

East Carolina University

# VECTORS

*News and Notes from the Department of Geography*

Spring 2010

Volume 3, Issue 2

## Department of Geography News

### Outstanding Alumni Award

As our numbers of alumni increase, we thought that it was time to develop a mechanism for recognizing significant accomplishments of ECU geography and planning graduates. This led to the establishment of the Outstanding Alumni Award, the first of which is being presented at the Department of Geography Recognition Ceremony on Friday, May 7.



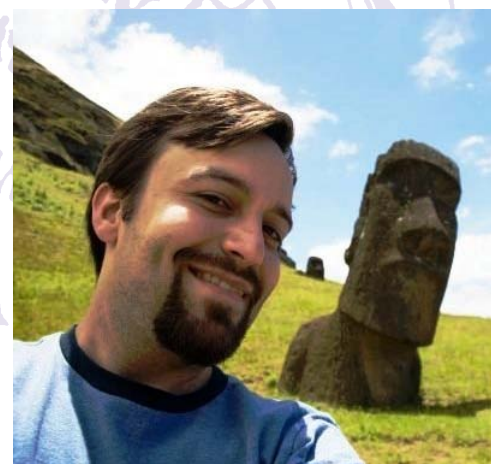
The 2010 recipient is Andy Moncla, Manager – Geodemographic Information at VF Corporation in Greensboro. Andy received both his BA and MA degrees from ECU. He was an undergraduate history major with a minor in geography. He saw the light and moved into the Geography Department for graduate work, receiving his MA degree in 1987. Since then Andy has been a leading Business Geographer with 20 plus years of experience in a variety of industries, including retail, banking and information technology. He was Market Research Manager at both Lowe's Home Centers and RBC Centura Bank, and is currently the Manager – Geodemographic Information for VF Corporation, a leader in branded apparel. We are delighted to be able to recognize Andy's accomplishments.

### Geography Alum Spotlight

In 2002 Anthony Robinson completed his BS in Applied Geography with a minor in Urban and Regional Planning, an undergraduate GIS Certificate and a 3.96 GPA. Since then he has been really busy. He left for Penn State University where he completed his MS in Geography in 2005. Continuing on at Penn State, he completed his doctorate degree in Geography in 2008, his dissertation was entitled *Design for Synthesis in Geovisualization*.

Currently Dr. Robinson is a Research Associate and Member of the Graduate Faculty, GeoVISTA Center and John A. Dutton e-Education Institute of the Department of Geography, Penn State. He leads interface and interaction design research for geovisualization tool development at the GeoVISTA Center on a wide range of externally funded research projects in GeoVISTA. He also creates course content, teaches, and advises students for the Dutton e-Education Institute MGIS program and instructs cartography courses in the resident Geography program.

In his own words, Dr. Robinson's research focuses broadly on designing and evaluating geovisualization tools. Application areas for this work include epidemiology, crisis management, and national security domains. His most recent work involves characterizing how users assemble



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and collect their analytical results, studying the use of geovisualization tools using eye-tracking, and exploring issues related to map symbol standardization in the context of emergency management.

In addition he has traveled extensively for conferences and research work on trips to places like Chile, Australia, China, Ghana, Japan and Russia and yet somehow managed to find time to get married to Brandi Nagle, a 2005 Penn State Geography alum.

Anthony credits ECU Geography (specifically Dr. Mulcahy and Dr. Mitchelson) for preparing him with the geographic and technical skills necessary to transition into a productive research career.

## Department News and Events

### Five Year Achievement Award in Reseach Goes to Curtis



Pictured above: Scott Curtis, Associate Professor and Deirdre Mageean, Vice Chancellor, Division of Research & Graduate Studies, East Carolina University.

Dr. Scott Curtis was one of two East Carolina University faculty members who received an Achievement for Excellence in Research and Creative Activity award in March. For those of you who have not met him, Scott Curtis came to ECU in 2003. He has master's and doctoral degrees in atmospheric and oceanic sciences from the University of Wisconsin and a bachelor's degree in environmental sciences from the University of Virginia. His research focuses on global climate variability and change. He is also assistant director of the ECU Center for Natural Hazards Research. He has received more than \$500,000 in research funding at ECU

and published more than 30 refereed articles and two book chapters. Recipients of the Five-Year Award are recognized for their achievements during five years of continuous service at ECU. Dr. Deirdre Mageean, vice chancellor for research and graduate studies, selected the awardees upon recommendation by the Faculty Senate Academic Awards Committee. Curtis received a cash award and conducted seminars on their work during Research and Creative Achievement Week.

### Alderman Appointed Research Fellow

This fall, geography professor, Derek Alderman will not only teach his courses in the department but will also 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."

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



Dr. Alderman is seen here giving the Fall 2009 ECU Commencement Address

with community groups and state agencies. "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."



## ECU CORS Site Team Wins Centennial Excellence Award

High up on top of the Science and Technology Building is the newest GPS CORS basestation in the North Carolina network. It continuously collects GPS information and streams it to the NC Geodetic Survey. This is the result of a three year effort, and although the site may not look like much, it is a significant addition to the NC CORS network. NC CORS consists of a network of continuously operating reference stations, or benchmarks. Each CORS site provides highly accurate measurements that is used to improve the autonomous accuracy (15m) of Global Positioning Systems throughout the United States. Our new NCEC CORS site fills a geographic hole in the eastern region. There are numerous applications for which such accuracy is critical. For example, researchers and state agencies may need to track subsidence due to ground water withdrawal or to position an environmental scanner to study landform changes.

Department of transportation engineers have surveying needs for planning and implementing our transportation infrastructure, land surveyors for delineating land ownership, and critical flood maps will be more accurate with improved horizontal and vertical positioning. The concept originated as a collaboration between the Department of Geography and Campus Operations, but eventually included Facilities Services and ITCS as well. The parties involved defined their efforts and support through a Memorandum of Agreement that included the ECU Attorney's Office, Campus Operations/Facilities Services, the City of Greenville, and NC DENR.

## Monroe Wins Award in WxChallenge

Two participating ECU graduate students made it all the way through the semester of weather forecasting in the collegiate focused WxChallenge. The WxChallenge is a 64-person tournament bracket out of over 1500 forecasters during the regular forecasting period. The regular forecasting period is composed of 10 cities in which a forecaster predicts the high and low temperatures, maximum sustained wind speed, and total precipitation. Each city is forecasted over a two week period, totaling 8 forecast days per city. To remain competitive in WxChallenge, students and professors alike employ current conditions, soundings, radar and satellite data, and numerical models to formulate the best point forecast. Additionally, knowledge of local or microscale weather for each city can help refine forecasts.



# Geography





Last semester, for the city of Denver, CO, Robbie Monroe finished in 2nd place for graduate students and tied 6th overall to win the runner-up trophy. This trophy is awarded to 1st and 2nd place for each category (i.e. graduate students) for each of the 10 cities.

## AAG Student Presentations

Several students traveled to Washington, D.C. this April to attend and present research at the Annual Association of Geography meeting. Two students agreed to share their experiences.

**Stephanie Hill** (advisor, **Paul Gares**): *Exploratory Analysis of Storm-Generated Wave Events at Duck, North Carolina*. I half expected the experience to be nerve-racking as I was the only Master's student in the session and I expected to get criticism because some of the top coastal geomorphologists in the country were going to be there. However, the presentation went well. Several of the coastal geomorphologists commented that my work was very interesting, my research questions were very hard ones, but that I was off to a good start! Having presented in front of some of the top names in the field I feel very confident about my upcoming defense. Presenting at AAG was very good practice and a rewarding experience as it reinforced the importance of my thesis work and reignited my incentive to finish and defend.

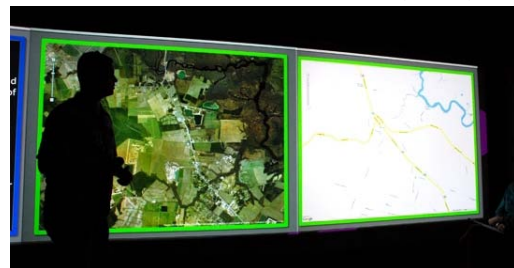
**Conor Harrison** (advisor, **Jeff Popke**): *'Because You Got to Have Heat': Energy Poverty, Weatherization, and Landscapes of Care*. Before attending the AAG conference I had no idea how big it was. There were thousands of people in attendance who were researching a huge variety of topics. Individual sessions tended to be fairly small and those in attendance were enthusiastic listeners and participants in the sessions. Our presentation seemed to be fairly well received by those in attendance, and I met some resources at the conference who should be valuable contacts as I continue on the PhD program at UNC-Chapel Hill.

**Rich Curran** (advisor, **Yong Wang**): My poster was on North CarolinaView (NCView). Most of the people I talked with were from or had connections to North Carolina. The AAG meeting presents the perfect opportunity to network and also to see the latest research and developments in Geography. This was the second AAG conference I have attended and I came away from it feeling it was time very well spent.

## 2010 VisWall Challenge Winners



The Visualization Challenge hosted by RENCI at ECU drew excellent presentations again this year. The top of the Challenge were Ronald Sessoms, undergrad winner, for *Town of Nashville, NC: Barnes St. Design Proposal*, (above) and Robert J. Howard, graduate winner, for *Investigating the Hydrological Impact of Agricultural Ditches Thru Flow Visualization, Flood Mapping in Currituck County, NC*. (below).



## Our Newest Alums

### Fall 2009 Undergraduates

Mark Conway, BS  
Anthony G. Diffenbaugh, BS  
Linwood E. Hall, BS  
Philip a. Hamilton, BA  
Thad Wester, BS

## Upcoming Homecoming Openhouse

On Friday, October 22nd, there will be an openhouse and wine and cheese reception for all visiting Geography alums. More details will be provided in your next issue of *Vectors* on October 15 and will be posted on the Geography Alumni webpage.

## We Want to Hear from You!

Do you have news to share? How about an idea you think would make a good story for *Vectors*?

**Email:** [mulcahyk@ecu.edu](mailto:mulcahyk@ecu.edu)

**Facebook:** search for ECU Geography Alumni

**Mail:** *Vectors* Alumni Newsletter, Department of Geography, Mail Stop 557 East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858-4353.

**Web site:** [www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/geog/Alumni.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/geog/Alumni.cfm)