Spring 1997

Editor: Dr. Philip W. Suckling, Professor and Head

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Geography Enrollments and Majors: The Numbers Game

Interest in geography at UNI continues to grow as exhibited by increases in course enrollments, undergraduate majors, and inquiries about our graduate program. For the current 1996-97 academic year, enrollment in all geography courses reached almost 2200 far surpassing the previous high of 1868 set in 1991-92. In addition, members of the faculty continue to participate in several inter-disciplinary course offerings such as non-western cultures, public policy and teaching methods. As is typical for geography programs, these enrollment figures are dominated by large numbers in our general education courses, especially with 1200+ annual enrollment for the introductory World Geography course. However, advanced geography courses (i.e., beyond general education) enrolled almost 370 students during the current academic year, also a departmental record.

The number of undergraduate geography majors has almost reached 50, which is a substantial change from 17 back in 1990. As of early March, we have 27 regular liberal arts majors, 7 geography teaching majors, and 12 environmental emphasis majors. The latter number is especially remarkable given that this program just began this past Fall. By comparison, of the four environmental emphases started over 3 years ago within majors in the College of Natural Sciences (biology, chemistry, geology, physics), only the biology emphasis is larger than our environmental program.

Our graduate program has remained at a steady count of about 10 registered students in recent semesters, with several being part-time students. We had no students complete the M.A. degree during the 1996 calendar year. However, interest in the program has shown substantial growth in recent months. After only one new student entered the program last August, we had four new students begin studies in January. We expect an additional 5-8 new students to enter the program by next August. This increased interest in our M.A. program is the result of enhanced recruitment efforts, as well as additional financial support opportunities that we have recently obtained for our graduate program. In addition to the single Graduate College research assistantship that we have had for several years, we have obtained three new graduate teaching assistantships for physical geography lab instructors to begin in the Fall semester. We also anticipate the continuation of externally-funded GIS-related graduate research assistantships (see related article about our GIS program).

Given these developments and the arrival last August of our two new faculty colleagues (introduced to you in last year's Newsletter), the geography program at UNI is indeed in a healthy state!
New Computer Lab, GIS Activities, and Summer Field Course

Last September, after two years of planning, the College's second Sabin Hall computer lab was opened in room 223. Equipped with 15 pentium personal computers, this lab will primarily serve the advanced computing needs for courses in the Design and Geography programs. Geography courses that have used the new facility so far include, geographic information systems (GIS), thematic cartography and remote sensing.

Dr. Stephen McGregor joined our faculty Fall semester as our new GIS specialist. He immediately established enhanced working relationships with several local and state agencies. Steve is UNI's representative on the Iowa Geographic Information Council. Among his activities, he arranged the new student internship positions with Black Hawk County as part of the county's establishment of a countywide GIS management and database system. Another project, which is funded by ISU's Center for Transportation Research and Education, has provided graduate research assistantships for two students this semester.

For the first time in over a decade, we will offer the 970:190G Field Studies in Geography course this summer. The course will be taught by Dr. McGregor and subtitled Global Positioning Systems. Scheduled for the first 4-week session (June 9 - July 3), the course will include a week-long field camp at Effigy Mounds National Monument. We have recently obtained new GPS equipment funded as part of the College's increased emphasis on experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students.

GAI Leadership Change

With the arrival of Dr. Kay Weller last August, the department's strength in the subfield of geographic education has been substantially strengthened. As part of her duties, Kay will assume the role of Coordinator of the Geographic Alliance of Iowa in May. The GAI, composed of K-12 teachers, college/university professors, and other individuals working to improve geographic literacy in Iowa, has been hosted by our department since its inception in 1991. In recent months, Kay has been working closely with the current GAI Co-coordinators: Murray Austin of our department and Jim Hantula of Price Lab School. Dr. Weller has already been organized a spring GAI conference and is responsible for this summer's GAI Institute for school teachers. As Jim and Murray complete their many years of devotion to the work of the GAI, we owe them our deepest gratitude for the tremendous efforts they have contributed on behalf of geographic education.

Professional Development Leaves

Dr. David May had a research leave last semester and professional development leaves have been granted to three more geography faculty for next academic year. In the Fall, Dr. Dennis Dahms will conduct research on Wyoming's Wind River Range with a project titled "Glacial Landform Analyses Using Cosmogenic Radionuclides". In the Spring, Dr. C. Murray Austin will be in Scotland to study "Local Governance and Global Economic Change: The Case of Scotland". Also in Spring, Dr. Thomas Fogarty will use his substantial knowledge of foreign political systems in order to assess "Decisive Majorities in the Liberal Constitution".
New Graduate Students Since Fall '95

John DeGroote (B.S., University of Iowa, 1992) began his M.A. studies this semester with interests involving GIS and remote sensing in environmental studies.

James Dickerson (B.S.E.E., University of Florida, 1977) entered our program this January after working for many years in Texas. Jim has interests in transportation problems utilizing GIS technologies.

Shelley Manning (B.A., University of Northern Iowa, 1994) started part-time graduate studies in January 1996. She is a high school teacher in Ankeny, Iowa.

Tina Parkin (B.A., University of Northern Iowa, 1996) was our first graduate from the Geography Major with Environmental Emphasis program. She began her M.A. studies in January with a focus on GIS.

Randy Pilkington (B.A., University of Northern Iowa, 1980) entered the M.A. program as a part-time student in the Fall of 1995. Randy’s focus is on economic development issues.

Brian Shea (B.A., Drake University, 1996) started his M.A. studies in January 1997. Brian has interests in political geography and planning.

Brian Steinberg (B.A., Central Michigan University, 1995) came to UNI in the Fall of 1995. His M.A. studies involve field work in the area of soils geomorphology.

David Turner (B.B.A., University of Dubuque, 1991) joined our program in August 1996 after serving several years in the U.S. Army. Dave's interests involve GIS applications for military support.

Recent Geography B.A. Graduates

Fall '96: Scott Clark
Tina Parkin
Kimberly Snow
Summer '96: Becky Reifenstahl
Spring '96: Cameron Blinn
John Creighton
Bradley Cutler
Michael Daggy
Micah Dodson
Brock Emmert
Joe Havighurst
Eric Klein
Dianna Leftridge
Stephen Martin
Norman (Rick) Massey
Timothy Schmidt
Chad Torgerson

Purple and Old Gold Awardees

Each year, the University presents the Purple and Old Gold Award to one outstanding graduating senior in each major. Recent geography majors who have been honored with such an award include:

1996: Micah Dodson (for Geography)
1996: Timothy Schmidt (for Russian)
1995: Joel Bennett
1994: Michael Buhr
1993: Keith Shaw
**Alumni Album**

*Eric Boysen* (B.A. 1994) is working as a digital cartographer for Rand McNally in Chicago.

*Joe Capesius* (B.A. 1992) recently completed his Master's degree at the University of Denver. He has been working for the U.S. Geological Survey.

*Bradley Cutler* (B.A. 1996) and *Micah Dodson* (B.A. 1996) were married last summer, before starting the M.A. program at the University of South Carolina. Brad's studies will focus on political geography, while Micah's emphasis will be in cartography and GIS.

*Brock Emmert* (B.A. 1996) is in the M.A. program at Kansas State University, where he is studying physical geography. Brock stopped by the department for a brief visit last semester.

*Jon McNamee* (B.A. 1982) lives in Cedar Falls and works as a health officer for the Black Hawk County Health Department.

*Randy Pilkington* (B.A. 1980) has been the Director of UNI's Institute for Decision Making, which is housed in the College of Business Administration, since 1990.

*Becky Reifenstahl* (B.A. 1996) was an intern at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center last summer before entering the M.A. program at Pennsylvania State University. Becky will study climatology under the direction of former UNI faculty member Brent Yarnal.


**Alumni Survey**

We are conducting an alumni survey for the first time since 1992, as part of our student outcomes assessment program. The purpose of the questionnaire is to provide us with feedback about you and how our program impacted your activities since graduation. This will help us make informed changes to our curriculum and procedures in order to develop a higher quality department. We encourage all alumni to participate in this endeavor by completing the survey at your earliest convenience. Thanks to all alumni for your cooperation.

In future issues of the Newsletter, we will continue to include information about UNI's geography alumni. Please send your news items to:

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**Obituary**

*Micah C. Buhr* (B.A., 1994) died November 19, 1996 at his apartment in Cedar Falls at the age of 25. Cause of death was reported as suicide. Mike graduated with highest honors from our undergraduate program and received the 1994 Purple and Gold Gold Award and Academic Certificate of Achievement as the top graduating geography major.
**Outstanding Geography Alumnus Award for 1997**

Two years ago, the faculty established the *Outstanding Geography Alumnus Award* to be presented annually to a distinguished alumnus. The 1995 award was presented to Don Peterson (B.A. 1965; M.A. 1975), while the 1996 honor was awarded to Bill Blake (B.A. 1963; M.A. 1969).

The Department is pleased to announce that the Third Annual *Outstanding Geography Alumnus Award* will be presented at this year's 17th Annual Geography Awards Banquet to **J. Mark Linda**. Mr. Linda is a 1974 graduate of our B.A. program and completed his M.A. degree in geography in 1978. For many years, he has been employed with the Black Hawk County Health Department, where he is currently the Disease Management Prevention Manager. Over the years, Mark has retained a close working relationship with UNI as a Research Associate. Next year, he will be an adjunct instructor for our department's Environmental Issues and Regional Public Policy course, which will focus on environmental health issues. The faculty of the Department of Geography are delighted to present this honor to Mr. Linda and we look forward to a strong continuing relationship with him and the Black Hawk County Health Department.

**Janice M. Clark Memorial Scholarship**

Applications from current undergraduate majors are being solicited for the Janice M. Clark Memorial Scholarship, which was established in memory of the wife of faculty member Dr. Robert E. Clark. The scholarship is awarded to majors who demonstrate excellence in the geography of rural areas, rural planning, or land use analysis. The 1996 winner of this $400 award was Greg Halverson. Students who are interested in applying for this year's scholarship should obtain an application form from the departmental office. Application deadline is April 1.

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**INVITATION**

**Spring Awards Banquet: Friday, April 18, 1997**

The Seventeenth Annual Geography Awards Banquet will be held during the evening of Friday, April 18, 1996 at the Olde Broom Factory restaurant, 110 N. Main Street, Cedar Falls. In addition to our traditional student honors, the third annual *Outstanding Geography Alumnus Award* will be presented. All students, faculty, staff and alumni are strongly encouraged to attend this gala event. For further information, contact Sandra Heller in the department office at 319-273-2772. [e-mail to: sandra.heller@uni.edu]