FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MODERN BIODIVERSITY AND DAWN ANIMALS:
FOCUS OF DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR LECTURES AT ECU

GREENVILLE, N.C. (Jan. 26, 2009) — What factors determine the location of organisms within a particular space or period of time? What does this tell us about modern organisms? What were the first known animals really like? How are they different or similar to modern animals?

On Wednesday, February 4, two visiting professors at East Carolina University will answer these questions and others in two separate presentations. These free, public discussions are part of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor Lecture series honoring professor Steve Culver, 2008 Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor and chair of the Department of Geological Sciences.

At 1 p.m. in the Howell Science Complex, Room N-102, Dr. Martin A. Buzas, senior geologist at the Smithsonian Institution, will present a lecture entitled “Explaining Modern Biodiversity Patterns through Fossil Distributions.”

Buzas received his doctoral degree from Yale University in 1963, his master of science degree from Brown University in 1960 and his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Connecticut in 1958. He joined the Smithsonian Institution in 1963 and has served as chair of the Department of Paleobiology and chair of the Smithsonian’s Senate of Scientists.

Also on February 4 at 5:30 p.m. in the Science and Technology Building, Room C-307, Dr. Jere H. Lipps, professor of integrative biology at the University of California, Berkeley, will discuss “The Dawn Animals.”

Lipps says there is a misconception that dawn animals, soft-bodied animals that lived nearly 600 million years ago, coexisted in a peaceful, non-predatory environment. Collectively called a “peaceful garden,” Lipps argues that these animals were actually more like modern herbivores, detritovores, filter feeders and predators. “They were neither peaceful, nor gardens,” says Lipps.

Lipps received his training in geology and paleontology from the University of California, Los Angeles, with his doctoral degree in 1966 and his bachelor of arts degree in 1962. Prior to his position at UC-Berkeley, Lipps served for two decades as a geology department faculty member and chair at the University of California, Davis. A notably broad-based paleontologist, Lipps interests include marine geology, marine biology, paleontology, micropaleontology and astrobiology.

For additional information about Buzas’ and Lipps’ presentations, please contact Culver at 252.328.6360 or culvers@ecu.edu. Individuals requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should call 252.737.1016 (voice/TTY) at least 48 hours prior to the event.

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