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lg/April 28, 2010

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ECU Geography Professor Appointed Research Fellow, Center for Sustainable Tourism

GREENVILLE, N.C. (April 28, 2010) — This fall, East Carolina University geography professor and recipient of the 2009 UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching, Derek Alderman, not only will teach his courses in the department but will be assisting the ECU Center for Sustainable Tourism, a Division of Research and Graduate Studies. Recently, Dr. Marilyn Sheerer appointed Alderman the Center's Research Fellow in Cultural and Heritage Tourism.

"I am thrilled to join the Center," said Alderman. "The Center is an exciting, interdisciplinary environment that will allow me to work with scholars across the campus in a common commitment to sustainable and responsible tourism development."

According to a Center publication, sustainability is a growing trend in all industries and is rapidly finding its way into mainstream tourism. The increasing popularity of sustainability has led to different understandings of what sustainability really means and how it can be applied, so to help clarify, the ECU Center for Sustainable Tourism has developed a working definition, which reads, "Sustainable tourism contributes to a balanced and healthy economy by generating tourism-related jobs, revenues and taxes while protecting and enhancing the destination's social, cultural, historical, natural and built resources for the enjoyment and well-being of both residents and visitors."

During his three-year commitment, Alderman will provide instructional support and student advising for the newly approved Master of Science in Sustainable Tourism, the first interdisciplinary degree of its kind to be offered anywhere in the nation. He will conduct individual and collaborative research that supports the Center's "Sense of Place Initiative," which is a cross-disciplinary concept that recognizes the many ways in which places take on special meaning to people. Finally, he will coordinate network opportunities for the Center's faculty affiliates and broaden the base of affiliated faculty; organize tourism-related panels and paper sessions at professional meetings and public programs; and participate in engagement and outreach efforts with community groups and state agencies.

Alderman is interested in developing the cultural and heritage tourism branch of the Center, advancing research on the relationship between place and tourism development and the role of tourist destinations as arenas for the negotiation of identity, social power and memory within communities.

“I am especially interested in studying issues of social equity in tourism as they relate to and impact African Americans in North Carolina and the American South,” said Alderman. “I hope to assist the Center in organizing an African American Heritage Tourism Summit that would help black entrepreneurs and community groups gain greater visibility within the wider tourism development landscape.”

Alderman’s excitement at joining the work of the Center flows easily from his past and current research.

“Through the Center, I will be able to apply my research on race, memory and place in ways that engage the tourism industry and create a dialogue with professionals and the public that would not be possible otherwise,” he stated. “For me, this is a natural step in my intellectual development as an engaged scholar-teacher.”

The Center for Sustainable Tourism is believed to be the only such center in the nation fully dedicated to research, community and business engagement, and education and training in sustainable innovations and applications in tourism. In 2007, the Center was given formal approval and Center designation with the first director assuming duties on October 1, 2007.

Due to its interdisciplinary and collaborative nature, the Center works closely with many academic and non-academic units at ECU; with local, regional, state and national governmental organizations; with business and industry; and with nonprofits and travel-related organizations.

For additional information on Alderman’s Fellowship, please contact Alderman at 252-328-4013 or aldermand@ecu.edu. For more information on the Center for Sustainable Tourism, please contact Director Pat Long at 252-328-9469 or longp@ecu.edu.

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