

East Carolina University

VECTORS

News and Notes from the Department of Geography

Fall 2009

Volume 3, Issue 1

Department of Geography News

**Words from our New Chairperson,
Dr. Burrell Montz**



I am delighted to be part of this energetic and diverse department. I come to ECU and the department from Binghamton University in New York (part of the SUNY system). During my time at Binghamton, I served as director of the interdisciplinary Environmental Studies Program, as both undergraduate and graduate director of the Geography Department, and as Chair of the Geography Department. My teaching has centered on environmental topics, including Water Resources, Planning and Management, Environmental Impact Statements, Natural Hazards, Resource Management, and Environmental Policy. In research, I concentrate on the social science and policy aspects of natural hazards including such topics as vulnerability, effectiveness of flood management alternatives, perceptions of risk, and response to warnings. The timing of my move to Greenville, just before the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Floyd, did not go unnoticed by my colleagues in the hazards research world!

The transition to North Carolina has been an easy one. We quickly settled into our house and

have been enjoying exploring the region – when I manage to take a break from making my way up the steep learning curve of administration at ECU. It has been fun, challenging, and never boring! Please come visit, but if you can't, please keep us posted on what you are doing. We love hearing from our alums!

Geography Alum Awarded Fulbright

Dr. Velvet Nelson, ECU MA 2003, Assistant Professor at Sam Houston State University, has been awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant to lecture at the University of Primorska, Slovenia during the spring 2010 semester. The Fulbright Program, America's flagship international educational exchange program, is sponsored by the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Slovenia's newest university, established in 2003, Primorska is a public university in Koper, Slovenia on the Adriatic coast only 15 miles from the Italian border. Dr. Nelson will be working with students in the Department of Geography at the university to examine issues associated with Slovenia's emerging tourism industry.

Dr. Nelson's research had been focused on issues related to the Caribbean where tourism is more overdeveloped and efforts are focused upon



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maintaining tourism levels. Eastern Europe faces very different issues as they attempt to develop new tourist destinations. Dr. Nelson is very excited about the opportunity and is open to new ideas and diversifying her research.

Department News and Events

ECU Geography Receives \$3.2 Million Software Donation

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, one of the fastest growing technology industries within our economy, along with the growth of nanotechnology and biotechnology, involves the application of advanced geospatial technologies. These new information technologies include the development and use of satellite images, global positioning systems and geographic information systems; and they are used in virtually every sector of the economy, including transportation and utilities, the health industry and intelligence agencies.



Pictured (from left-to-right) are Eric Lester, creator of the GeoGenesis image-processing software; Ron Mitchelson, former chair of ECU Geography; and Matt Heric, CEO of IAVO.

East Carolina University students and faculty are benefiting from a large gift, generously provided by IAVO Research and Scientific, a geospatial technology firm located in Durham, N.C. IAVO's gift consists of more than 100 copies of their GeoGenesis® image-processing software to be used over a period of five years and is valued at nearly \$3.2 million.

GeoGenesis is a unified image-processing suite specifically designed to support modern geodata production services. With the GeoGenesis computer suite, students at ECU will receive

a package that is geared to support mapping, feature extraction, digital elevation modeling and the management of these tasks. Some students might be looking for pre-historic settlements, others might be examining vulnerable coastlines, or designing a new subdivision, while still others might be estimating the area of impervious surfaces and storm water issues. "The applications of the software are endless," says Heric. "Mastering these tools provides great marketability for all students."

Alderman Receives BOG Teaching Excellence Award

Derek Alderman, associate professor in the Department of Geography, was selected as the ECU recipient of the annual UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching. "I'm truly honored to be recognized among all of my great colleagues," Alderman said. "One of the reasons I enjoy this institution so much is its commitment to research, teaching and service." Alderman credited a mentor from his undergraduate days with his successful teaching model, which includes an open door policy, constant communication with students, the involvement of students in research, and the cultivation of a challenging and engaging classroom atmosphere. "The university is more than just a transfer of information," Alderman said. "Our job as university professors is to create opportunities and environments in which we can put students in places where they can help construct their own knowledge."

Course Going Global in 2010

Global Climates (GEOG 3230) will have a very different look in Spring 2010, because the course is being offered as an ECU Global Understandings class. The test design was proposed through a partnership between ECU and the U.S. Department of State (DOS). Sixteen students from Geography and other disciplines around campus will be able to work with their counterparts from universities in Brazil, China, and India to propose solutions to pressing climate change issues. Students will examine six topics: science, impacts, mitigation, adaptation, government's role, and international negotiations by listening to a prominent guest speaker from the U.S. government followed by a roundtable discussion group represented by the four nations. Solution proposals will be developed in small groups with input from all four countries and

will be posted on a DOS web site for the global community to view. Geography professors Dr. Rosana Nieto-Ferreira and Dr. Scott Curtis will team-teach the course, facilitating discussion and acting as resources on climate change. Updates on the course and a link to the DOS site will be available at: personal.ecu.edu/ferreirar/GEOG3230/GlobalClimates2010.html.

GeoClub Report

GeoClub is gearing up for SEDAAG 2009 where 10 members are giving either poster or paper presentations. In the spring of 2010, the club is planning a spring yard sale fund raiser. The 2009/2010 GeoClub officers include: Stephanie Hill (President), Emily Wright (Vice President), Haley Cleckner (Secretary), Robbie Munroe (Treasurer), Jennifer Mann (Historian), Justin Briggs (SGA Representative), and Matt Watterson (SGA Representative).

Student's Detour Leads to Scanning Mountains



Cal Scheinert transferred from Auburn, Alabama to ECU in Fall 2008 intending to enroll in the physical therapy program. With a single Geography class he radically changed course. He enrolled in Geography's Water Planet class with Rosana Nieto-Ferreira. By Spring 2009 he was enrolled in three Geography courses including Earth Surface Systems, Fundamentals of GIS, and Weather and Climate. He learned of Thad Wasklewicz's research interests in the Earth Surface Systems class. In May, he returned home and worked doing landscaping to save money to purchase plane tickets and to cover his expenses to accompany Dr. Wasklewicz and assist with laser scanning of a watershed prone to debris flows near Buena Vista, CO. The research there was in collaboration with the US Geological Survey Landslide Hazards Program in Golden, CO. After

four grueling days of laser scanning, sometimes in hard hats for protection from persistent rock flow, the team returned to the Golden USGS office. During their drive to the office it was raining and video cameras had captured a debris flow caused by the rain. Cal was preparing to return to Greenville, but was asked to stay and assist with the scanning. As a result, he was reimbursed for all of his expenses. In addition, Cal is now employed on Dr. Wasklewicz's NSF grant to work in California on debris flows associated with recent wildfires. Next spring he will present a poster at the Association of American Geographers' meeting in Washington DC.

Commemorating 10th Anniversary of Hurricane Floyd

Scientists and policy makers from ECU and across the nation convened in Greenville's City Hotel and Bistro September 17 and 18 to participate in panel discussions and present research on hurricanes. Several ECU Geography and Planning students, professors, and graduates were also in attendance. The overarching theme was "Where have we come in 10 years since the Floyd flood?" On Thursday Dr. Burrell Montz (introduced this issue) and Dr. Tom Allen (Geography at ECU) facilitated panels on "Human Dimensions of Hurricane Floyd" and "Emerging Technology for Hazards Risk Reduction" respectively. On Friday the following talks were given by Geographers:

- *Back to the Future: Satellite Precipitation as a Tool to Reanalyze Hurricane Floyd and Forecast Probabilities of Extreme Rainfall in Eastern North Carolina.* Dr. Scott Curtis, ECU.
- *Changes in Flood Characteristics after a Major Flood Event: Re-evaluating the Effect of Hurricane Floyd on Future Flood Response.* Dr. Jennifer Arrigo, ECU.
- *The 1999 Flood of the Century: Extraordinary Hydrometeorological Event or Human-Induced Catastrophe?* Dr. Scott Lecce, ECU and Erica S. Kotecki, former ECU MA student.
- *African Easterly Waves and Rainfall Variability in Niger during the 2006 AMMA Field Campaign.* Dr. Rosana Nieto-Ferreira and Dr. Tom Rickenbach, ECU.
- *Trauma Written in Plywood and Flesh: Hurricane Graffiti, Post-Katrina Tattoos, and the Value of Narratives to Hazards Research.* Dr. Derek Alderman, ECU, Heather Ward, current CRM ECU student, and Glenn Gentry, former ECU MA student.
- *A Methodology to Inject Sea-Level-Rise-Enhanced Storm Surge Modeling into the Long-Range Comprehensive Plans of Coastal Communities.* Dr. Tim Frazier, U. Idaho, Dr.



Brent Yarnal, Penn State U., and Nathan Wood, USGS. Videos of the above panels and talks, among others, are available to view on ECU's Center for Natural Hazards web site: www.ecu.edu/renci/Floyd/index.html. Actual presentations will be posted at a later date.

Our Newest Alums

Spring 2009 BS Undergraduates

Jeremy Phan
James C. Stewart
Ronald "Clay" Foxworth
Thad Townsend

Fall 2009 MA Graduates

Ryan Covington. *So, What Do We Do Now? A Critical Analysis of ENGO Climate Campaigns*. Katherine Baucom. *Fostering Social Capital Through Neighborhood Design*.

Jesse Lyman Brass. *Comparing Developed and Undeveloped Barrier Island Systems: A Descriptive, Historical Morphology of the Wrightsville Beach-Masonboro Island Sediment System, North Carolina*.

Naomy Perez-Sanchez. *Influence of Geographical Orientation, Beach Shelter, and Seasonality on Beach Behavior in the Caribbean: A Case of Study, Puerto Rico*.
Jessie R. Messina. *A Word Frequency Analysis of HIV/AIDS Policies in the African Countries of Botswana, Ghana, South Africa, and Uganda*.

Christy Swann. *Frequency/Magnitude of Aeolian Events*.

Spring 2009 MA Graduates

Teddy Allen. *Jamaica's Mid-Summer Dry Spell and Vegetative Response*.

Andrew Bennett. *Combining the Tools of Smart Growth and Citizen Participation*.

Sean Hawley. *Greenville Utilities Commission: Geographic Information System*

Summer 2009 MA Graduate

Michael Cockerham. *The Anatomy of Crisis: Oil, Politics, and Nigerian Society*.

Upcoming

Grad Students to Present Range of Topics at SEDAAG

During Thanksgiving week a group of Geography graduate students will be presenting a wide range of topics in the form of papers and posters including: Richard Barnhill, poster. *Regional Variation of Convective Structure at Monsoon Onset Across South America Inferred From TRMM Observations*.

Haley Cleckner, paper. *Predicting Mosquito Abundance Using a GIS*. Matt Watterson, paper. *The Place of*

the Market and Tourism in Preserving Heritage Spaces in New Bern, NC. Richard Curran, poster. *North CarolinaView*. Jonathan Furst, poster. *Aerodynamic Interactions between Atmospheric Boundary Layer Turbulence Gusts and Tree-sway Motions*. Conor Harrison, paper. *High Bills, Energy Inefficiency, and Isolation: Living with Fuel Poverty in Eastern North Carolina*. Stephanie Hill, poster. *Exploratory Analysis of Storm Generated 'Wave Events' from 1997-2007 at Duck, NC*. Jennifer Mann, poster. *The Coast as a Vernacular Region: Using GIS to Analyze and Visualize Regional Identity*. Robbie Munroe, paper. *ENSO Forced Changes in Precipitation Distributions and Related Global Circulation Patterns*. Stephen Sanchagrin, paper. *Surge Viz*. Emily Wright, poster. *Effects of Cold Air Intrusions on the Onset of the South American Monsoon*.

ECU Geographers Lead Water Resources Panel on 11/17

Water is an important and necessary life-sustaining resource that affects local and global communities, alike. A range of topics addressed at a panel discussion on water resources at East Carolina University on Tuesday, Nov. 17. Faculty in the Department of Geography will discuss "Water, Water Everywhere: Or Is It?" from 6:30 – 8 p.m. in room C-209 of the Science and Technology building.

We Want to Hear from You!

Do you have news to share with your fellow Department of Geography alumni? How about an idea you think would make a good story for *Vectors*? Please consider sharing it with your alums.

Email: mulcahyk@ecu.edu

Facebook: search for ECU Geography Alumni

Mail: *Vectors* Alumni Newsletter, Department of Geography, A-226 Brewster Building, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858-4353.

Web site: www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/geog/Alumni.cfm



AARGH. Brandon Hill, Geography undergrad pirate is off to the ECU vs. VA Tech game.



Geography