camille Holmgren organized the annual photo contest around the "Year of The City" theme. First, second and third place photos, voted on by the faculty, depicted the interdependence of society, the economy, and the environment in an urban setting.

Dr. Stephen Vermette gave a talk on climate change and the city during which he explored the interdependence of urban infrastructure, how it contributes to heating and what steps may be taken locally to mitigate the warming. Both Stephen and Veryan Vermette organized a geography t-shirt contest where students in shirts with a geographical theme were entered into a raffle for a \$50 gift certificate at the college bookstore.



Winning photos:
1st place (above)
Ms. Britney McClain,
"Clandestine". 2nd
place (top right)
John Long,
"Peaceful
Pathways". 3rd
place (right)
Aurora Shul
untitled.



The GAW luncheon became an integral part of the celebration. This year the luncheon featured foods produced within 100 miles of Buffalo, NY. Students in Dr. Mix's transportation planning class prepared posters relevant to the debate between locavores and globavores, initiated with a recently published book entitled The Locavore's Dilemma: In Praise of The 10,000-Mile Diet.

Department/Faculty News



Dr. Vermette's climate change presentation.

Half of the class created posters reflecting arguments support the 100-mile diet while the other half concentrated on the arguments in support of the 10,000-mile diet.

BSC faculty, staff, and students were invited to sample a variety of locally produced meats, vegetables, breads, and cheeses as well as join in a conversation on this debate.

The interdependence of food choices on society, the economy, and the environment at local and global scales proved to be a satisfying theme for many! (bottom right)



Students' posters lined the corridor (top). Source of ingredients information was provided with the buffet (middle).



Kim Irvine is on sabbatical at National Institute of Education (NIE), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, between July, 2012 and July, 2013. NTU is ranked 86th in the world based on the Times Higher Education ranking (<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2012-13/world-ranking/range/001-200>) and 47th in the world based on the U.S. News ranking (<http://www.usnews.com/education/worlds-best-universities-rankings/top-400-universities-in-the-world?page=2>). In addition to teaching, Dr. Irvine has undertaken a number of initiatives, including:

- ▶ Signing an MOU between the Center for Southeast Asia Environment and Sustainable Development and Mahidol University in Thailand;
- ▶ Coordinating the WAMSEAS (Water Monitoring for South East Asian Schools) program. Supported originally through

Faculty News

funding from the Research Foundation, the program currently partners with the Traidhos Three Generations Barge Program (<http://barge.threegeneration.org/index.html>) to work with 5 Thai Government schools



WAMSEAS at the Kanarajbumroong Patumthani School, Thailand (above); and the constructed wetland that treats Commonwealth School's gray water (right) being tested as part of WAMSEAS.

(13-15 year-olds) on the Chao Phraya River, Bangkok and Commonwealth Secondary School in Singapore (<http://www.commonwealthsec.moe.edu.sg/ee/home.htm>) to test water quality on the Chao Phraya and in one of Singapore's drinking water reservoirs and the constructed treatment wetland on the Commonwealth campus. Staff from Traidhos and Commonwealth made presentations about these programs at the Southeast Asian Geography Association (SEAGA2012) Conference in Singapore at the end of November. In December, I will meet with Dr. Vida Vanchan and teachers at Bak Teuk High School in Phnom Penh to initiate the WAMSEAS program there. Dr. Stephen Vermette has funding from National Geographic to work with New York State schools on a similar theme and the long term goal is to link all schools via the internet and have them post and discuss their water quality results.

- ▶ In collaboration with Mr. Josiah Bowles, the Masters student I am co-advicing at AIT, Dr. Nik Mische, Director, United Education Consultants, and Ms. Krupatchy Pichadul, Thai Airways, we have begun to assess and support several water resource, sanitation and health education initiatives in the Karen Hilltribe village of Huai Pla Kong, Thailand.

- ▶ Began a stormwater modeling project for Rach Gia City, Vietnam, in collaboration with the Southern Institute for Water Resources Research (Vietnam) and Dr. Lloyd Chua, Environmental Engineering at Nanyang Technological University.



MOU signing at Mahidol University (above) and at SEAGA2012 conference (below).





Stephen Vermette,

dabbled in a little historical geography over the past year

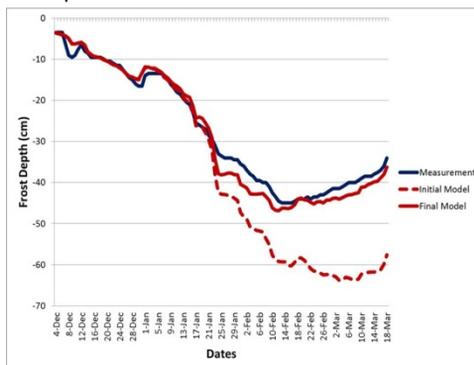
with co-author Guy Cameron, as published in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*. The subject was the failure of the San Miguel De Gualdape colony in 1526, the first colony established on current U.S. soil. Our hypothesis, focusing on evidence from paleoclimate reconstructions, suggests that the colonies failure was attributable to the extraordinary cold conditions of that year.

A second research project, co-authored with Jack Kanack, and published in the proceedings of the 69th Annual Eastern Snow Conference focused on the measurement and modeling of frost depth in WNY. From our research, a climate-only model was developed to successfully determine frost depth.

As part of 'Kits for Cambodia' Dr. Stephen Vermette travelled to Cambodia (with Vida Vanchan) to conduct a series of workshops, under the auspices of the National Institute of Education, for teachers and pre-service teachers. The purpose of the workshops was to demonstrate the value of our Geography

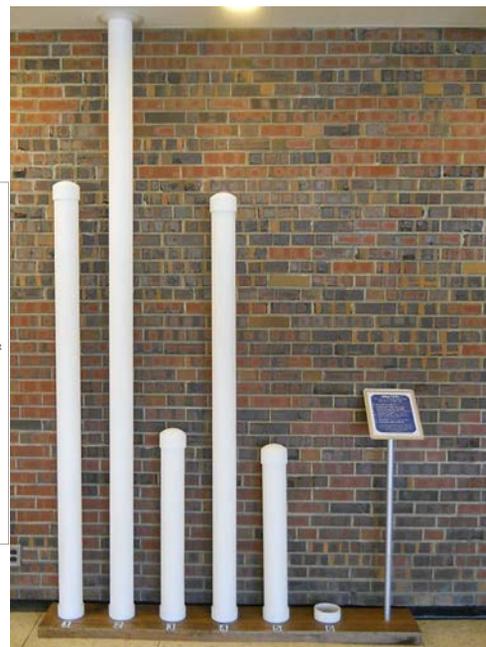
and Earth Science kits for Cambodia's teachers and students.

Last year's focus on 'Weather Event', Dr. Vermette's meteorological interpretation of Charles Burchfield's watercolors (co-curator Tullis Johnson), was awarded a 'Certificate of Commendation' from Museumwise in Spring'12. In awarding the certificate of commendation, the reviewer noted, *"This is a great way to interpret Burchfield's art and a new way to engage partners and audience. I love the connection between art and the artist's environment."* There is talk of the show traveling to Albany in Fall'13. My bags are packed!



Frost depth measurement and model output for winter of 2010-11. (above) "Snow Pipes" in lobby of Classroom Building. (right)

A new climate-related display – a little art mixed with education - was unveiled in the lobby of the Classroom Building – 'Snow Pipes'. It shows the height of various record snow events in the Buffalo area. The tallest of the pipes (winter of 1976-1977) actually penetrates through the second story floor and comes up into the hallway of the Geography & Planning Department.



Kelly Frothingham

is teaching GEG 421/521 *Watershed Analysis* this fall semester and

students are working on a stream assessment of Gill Creek, which is in the Niagara River watershed. Twelve undergraduates and one graduate student are studying watershed management from a fluvial geomorphological perspective and getting hands-on experience out in the creek (see photos). The final report from the class project will be submitted to Vic DiGiacomo, Jr. who is the Eighteenmile Creek Remedial Action Plan Coordinator at the Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District and a Buffalo State geography program graduate ('04).

Dr. Frothingham was pleased to be appointed to the Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Directors by the County legislature this summer. The District focuses on soil conservation and water quality issues throughout Erie County

and provides information, service, technical, and financial assistance to agricultural, urban, and suburban constituents.

Dr. Frothingham also has been serving as vice president of the Middle States Division of the Association of American Geographers this year. Her main responsibility as VP was preparing questions for and moderating the Geography Bowl at the Division annual meeting in Shippensburg, PA. She would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the Department that helped her with this task by submitting Geography Bowl

questions. In the end, she had four rounds of questions with 14 questions per round—that's a lot of geography trivia! Next year Dr. Frothingham will serve as Division president, so the annual meeting will be held here at Buffalo State. The annual meeting will serve as an excellent opportunity to showcase our department and campus to Division members from colleges and universities throughout New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

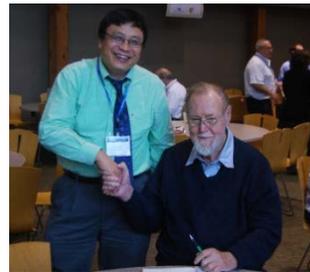


GEG 421/521 students on a field trip to Gill Creek. (Left) Practicing using the Stream Visual Assessment Protocol. (Above)

Tao Tang 1) Served as a guiding member for a SUNY–Buffalo State delegation to visit the Capital Normal University of China for negotiating a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree collaborative educational program. The delegation was led by the Dean of the School of NSS, Dr. Severson. The objectives are: a) increase exchanges of educational ideas; and b) increase the international tuition revenue.



2). Brought the students In Geographic Information Systems (GIS) classes to the New York State Geospatial Summit Conference. Students’ remarks are: “I got the opportunity to talk with GIS professionals across the New York State. This is a good experience to me”; “Dr. Tang, I want do LiDAR data collections and analysis. It is cool.” Dr. Tang was awarded one of the six signed books “Thinking about GIS” by Dr. Roger Tomlinson during the conference. Dr. Tomlinson is the recognized funding father of GIS.



3). Conducted summer research for field survey and GIS analysis of air pollution in Beijing, China with faculty and graduate students at the Capital Normal University. The recent trend of this collaborative study is trying to find spatial relations between the pollution concentrations and solar radiation reflection rate of urban trees and plant species.



4). Presented a research paper at the Middle State Conference of the Association of American Geographers in a poster format. The title of presentation is “3D Geographic Feature Data Collections Applying LiDAR Remote Sensing for Street and Highway Maintenance Applications - A Case Study for the New York State Thruway Authority”



Wende Mix has been enjoying the opportunity to work with her students in PLN 412 on a realignment of the Jesse Kregal bike path for Scajaquada Pathway Committee, Inc. The students have examined three alternatives for the project, researched funding sources, and developed schematics using Sketch-up.

Dr. Mix was appointed to chair the College’s Transportation and Parking Committee. One outcome of this year’s efforts was the development of a new (one-stop) [Transportation Services](#) information page that has a little something for everyone. Dr. Mix is teaching a new course on Sustainable Transportation during the spring 2013 semester, to follow on the transportation planning course she taught this fall. Once again, Tim Trabold and his staff at GBNRTC graciously hosted the students at their downtown office, demonstrating some of the really interesting things transportation planners do.

League of Women Voters invited Dr. Mix to present at a transportation forum entitled “Transportation: Key to Future in WNY”.



Vida Vanchan Since 2011, Dr. Vanchan has been involved in providing assistance to the recently established National Institute of

Social Affairs (NISA), Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation in Cambodia, in their curriculum and institutional development. She serves as lead international liaison and principal investigator for this effort. She helps facilitate both language and cultural translation between the Cambodian and U.S teams (faculty and staff from the Geography and Planning Department, Center for Health and Social Research (CHSR), Social Work, Sociology, Computer Information Systems, Institutional Research, and Center for the Development of Human Services (CDHS); faculty from California State University at Long Beach; and faculty and staff at NISA and MosVY). This past December, she had an official meeting with His Excellency ITH Sam

Students with Jesse Kregal and Joe Frandina preparing to tour the section of interest.



Dr. Mix continued work on a grant from the Center for Development of Human Services on the role of inadequate housing in recurring child maltreatment. This year, she developed an online housing quality assessment instrument to be used by caseworkers on visits to clients. The goal of the project was to help caseworkers differentiate between poverty and inadequate housing.

Faculty News

Heng, Minister of MosVY, and his cabinet, which was televised nationally on Cambodian news reports.

With funding support from the Research Foundation, Dr. Vanchan successfully co-organized and provided training workshops with Dr. Stephen Vermette to teachers and pre-service teachers in Cambodia in January of 2012. These workshops aimed to enhance teaching and student learning experience as well as geography and earth science curricula. Dr. Vanchan also gave a lecture on 'development and inequalities' to faculty and students at the Royal University of Agriculture in Cambodia, at the invitation of the Dean and Vice Dean of the School of Land Management and Administration.

In the U.S., Dr. Vanchan gave an invited presentation at the University at Buffalo on promoting and enhancing education in developing countries – Cambodia's experience, during the Asia at Noon Speaker Series organized by the Asian Studies Program. This past summer, she gave another invited presentation on design strategies, strategic design and competitiveness of firms as part of the Annual Parsons Festival at The New School for Design in New York City, with



Dr. Vanchan discussing support for NISA with His Excellency ITH Sam Heng, Minister of MosVY, his deputy minister, and the Institute director, and staff.



Training workshop at the National Institute of Education

distinguished panelists from Parsons School of Design Strategies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Carnegie Mellon University, Rhode Island School of Design, and The New Inquiry.

In addition to chairing, co-organizing sessions, and presenting her research at national and international conferences, Dr. Vanchan successfully created and coordinated the first 'Southeast Asia Week', with support from the Center for Southeast Asia Environment and Sustainable Development and the Department of Geography and Planning. This event, held in March 2012, featured film and lecture presentations. It was a great success, gathering audiences from across the campus.

Dr. Vanchan served as reviewer for the Journal of Industry and Innovation, and recently published a book review in Economic Geography, a journal that ranks 2nd in geography.



Camille Holmgren

During the past year Camille Holmgren continued her research activities focused on reconstructing the past history of vegetation and

climate change in Baja California, Mexico, and has been finalizing analyses and preparing a new manuscript related to her research in the Sierra Juarez in northeastern

Baja. She presented this work at Buffalo State's Twelfth Annual Faculty/Staff Research and Creativity Fall Forum.

Dr. Holmgren also traveled to Santiago, Chile where she spent two weeks working with Dr. Claudio Latorre at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile to learn plant cuticle analysis from fossil rodent middens. While there she also gave an invited talk entitled "Late Quaternary Biogeography and Paleoclimate of the Sonoran Desert." Upon returning to Buffalo State, she began supervising a Undergraduate Summer Research Fellowship student, Mr. Michael Borrelli, in plant cuticle techniques and applying these to the Sierra Juarez packrat midden record.

Over the past year, Dr. Holmgren taught courses in Global Change, Paleoclimatology, and World Natural Environments. She has also been busy serving as Chair Pro Tem and organizer of the 2012 Geography Awareness Week Photo Contest.

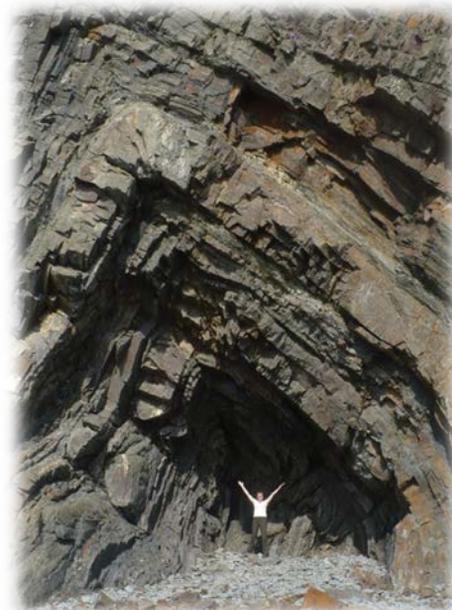
Veryan Vermette In May, my daughter and I spent two weeks trekking the coast of Scotland and England: fantastic geology, good food, (occasionally) good weather,



~335 million year old tree trunk near St. Andrews, Scotland (Above) Amazing folding in coastal Devon, England. (Right)

lovely company, and pleasantly exhausted at the end of each day.

William Wiczorek continues to be the Director of the Center for Health and Social Research at Buffalo State as his main appointment in addition to his role with the Geography and Planning Department. The GEG/PLN 396 Research Methods course was offered to departmental majors for the second time since its inception one year ago. Drs. Wiczorek and Marczynski co-teach the course, which had an even greater focus on



students finding a faculty mentor and then developing the research proposal that will be implemented during the Spring semester in GEG/PLN 430. Conducting a writing intensive course with over twenty students has been quite challenging, as well as rewarding to the progress they are making.

Faculty News

During this past year, Dr. Wiczorek was appointed to chair one of the of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant review groups. He is the chair (2012-14) of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Initial Review Group Epidemiology, Prevention and Behavior Research Review Subcommittee (AA-2), which meets three times a year to review applications on these topics. In addition this past year, he has also conducted grant reviews for NIH center grants and for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Of particular note this year has been the awarding of a Federal grant to support the West Side Youth Development Coalition (WSYDC), which is co-chaired by Dr. Wiczorek and Lucy Candelario, executive director of West Side Community Services. The WSYDC is aimed at improving social, educational, and health conditions on Buffalo's West Side. This five-year grant is from the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and focuses on using data-driven approaches to enhance parent-child bonding, decrease

underage alcohol access and consequences, and conduct a block-by-block standardized assessment to guide future activities.

The year was also marked by a large number of funded projects (e.g., 8 local contracts, 3 NIH), several conference presentations (AAG, Research Society on Alcoholism), and several peer-reviewed publication in journals such as Children and Youth Services Review, Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, and Journal of Research on Adolescence.



Kick-off press conference of U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. addressing the audience

Student News

WeatherMedic, Inc. (a local weather consulting firm) is working with three of our students (Melissa Bender, Christopher Sica, and Samantha Thomas) to provide customized weather forecasts for Shermco Industries who are installing two wind turbines at SC Johnson's (makers of Glade®, Pledge®, Ziploc®, etc.) largest manufacturing plant located in Racine, WI. This is yet another example of how our students can gain real-life experiences in the business of weather.



The annual pumpkin drop to celebrate the Fall Equinox was another huge success. This time the pumpkin was dropped onto pavement creating a huge 'thud' tossing some pumpkin shrapnel into the crowd. Many thanks to the students who organized the event (special thanks to Mike Borrelli who provided the pumpkin and dropped it from the roof, and to Dominick who provided the dramatic drum roll).

In Autumn 2010 our students climbed a mountain (Alpine Field Experience) and this year (Autumn 2012) we returned underground, with 19 students enrolled in Cavern Studies. The course was led by Stephen Vermette and Karen Wehn (ECC), with assistance from Veryan Vermette. The photo is of our group in Laurel Caverns.



Click picture above to watch a video of the pumpkin drop.

Student News

Michael Borrelli was awarded an Undergraduate Summer Research Fellowship for his project entitled “Extraction and Analysis of Plant Cuticles from Sonoran Desert Packrat Middens”. Mr. Borrelli worked with his faculty mentor, Dr. Camille Holmgren, to identify and analyze plant cuticles (epidermis fragments) preserved within the fecal pellets from rodents. Lab work involved grinding, mounting

materials on slides, and microscopic examination of modern reference and fossil material. As a result of this work, he was able to determine how representative rodent diets were of the surrounding plant community and how their diets have changed over the past ~50,000 years in response to climatic and vegetation changes.

SkyWarn is a National Weather Service (NWS) storm spotter training program. Photo shows students and staff who took part in the Spring’12 training.



Michael Borrelli analyzing fossil plant cuticles under the microscope.



Student News

Geography and Planning freshmen learning how to geocache during the student orientation program fondly known as “FYWOW”.



Recent alumni Jordan Barry and Crystal Surdyk presenting results from their PLN 412 project at the Thirtieth Annual Greater Buffalo Environmental Conference, Western Chapter of New York Water Environment Association held in March

Student News

Student Awards The 2012 student award winners were:

Katheryne T. Whittemore Award for outstanding Geography and Planning major - Crystal Surdyk

Western NY American Planning Association Award - Jason Kulaszewski

National Council for Geographic Education Award in Geography - Cortney Sugg

National Council for Geographic Education Award in Planning - Alexander Anhwere-James

David Bullough Memorial Award - Bill Dobson

Chair's Discretionary Award - Jordan Berry and Kyra Clark

Please visit our [web site](#) for more information.



Lindsey Higgins successfully (B.A. Geography '10) completed her M.S. at Ohio State University, in the Department of Geography/Byrd Polar Research Center,

studying ice core paleoclimatology. She is currently working on her Ph.D. at Stockholm University, in the Department of Physical Geography and Quaternary Geology, where her research will explore environmental history and climate change in relation to historical land use changes in East Africa through the analysis of lake sediments.

Crystal Surdyk (B.S. Urban & Regional Planning, 2012) is employed as the Administrative Manager for Joy Kuebler Landscape Architect, PC. She has remained active in community service by volunteering as a business mentor and fundraising organizer with Westminster Economic Development Initiative, as well as volunteering with WNY Coalition for the Homeless at the annual Project Homeless Connect event. Crystal has also expanded her participation in community development as the Project Manager for Designing to Live

Sustainably (d2ls). She has an intense passion for community revitalization, historic preservation, and urban renewal, and respects the history of the Buffalo-Niagara Region and strongly believes in its potential for growth. Crystal is excited to join d2ls and to be a part of an organization that is dedicated to the collaboration of knowledge, skills, and ideas to achieve responsible strategy for the sustainable development in the City of Buffalo and the Buffalo-Niagara Region.

Alumni: We want to hear from YOU. Please send us a note or email to let us know what you are doing.

Please feel free to send any comments or questions to our Newsletter Editor, Dr. Wende Mix, at mixwa@buffalostate.edu

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