UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002

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

[Visit our departmental web page at: http://www.uni.edu/geography/]

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New GIS/Remote Sensing Faculty Member Appointed for 2002-03

Dr. Michael Emch resigned from his faculty position in the department last December in order to join the Geography faculty at Portland State University in Oregon. During his 3½ years at UNI, Mike's contributions had a major impact upon our technical course offerings for both our undergraduate and graduate students. We wish him well in his new post, which places him closer to members of his extended family.

After a national search for Mike's replacement, the Department is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Ramanathan Sugumaran effective August 2002 as Assistant Professor specializing in GIS and remote sensing. "Sugu" is originally from India where he obtained B.Sc., M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in the field of botany during the late 1980s through mid-1990s. Subsequently, Sugu received a second Ph.D. degree in 1999, with a major in Geography, from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. In May of 1999, he moved to the University of Missouri-Columbia as a post-doctoral fellow at the Center for Agricultural, Resource and Environmental Systems (CARES). Currently, Dr. Sugumaran holds the post of Research Assistant Professor of Geography and Assistant Director of CARES at the University of Missouri-Columbia. We look forward to having a scientist of Sugu's caliber join our faculty in August.

Alumni Album

For future issues of the Newsletter, please send your alumni news items to:
Sandra Heller, Secretary
Department of Geography
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0406.
E-mail: sandra.heller@uni.edu  Fax: 319-273-7103

Alumni are strongly encouraged to complete the alumni survey contained within this issue of the Newsletter (see pages 3-6). Your news items will be highlighted in next year's Newsletter.

Recent Geography Graduates

Spring '01:  Samuel Gibson
Jacob Ironside
Kevin James
Ben Limmer
Matt Loetz
Barrel J. McGinn
Nicole Rosemeyer
Jason Miller

Fall '01:  William Jeff Brown (M.A.)
Judson Gruber
Joshua Spaete
Tami Huegel
Brent Kauffman
Daniel Weiss
Paul Witte

Geography Foundation Account

The Department of Geography has a discretionary account within the UNI Foundation to fund special field trips, external speakers, and the annual spring banquet. Individuals who wish to contribute to this account should mail their tax-deductible donation to:
UNI Foundation
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0282
[Make checks payable to "UNI Foundation - Geography Discretionary Fund"]
2002 GEOGRAPHY ALUMNI SURVEY

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of our B.A. and M.A. programs, the Department of Geography would like to receive feedback from our alumni. We have an ongoing process to solicit feedback from current geography majors. However, in order to obtain a broader perspective, please assist us by completing this brief questionnaire. Our last alumni surveys were conducted back in 1992 and 1997. We would like to receive feedback from all past alumni (i.e. 1969 through 2001) including those who responded to the earlier surveys.

The survey is divided into three parts: questions that focus on you the alumnus and your current situation; questions that focus on the importance and usefulness of geography; and questions that focus on your perception of the effectiveness of our academic program.

Please send the completed questionnaire (preferably by May 15, 2002) to:

Sandra Heller, Secretary
Department of Geography
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0406

Please check the appropriate blank or circle the number that most applies for each of the following questions. Provide written answers or comments where indicated as appropriate.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

Name (omit if you wish to be anonymous): ____________________________

1. Please check which degrees (with Geography as the major) you obtained from UNI and enter your graduating year:

   ____ B.A. Year: ____
   ____ M.A. Year: ____

   If you received the B.A. degree in Geography, which version of our major? (check one)
   ____ general Geography major
   ____ Geography Major With Environmental Emphasis
   ____ Geography Teaching Major

2. Did you complete our Program Certificate in Cartography and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), or (if prior to the early 1990s) Certificate in Cartography? (check one) Yes ____  No ____
3. Did you have any other majors or minors while at UNI? If yes, please list:

4. Employment history: Please list the full-time jobs you have held since graduating from UNI and the years of employment:

5. Does geography play a role in your current job/occupation?

   1  2  3  4  5
yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

Please explain:

6. Did you go on to further higher education after graduating from UNI? If yes, please describe what you have done:

If you did further graduate work in geography or a related field, did your UNI program in geography prepare you well?

   1  2  3  4  5
yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE AND USEFULNESS OF GEOGRAPHY

7. A geographic perspective is important to my understanding of world affairs.

   1  2  3  4  5
yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

8. A geographic perspective has helped me pursue my career.

   1  2  3  4  5
yes, a great deal somewhat not at all
9. Understanding Human Geography has been valuable to me.
   1  2  3  4  5
   yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

10. Understanding Physical Geography has been valuable to me.
    1  2  3  4  5
    yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

11. Understanding maps and map reading has been valuable to me.
    1  2  3  4  5
    yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

12. Understanding statistical analysis has been valuable to me.
    1  2  3  4  5
    yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

13. Being computer literate has been valuable to me.
    1  2  3  4  5
    yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

14. The ability to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has been valuable to me.
    1  2  3  4  5
    yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

15. I have had to update my geographic technique abilities since graduation.
    1  2  3  4  5
    yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

16. The ability to make professional oral presentations has been valuable to me.
    1  2  3  4  5
    yes, a great deal somewhat not at all

17. The ability to write comprehensive reports has been valuable to me.
    1  2  3  4  5
    yes, a great deal somewhat not at all
QUESTIONS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UNI GEOGRAPHY PROGRAM

18. My experience as a geography major at UNI prepared me effectively for my career.

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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>yes, a great deal</td>
<td>somewhat</td>
<td></td>
<td>not at all</td>
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</tbody>
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19. Please list up to three things that you think our Department did well:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

20. Please list up to three things that you think our Department did poorly:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

21. Please list up to three things that you think our Department should do to help enhance the student experience as a UNI geography major:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

22. Please list up to three things that you think our Department should do to better prepare students for their careers after graduation

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Please remove pages 3-6 from this Newsletter and mail your completed survey to Sandra Heller as indicated on page 3. Thank you for your co-operation.
Results of the 2000-01 Departmental Academic Program Review

During the 2000-01 academic year, the Department of Geography underwent a comprehensive academic program review. Such reviews are undertaken once every seven years at UNI. The process includes a detailed self-study as well as review by two external evaluators. During April 2001, we hosted our external evaluators who were Dr. M. Duane Nellis, Dean of Arts and Sciences at the University of West Virginia (and current vice-president of the Association of American Geographers) and Dr. Daniel L. Wise, Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences at Western Illinois University.

The final written report of the external evaluators was very positive. Quoting from the conclusion of the report: “The Department has turned itself around since the last self-study (1993-94). The faculty members work well together and have an excellent vision of where they want the department to be in the future.” In their specific evaluation of the M.A. program, the reviewers concluded: “Overall, the geography faculty should be complimented for offering a high quality graduate program. The department has made substantial progress in improving its graduate program since its last review, and should be complimented for developing strategies (including important administrative support) for strengthening the program and enhancing the program demand.” As a result of the program review, the Department developed a "Program Plan" in October 2001 as a strategic guide for the next few years. The alumni survey (see pages 3-6 of this Newsletter) represents an integral part of our future review and planning process.

Dr. David W. May
Promoted to Full Professor

Recently, the Iowa Board of Regents approved the promotion of Dr. David W. May to full Professor. Dave joined the UNI Geography faculty in 1985 and was promoted from Assistant to Associate Professor in 1990. In recent years, Dave has won the university-wide Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Regents Award for Faculty Excellence. Therefore, Dave's promotion to Professor is well-deserved!

Spring Awards Banquet:
Friday, April 26, 2002

The 22nd Annual Geography Awards Banquet will be held during the evening of Friday, April 26, 2002 at the Olde Broom Factory Restaurant in Cedar Falls. In addition to our traditional student honors, Randy Pilkington (B.A. 1980; M.A. 1998) will be honored as the 2002 winner of the Geography Outstanding Alumnus Award. Randy currently holds the positions of Executive Director of Business and Community Services, Director of the Institute for Decision Making, and Interim Director of the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center at the University of Northern Iowa. Students, faculty, staff and alumni are strongly encouraged to attend this gala event. For further information about the banquet, contact Sandra Heller in the department office at 319-273-2772 or send e-mail to: sandra.heller@uni.edu