

Department of Geography & Planning Newsletter



Volume 7: Winter 2011

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Message from the Chair

It's time for another volume of our department newsletter. We're so pleased that alumni are interested in keeping up with what's going in the department and I'd like to remind you all that we'd love to hear from you, too! Please call or email the department with your post-graduation update. You can also keep up with us by liking our new Facebook page (www.facebook.com/BuffaloState.Geography.Planning).

Many exciting things have happened in the last year: the number of majors in our programs is growing, place-based courses are becoming more popular, and students are taking advantage of internship opportunities. While we saw a large group of students graduate in May, we also had four transfer and five first-year students start in our programs this fall. Fall orientation went well and we hope that all of the new majors learned something about the department and felt welcomed. The number of place-based courses offered through the department continues to grow and students visited Thailand, Malaysia, and the Bahamas this past year. And, many students took advantage of internship opportunities at places like the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning, WGRZ-TV, and Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation.

Faculty are staying as busy as our majors by teaching and doing research locally and abroad. I'm continually amazed at the breadth of

research being done by faculty in this department. They are studying everything from bus use in Buffalo to using engineered wetlands to treat sewage in Thailand and competitive characteristics of US design firms to reconstruction of past vegetation and paleoclimatology. This research goes a long way to enhance and inform the material presented in the courses that faculty teach, which is such an important part of why faculty spend time doing research.

Finally, we had one significant change in the department over the last year. Dr. Charlotte Roehm, who held a joint appointment with Geography & Planning and the Great Lakes Center, has left the college and moved to Colorado to pursue research opportunities there. However, she maintains adjunct faculty status here and will continue to work with Stephen Vermette and Mary Perrelli on an EPA-funded project investigating the Lake Erie nearshore environment.

Department News

Charles Burchfield: Weather Event

Charles Burchfield wrote "My diary seems to be a journal of the wind, sunshine and sky", and one can say much the same for his watercolors. While some may travel the world to find nature's beauty, Charles Burchfield found beauty in his own backyard – the environment near Lake Erie. His paintings offer an intimate study of our sky, winds, clouds, and storms, as he wrote "I find no sympathetic beauty in the sky I have not lived under". A study of Burchfield's paintings is really a unique historical record of our weather, and collectively, of our climate through Burchfield's eyes.

Weather Event is the result of collaboration between Stephen Vermette and Tullis Johnson, Manager of Archives and Information Resources at the Burchfield-Penny Art Center. The exhibit provides an interpretation of



Department faculty attending the opening celebration of Weather Event.

the meteorological elements and symbols used in Burchfield's paintings and sketches. Noteworthy are Burchfield's use of sounds that relate to heat, and the two watercolors "Flaming Orange Northern Sky at Sunset/V-4a and V-4b", from July 16, 1915, which have not been previously viewed. The colors in the sunsets are brilliant and they may be

attributed to the earlier eruption of Mount Lassen. Robert Moore, a student of Meteorology & Climatology, provided a radio forecast (exhibited on QR codes) <http://vimeo.com/31385664> for a number of the early paintings and sketches (1915-17), predating actual radio broadcasts. *Weather Event* is on view from October 28, 2011 to February 26, 2012.



Stephen Vermette presenting Weather Event to GEG 101 students.

Department News



Red House, at the Weather Event

Secure Green Space

A secure Green Space (including a naturalized component – grass not mowed), spearheaded by Stephen Vermette and Terry Harding (Director, Campus Services), was recently established on campus. The green space allows for the set-up monitoring equipment, or simply access to an open area, for both short and long-term field projects.

We were able to carve out a slice of green space just in time, as this is the last usable green space on a campus which is quickly filling in with new buildings. The space is located near the (Y) parking lot, it is fenced in (for security purposes) and has a power outlet. While there has always been, and still is, the option to take field experiments off campus, a secure green space on campus will allow faculty and students convenient and secure access. Our list of potential users is growing, from a number of academic departments.



The fenced 'Green Space' is outlined in red. (Above)

The fenced 'Green Space', looking from Iroquois Drive toward the Scajaquada Expressway. (Left)



Faculty News

Kim Irvine The Center for Southeast Asia Environment and Sustainable Development had a busy year, offering three different field courses in Southeast Asia. During the January, 2011 intersemester, Dr. Kim Irvine led a group of 10 undergraduates on a two-week course in Thailand. The students investigated Thailand's culture, geography, history, architecture, religion, art, and urban infrastructure during visits to Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Hua Hin and Kancharaburi. Two experiences were particularly notable. First, the students stayed in traditional mud and thatch houses in a remote Akha hilltribe village and taught English classes for a day at the Pong Num Rong village school. In addition to the teaching, the group raised \$740 that was donated towards school supplies. The students also met with staff at Drum Publications in Kancharaburi who produce English-Karen language children's books and dictionaries, particularly for use in the Karen/Burmese refugee camps in Thailand. The group purchased a number of books that were brought back to Buffalo for the growing Karen refugee population here.

During the summer Dr. Irvine and Dr. Stephen Vermette took three undergraduates to Malaysia for a field course that was conducted jointly with Dr.

Firuzza Mustafa and 30 Geography majors from the University of Malaya and this provided a wonderful introduction for our students to a predominantly Muslim culture. The course focused on collaborative research experiences in the rural Kuala Selangor area, specifically looking at nature preserves and tourism opportunities, agricultural practices, wild catch and aquaculture fisheries, and water quality issues. The group also spent several days exploring the landscape of the world class city of Kuala Lumpur.

Finally, Dr. Irvine jointly taught a graduate level course in wastewater design at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok, with Dr. Thammarat Koottatep (AIT) and Dr. Hiroyasu Satoh (University



Teaching at Pong Num Rong school, Thailand



of Tokyo). The course enrolled 12 students from throughout Southeast Asia and included Buffalo State Master's student Ms. Jameieka Price.

Field course in Malaysia

Stephen Vermette, working with Karen Wehn (Erie Community College), once again took students to the Gerace Research Centre on the island of San Salvador, Bahamas. The island's beautiful waters, its coral reefs, beaches, dunes, caves, geology, plantation ruins, and the beach where Columbus first made landfall in the New World, offer plenty of material for the geography student. Working with Kim Irvine, Stephen also took students on a field course to Malaysia. In Malaysia, the Buffalo State students merged with a field class of geography students from the University of Malaysia. As a merged class, students explored the physical and cultural landscape of this tropical country, staying both in Kuala Lumpur (the country's capital city) and in a jungle nature park. The added value was the opportunity for our students to study alongside their Malaysian peers, and to truly live a unique culture. As with the Bahamas Field Experience course, our classroom was nothing short of spectacular.

While on sabbatical, time was spent on a number of meteorology-related projects, the fruits of which will be born later. An early accomplishment was *Weather Event*, an exhibition at the Burchfield Penny Art Center. In addition to art, Stephen also

entered the realm of magazine publishing, publishing articles on 'The Afternoon the Sun Disappeared over Western New York' in the *Western New York Heritage Magazine*, and most recently 'Friend and Foe: Weather and the War of 1812' in *Weatherwise*. Working with Mary Perrelli, Stephen ran a number of our Ecomapper missions to sample water quality and current off of Lake Erie beaches, and along with Mary and Charlotte Roehm, continued our efforts to install and maintain a high-tech buoy system for Lake Erie. Lastly, Stephen received the New York Geographic Alliance for the Virginia Figura Award, recognizing distinguished service to geographic education in New York State.



Ecomapper



Students snorkeling in the Bahamas (Above) Mary, hard at work, at the beach. (Left)



Kelly Frothingham has been spending a lot of time working with colleagues from the Great Lakes Center and other departments on campus developing two new interdisciplinary master's programs in Great Lakes environmental science. In particular, she's taken the lead on the Master of Science program which has been planned as a Professional Science Master's (PSM). PSM programs combine science or math coursework with communication, leadership, and project management skills. Those "Plus" courses and an internship replace a thesis. The core courses in both programs focus on Great Lakes ecosystem science, GIS, and quantitative

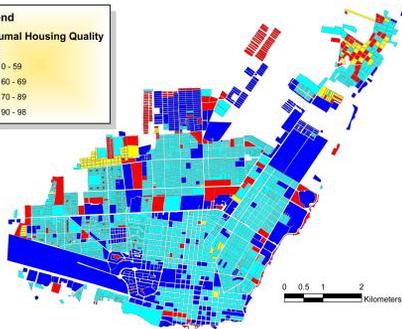
methods. Electives can be taken in our department, as well as biology, chemistry, and earth sciences & science education. Representatives from local environmental organizations have expressed a lot of interest in the programs, especially the PSM program, and internship opportunities should be plentiful. We hope these exciting new programs will start in the fall of 2012.

Dr. Frothingham also started serving as secretary of the Middle States Division of the Association of American Geographers this year. After serving as co-editor of the *Middle States Geographer*, journal of the Middle States Division, for 10 years, Dr. Frothingham is excited to serve the Division in this new capacity. She's also looking forward to serving as Division president in 2013 and hosting the annual meeting here on campus in fall 2013. 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.

Tao Tang 1). In collaboration with Elias Montes, a faculty member at the Quintana Roo University, conducted research for "applying high resolution satellite Images to map the strength of housing structures to hurricane hazards in Cancun and Chetumal, Mexico." One graduate student, Eric Snyder and two undergraduate students Aaron Boci and Maundud Omar worked on this project. Aaron Boci obtained an undergraduate student travel grant for this research.



Field investigation in Mexico



Distribution pattern of roof quality in Chetumal, Mexico

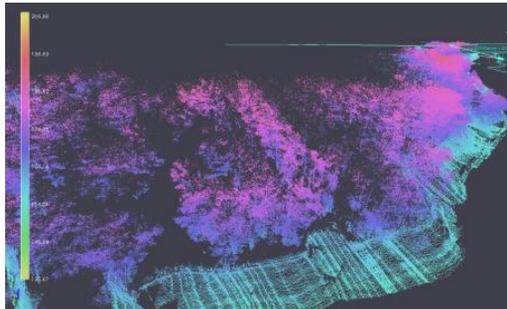
2). Supervised undergraduate student, Robin Tedlock to obtain one NSF Undergraduate Research Fellowship for him to travel with me to Beijing China in conducting research of “spatial analysis of street traffic density impact on CO2 and air particle distribution in Beijing, China”.

Robin Tedlock conducts field measurement with graduate students at the Capital Normal University, Beijing China. (Left)

Robin visits the famous tourist sites in Beijing after field work. (Right)



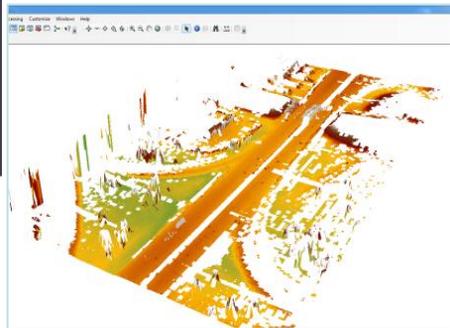
3). Conducted two LiDAR (laser scan) 3D survey projects with three visiting scholars from the Capital Normal University of China: a) east Lake Erie shoreline 3D analysis; b) the New York State Thruway Authority pilot 3D data collection and processing.



Preliminary view of Lake Erie shoreline data.



Field data collection along highway I-90



3D model of a portion of highway constructed in ArcGIS.

Wende Mix spent an enormous amount of time converting GEG 309 Introduction to Urban Geography to an online only class. She had eight weeks of training from the SUNY Learning Network on teaching online only classes and participated in several faculty development workshops regarding online

teaching. The first offering of the course was during the summer of 2011. Dr. Mix was apprehensive at first, but eventually extremely pleased with the experience. She had much more interaction with students and the students had much more interaction, and peer to peer learning, with each other than was possible in large face to face lectures. Dr. Mix plans to continue offering this course, online only, every semester and hopes to develop new online only courses for the department.

Ironically, Dr. Mix presented at a Professional Development Workshop entitled “Continuing to Click: Increasing Student Engagement and Learning”. She was invited because of her lengthy experience using clickers in her face to face Urban Geography lectures.

Other notable activities for Dr. Mix this year included being the faculty sponsor of the Community Youth Garden project (see the student section). She also worked on a grant from the Center for Development of Human Services on the role of inadequate housing in recurring child maltreatment.

Dr. Mix served on the BSC 101 Oversight Committee for the college. Although BSC 101 is no longer going to be a required course, Dr. Mix intends to use all of the books and DVDs she acquired for her BSC 101 class to teach about sustainability in a new Geography and Planning course on Sustainability that she is proposing with Dr. Irvine.



Dr. Mix's weather photo – not submitted to GAW photo contest! Sailboat lost in the fog on Lake Ontario.



Vida Vanchan As chair of the Early Career Development Committee (ECDC) of the Industry Studies Association, Dr. Vanchan co-organized

a Professional Development Workshop and Networking Dinner for early career scholars engaged in industry studies research at the University of Pittsburgh in the summer of 2011 in which there're over 40 participants including 12 panelists of leading scholars, representatives from major funding organizations, and junior scholars across disciplines, ranging from economics, geography, urban planning, to labor relations, engineering, and management. In this position, she also helped administer the Industry Studies Dissertation Awards and presented the awards to the winners from MIT and Carnegie Mellon at the Awards Luncheon, which was held at the University of Pittsburgh, with over 100 attendees from leading institutions across the country and abroad. This presentation follows opening remarks from the Industry Studies Association President and the Provost of the University of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Vanchan co-organized successful sessions for a second consecutive year on 'Tangibles, Intangibles and New Geographies of Manufacturing/Production,' at the 2011 Annual Meeting of Association of American Geographers in Seattle. She also presented a paper on her ongoing work on the industrial design sector, 'The Nature of Contracts, Network Cultivation, and Relationships between Industrial Design Firms and their Clients.'

Furthermore, Dr. Vanchan has served as reviewer for internationally peer-reviewed journals, *Economic Geography* and *Industry and Innovation*. She has successfully taught another new course, 'Geography of Development,' this past spring semester. This course is designed to broaden the Geography and Planning Department's offerings in human geography and give students a better understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of geography. It does not only support the recently established Center for Southeast Asia Environment and Sustainable Development within the department, but also seeks to enrich student's understanding of development from its theories, history and progress to issues and challenges in developing areas around the world.

Veryan Vermette The scene: Ka'ena Point Natural Area Reserve, Oahu Hawaii. Me, balanced on coastal lava rocks photographing sea urchins. Into the cove, and to within several feet of me, swims a rare Hawaiian monk seal. The playful creature cavorts (dare I say 'for' me?) and grins ('at' me?) for a quarter-hour before stretching out to sleep. I am enthralled, bewitched, and humbled by its trust. I have been gifted with a once-in-a-lifetime encounter with a delightful member of this endangered species.



Camille Holmgren

continued her research activities focused on reconstructing the past history of vegetation and climate change in Baja California, Mexico.

Highlights include publication of an article in *Quaternary Research*. This work provides a reconstruction of past vegetation and climate spanning ~33,000 years from the Sierra San Pedro Martir in northeastern Baja California, Mexico, offers new insights into the dynamics of the chaparral-desert ecotone, and supplies a historical baseline for assessing ongoing ecological change in a rapidly developing area. She was also engaged in on-going work on a new packrat midden record from the Sierra Juarez in northeastern Baja.

In addition, she is participating in the development of NEOTOMA, a multi-proxy database for paleoecological data. NEOTOMA is an international database involving collaborative effort involving individuals from 19 institutions. Dr. Holmgren is serving on the Science Advisory Committee of the Fossil Rodent Midden Working Group and in Fall 2010 attended a workshop in Madison, Wisconsin where she helped to draft a

working group plan aimed at ensuring that all published midden data for North and South America are incorporated in a format compatible with the NEOTOMA.

Dr. Holmgren was also awarded a Research Foundation Incentive Grant to support her efforts to develop a proposal with collaborators in Arizona to investigate community assembly in the Sonoran Desert. She also received a Provost's Incentive Grant that will be used to fund upcoming travel to Santiago, Chile where she will spend two weeks working with Dr. Claudio Latorre at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile to learn plant cuticle analysis from fossil rodent middens.

Over the past year, Dr. Holmgren taught courses in Global Change, Paleoclimatology, and World Natural Environments. She has also been busy serving as the chair of the Geography and Planning Curriculum Committee and organizer of the 2011 Geography Awareness Week Photo Contest.

William Wieczorek a professor in the Department of Geography and Planning, is the full-time Director of the Center for Health and Social Research at Buffalo State College. Dr. Wieczorek remains highly involved in departmental activities, in addition to his overseeing a busy research center, which has ten full-time research staff. D. Wieczorek and the Center provided support for Geography Awareness Week in November of this year.

This past year has been quite busy with research, teaching, and various community projects for Dr. Wieczorek. While his main appointment at Buffalo State is to direct the Center for Health and Social Research, Dr. Wieczorek is also an active participant as a professor in the Department of Geography and Planning. It has been a highly busy year for Dr. Wieczorek in both of these roles.

The GEG/PLN 396 Research Methods course mentioned last year was approved. The first round of geography and planning majors took the course this fall. Dr. Wieczorek co-taught the new course with Dr. Kelly Marczynski, Assistant Director of the Center for Health and Social Research, who is

Faculty/Student News

trained in mathematics and epidemiology. All of the department's faculty members also presented their research interests and projects to the students to facilitate the matching of students to research topics and mentors before the senior thesis course (GEG/PLN 430). The preliminary response is that the new course has provided a solid foundation so that the senior thesis course can focus more on the implementation and interpretation of the thesis project.

Other activities that are specific to the department include Dr. Wieczorek continuing as the Personnel Chair and the Center's support of Geography Awareness Week in November of this year. In addition, Dr. Wieczorek was a committee member for two successful doctoral students this past year (Dr. Amy Manning, Ph.D. in Social Work at the University at Buffalo, and Dr. Byeonghwa Park Computational Science and Informatics at George Mason University)

Dr. Wieczorek was quite involved in research presentations, publications, and external grants and contracts over the past year. He is the lead author on a forthcoming article in

WIRE Computational Statistics titled "Clustering in Irregular Areas and Lattices" with Alan Delmerico (Buffalo State), Peter Rogerson (UB), and David Wong (George Mason University). Other coauthored publications this past year include an article on peer moderated mediation of early alcohol use (Addictive Behaviors), rural suicides in China (Social Science and Medicine), the role of victimization in criminal behaviors (Children and Youth Services Review), and the association of early offending on impaired driving (Addictive Behaviors). Dr.

Meteorology & Climatology Club

The fall equinox was celebrated this year with a pumpkin drop from the Classroom Building. The event was organized by students from the our Meteorology and Climatology Club". To watch WIVB's a video of the event, [click here](#).

Out of Their Gourd ?

Wieczorek and Alan Delmerico developed a webinar titled "Foundations of GIS in Public Health and Health Professions" for the Empire State Public Health Training Center, which provides training to all of the public health departments in New York State. Funding sources over the past year include the National Institutes of Health, the P2 Collaborative of Western New York, Erie County Department of Mental Health, US. Department of Justice, and several local community-based organizations



Student News

Community Youth Garden

Three Geography and Planning majors were awarded a grant from Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo to create a community youth garden at the Asarese Matters Recreational Center. The grant was awarded through the COLLEGE GREEN BOWL, a competition among local colleges to conduct a campus sustainability project. Crystal Surdyk, Jordon Barry, and Kari-Anne Clayton worked with Dr. Mix and AmeriCorps volunteer Maureen McCarthy to plan, construct, plant, and harvest a youth garden at the center. The City of Buffalo Parks and Recreation Department granted a use permit at the center. Grassroots Gardens and The Grant-Ferry Association provided support for this effort. Crystal Surdyk took the lead role presenting the winning proposal at an awards ceremony. She wrote for the project report "What makes the garden project at the AMRC different from the other urban gardens is its design was decided by the youth of the community. Not only were these youth involved in the design process, they ultimately decided what was to be planted, learned how to plant, care for, and harvest their plantings, maintained the garden for future harvests, learned the benefits of growing and consuming natural foods, were able to consume the "fruits (and vegetables) of their labor", and learned how to work with and respect the natural environment to achieve and sustain their garden."

The BSC students organized box building activities during a community service day, worked with the youth to plant seedlings and plants in the Spring, maintained the garden during the summer, and helped harvest and prepare the garden for winter. Crystal and Jordon used their design skills and connections at Erie Community College to plan the garden, obtain the materials, build the boxes and create a sign. They are now recruiting younger students to take over when they graduate .



Crystal and Jordan's sign. (Above)



BSC Students and two of Dr. Mix's offspring (Andrew and Rachel O'Neill) preparing the garden for planting. (Below)

Crystal Surdyk, Dr. Mix, Maureen McCarthy, and Jordon Barry (above) on box building day along with other volunteers (below).



Student News

Student Awards The 2011 student award winners were:

- Katheryne T. Whittemore Award for outstanding Geography and Planning major - Ben Bissell and Bernice Radle
- Western NY American Planning Association Award - Scott Petrus
- National Council for Geographic Education Award in Geography - Keenan Toohey
- National Council for Geographic Education Award in Planning - Kevin Ward
- David Bullough Memorial Award - Aaron Boci
- Chair's Discretionary Award - Alyssa Russell

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

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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