Notes from the chair

Dear Friends of the Department of Geography at GWU,

As we embark on our second year in Old Main, I am pleased to report that our faculty and students continue to thrive and the Department continues to grow. Last year we taught some 2000 students and graduated over fifty students in our BA (Geography, Environmental Studies) and MA (Geography) programs. We currently have 10 faculty, 70 majors in Geography and 31 majors in Environmental Studies. Last year, our faculty won accolades for their research and publications and traveled to five continents to do research, give scholarly presentations and conduct institutes and workshops. Our students collaborated with faculty on research, presented papers at conferences and upon graduation, many were hired in the United States and abroad by government, private, and multilateral agencies as well as NGOs. Others joined prestigious universities for further study.

Among the significant events that took place last year was the promotion of Prof. Marie Price to Full Professor, a richly deserved honor. Prof. David Rain took over the reins of the Environmental Studies Program as its new director starting in Fall 2009. Under the leadership of Prof. Joe Dymond, GW Geography launched a special internship program with the National Geographic Society in which 4 students interned for credit with the Geographic Alliance program at NGS headquarters. Prof. Lisa Benton-Short continued to provide students with hands-on service learning experiences. Students in her Cities and Societies class worked in collaboration with Casey Trees, completing an inventory of trees on campus and also providing suggestions for greening the GWU campus. Students in Prof. Mona Atia’s Geography of the Middle East and North Africa class are the first from GWU to participate in the Soliya Connect Program, a cross-cultural educational exchange program between students in the Arab world and students in the West. Prof. Ryan Engstrom and Prof. Elizabeth Chacko lectured and participated in the Ford Foundation-funded Summer Institute on Climate Change which hosted a group of officials from Vietnam in July 2009.

We are proud of the department’s repeated success in recruiting stellar new faculty who are leaders in their fields. We welcome Dr. Nikolay Shiklomanov, a geomorphologist with a special interest in Arctic landscapes, and Dr. Melissa Keeley, whose area of expertise lies in urban environmental management. But we also bid old friends Prof. Tom Foggins and Prof. Ranbir Kang goodbye. At a retirement dinner party for Prof. Foggin that was attended by more than 80 people, current and former students as well as faculty and staff shared their stories of Tom amidst laughter and tears. We wish both Tom and Ranbir the best of luck.

This issue of our newsletter was prepared and published by Jeremy Stadelman, our excellent Executive Aide, with the assistance of the equally remarkable Nuala Cowan, manager of our Spatial Analysis Lab. I thank them both for their hard work and artistry.

Thank you for your continued interest in, and involvement with the Geography Department at GWU. We are very grateful to our alumni whose financial contributions help us support student research and professional development. Your gifts have also helped us maintain a state-of-the-art Spatial Analysis Lab. Alumni have mentored our students, helped them obtain internships and shared with them exciting job opportunities and careers in geography. As always, we’d be delighted to hear from you and have you visit us at 1922 F Street. Please share news of your travels, your work and new developments in your lives with us. We look forward to hearing from you!

With sincere thanks for your continued support of the Geography Department at GWU,

Elizabeth Chacko
New Faculty Additions

Dr. Melissa Keeley has joined the Department of Geography and the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration this fall following her position as a Columbia University Earth Institute Fellow. She happily returns to DC with her husband, Chris, two year old son Abraham (Bram) and newborn daughter Madeleine. Keeley’s research focus is urban sustainability and her work lies at the intersection of urban environmental science, policy, and planning. She completed her doctorate in environmental engineering at the Technical University of Berlin (Germany). Keeley’s studies have additionally taken her to the universities of Hamburg (in Germany) and Washington (in Seattle), Ohio State and Harvard.

Dr. Keeley regularly advises decision-makers in cities including Miami, Chicago, Philadelphia, Seattle and Washington, DC on methods of incorporating sound science into environmental policy and planning initiatives. Her current research agenda will continue to inform this work, specifically in evaluating the role of green infrastructure in ameliorating urban environmental problems and in understanding how the LEED Green Building rating system has been utilized and the environmental outcomes of this emerging standard.

Dr. Keeley examining an overgrown section of the Berlin Wall. Her research frequently brings her to European cities where she examines approaches to urban sustainability.
New Faculty Additions

Dr. Nikolay Shiklomanov’s main area of research is the response of the Arctic environment to climatic variability and change. He is also interested in Geomorphology, the history of Arctic research, and socioeconomic problems associated with development in Arctic regions. Dr. Shiklomanov’s educational background includes a BS in physics from Leningrad (St. Petersburg) University, Russia, a master’s in physical geography from SUNY-Albany, and a Ph.D. in climatology from the University of Delaware. For the last 9 years he held a research associate position at the University of Delaware’s Geography Department where he was actively involved in permafrost and climate research. His NSF- and NASA-sponsored projects include both field-based investigations in northern Alaska, Siberia, Mongolia, and China and simulation studies at regional and circumarctic scales.

Dr. Shiklomanov strongly believes in international collaboration between scientists in all aspects of Arctic research through development of joint projects promoting international scientific exchange (including students). A native of St. Petersburg, Russia, Dr Shiklomanov maintains close personal and professional ties with his home country. In the course of his research he has developed productive relationships with scientists from a wide range of Russian research and educational institutions.

Dr Shiklomanov plans to continue and expand his Arctic research at GWU and hopes for broad involvement of GW geography students in his field-based and analytical investigations.

“Dr. Shiklomanov strongly believes in international collaboration between scientists in all aspect of Arctic research...”

Dr. Shiklomanov and graduate student, Chris Marques, examine ground ice on the Alaska Arctic Coast.
Tom Foggin Retires

Professor Tom Foggin retired this spring after nearly 20 years of teaching at the George Washington University. During Commencement Weekend, he shared these reflections with the graduating students in Geography and Environmental Studies. Tom and his wife Pamela are heading to the Pacific Northwest and their new home in Anacortes, Washington. This charge on the “Fringe Benefits of Failure” is pure Foggin. It seems appropriate to share his thoughts to our larger geographic community.

"On this wonderful day when we are gathered together to celebrate your academic success, I have decided to talk to you about the benefits of failure. Ultimately, we all have to decide for ourselves what constitutes failure, but the world is quite eager to give you a set of criteria, if you let it. So I think it fair to say that by any conventional measure, a mere seven years after my graduation day, I had failed on an epic scale. An exceptionally short-lived marriage had imploded, and I was jobless, a lone parent, and as poor as it is possible to be in modern Britain, without being homeless. The fears my parents had had for me, and that I had had for myself, had both come to pass, and by every usual standard, I was the biggest failure I knew.”

And who was this person who uttered these encouraging words to the eager graduates and proud parents at the commencement exercises last June at Harvard University? J. K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series and one of the few persons anywhere in the world who has more money than the Queen. But why did she select such a dark topic? Because, as she puts it, “some failure in life is inevitable. It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well have not lived at all -- in which case you fail by default. Life is difficult, and complicated, and beyond anyone’s total control, and the humility to know that, will enable you to survive its vicissitudes,” she concluded.

Today marks the final graduation party of my teaching career, the end of our four-year pilgrimage together, and the completion of some four decades of me sharing geography with just about anyone who would listen. Some have been regular students, guards and inmates, some tribal members, some challenged and delinquent children, some just plain folks you meet in the market place, and always the family members. But why do I turn to this particular topic, the fringe benefits of failure, on this particular day of celebration?

In June of 1970, I was terminated from the doctoral program in the department of geography at the University of California, Los Angeles. At the time, I was new faculty at the University of Montana, a 33-year-old father of three, living in wonderful old white-framed house that I loved, two blocks from campus, in a state that publically proclaims itself to be “The Last Best Place.” I came late to the discipline of geography during my single-semester, senior year at the University of Virginia. After four years in the Coast Guard, I returned to school earning a MA in geography at UCLA. And then the door closed! But I was not through learning. There were so many books unread, so many new articles being written. Plate tectonics and watershed studies were not to be found in textbooks, they were current events. I did not want to stop learning, and I certainly did not want to leave Montana. So I went across campus to the forestry school and applied to their doctoral program. I was accepted on my second attempt. Was this a pragmatic decision on my part to continue graduate study, having addressed all its costs and benefits? No! It was basically the momentum given to me by my mother, when I was intermittently working my way through UVA in Charlottesville and the Chevy engine plant at home in Buffalo. She told me that the only thing the bank cannot repossess from you is your education.

So our family soldiered on, the five of us. Each of the children finished high school. Our eldest attended the naval academy having been selected from the submarine fleet. Our
daughter came to Washington as a nanny and graduated from junior college. My bride became a diploma nurse working the operating room, and then earned a business school degree in information systems at the University of Montana. I finally completed the doctoral degree in forestry, with the help of a 9-day weekend in May of 1980, making the final touches on my dissertation. The weekend was the compliments of Mt. St. Helens.

I often told the children that there was a wide and wonderful world out there, and if they wanted to be a part of it, they had to change buses in Butte. So with our youngest child’s high school graduation in 1990, we too left, arriving in Washington, DC, where Pamela and I had courted and married. I was armed with a letter of introduction from my former Geography Department chair in Missoula, and on that basis became a semi-permanent adjunct geography instructor at GW. That meant being paid by the credit hour, with no retirement benefits, no health insurance, and no summer paycheck. Not what one would call being gainfully employed. But here is where the fringe benefits of failure come to pass. This small department of a dozen or so majors grew into a very collegial and congenial group of over 100 faculty, staff, and students, even graduate students. I was given courses that I really wished to teach, including “People, Land, and Food,” and I was left alone to teach them. And I was given bosses, such good bosses! I have always had my own office, with a window, except for the three years I shared it in Quigley’s with Professor Chacko, a blessing from the Creator’s wife. I also had no research requirements, no chasing after grant money, no committee assignments, and I was given the senior seminar in geographic thought, so that no geography student could graduate without coming under my shadow. My responsibility was to teach and advise. That is what I have always wanted to do, and that is what I was allowed to do. And my rewards, the stories, those wonderful stories of two decades worth of students, who have gone on to places they had never dreamed of when they first arrived at Foggy Bottom. One got his dream job at the Agency, a former Navy corpsman is now a P-3 pilot, an undergraduate went to the University of Iceland this spring to study glaciology and vulcanology, and a former interior-design major is studying urban geography at University College, London.

Our old friend Yi-fu Tuan shared his life with us during seminar in his autobiography, “Who am I?” His point, “a life unreected upon is a life un-lived.” The more you reflect upon your own story and the stories of others, the more fully you will grow into being that person you were conceived to become. As Ms. Rowling said, “ultimately, we all have to decide for ourselves what constitutes failure. The world is quite eager to give you a set of criteria if you let it.” For me and my story, I took a little longer than most to get here, I took an altogether circuitous route, and have spoken to you all from a very different wing of the faculty. It has taken me almost four decades to understand my story, to come to terms with my story, to embrace my story, and to be at peace with my story. I now accept what my bride has been saying to me these past years. Yes, it is a career. Yes, it is all worthwhile. And yes, the proof is in the stories that you bring home about your students. I have been blessed with many, many fringe benefits.

Over these past four years, we have been able to share conversations, thoughts, ideas, and hopefully some wisdom together. And more importantly, we have shared life and space and time together, and not least of all, we have broken bread together. It has been a good journey. And as you depart, know that you have been well served by those of us who have prepared you and who now stand with you. Always remember that your first draft may not be your final draft, and that your abstracts get better with time. We call it experience, be it by success or be it by failure.

And, so I leave you with two final thoughts: truth is where you find it, and Italy grows rice.
NEW MASTER’S STUDENTS IN GEOGRAPHY

Derek Breese
I am from Crofton, Maryland, a DC suburb, and currently live and work in the Gaithersburg area. Coming from a military family, I had the unique opportunity to travel across the country as a child, which sparked my interest in the field of Geography. As a Geography Masters student, I plan on focusing on population studies and demographics, as well as satisfying my curiosity of issues surrounding economic development.

Kristin Calkins
I’m from Modesto, California, and graduated in 2008 from California State University Stanislaus with a degree in Social Science. Geography caught my interest as an undergrad, and became one of my concentrations. While at GW I hope to focus on sustainability and resource management, and desire to study how humans impact these issues. During my free time I love to hike, ski, and window shop.

Lisa Colson
Originally from Colorado, I have lived in the DC area since 1998. I have a BA in Environmental Studies with a minor in Spanish from Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, FL and a passion for exploring population and environment interactions. While working for the Population Reference Bureau (PRB), I attended the UN World Summit for Sustainable Development in South Africa in 2002, and more recently, worked on a human geography education project and traveled to the Philippines for our Population, Health, and Environment Conferences. While at GW, I plan mainly to research changing patterns in human population size and water quality in Southeast Asia and Africa.

Ellen Hatleberg
I graduated in 2005 from the University of Colorado, Boulder with a BA in geography. In 2006, I spent time in India assisting subsistence farmers with their harvest. Currently, I work for the AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships. My interests include GIS, climate change, sustainable urban planning, and development.
I am originally from Providence, Rhode Island and I received my BA in 2008 from the George Washington University in Geography and International Affairs. After working a year in a local GIS company I have returned to school in pursuit of a Masters degree. I am most interested in studying interactions between the environment and populations.

Chris Marques

Originally from Charlottesville, Virginia, I received my BA in geology from Amherst College in 2002. I’ve spent the past five years at the National Academy of Sciences, where I supported and directed research and policy studies for the earth and geographical sciences. My research interests are in international development, specifically in drinking water and sanitation in sub-Saharan Africa, and applying GIS to support development work. Outside of school, I like to travel, peruse local farmers markets and cook up my discoveries, and spend time hiking/biking/being outside.

Caetie Ofiesh

I graduated from GWU in 2005 with a BA in Geography and International Affairs. I previously worked in energy consulting and now work as a cultural geographer with the federal government. I'm deeply interested in migration, identity, security, borders and South Asia. I blog news analysis focused on Bengal in my spare moments and hope to have fun geographic adventures with my wife! Rounding me out is a bizarre obsession with rulers such as Hannibal and Genghis Khan.

Robbie Sidell

I earned my bachelors degree in geography from the University of California, Berkeley in 2005. Since graduating, I worked at an urban planning firm in Oakland, California, where I helped communities throughout the US plan for high-density growth while conserving open space. In my studies at GW, I hope to explore the spatial nature of suburban land use in the US and possibly Latin America.

Alec Stewart

I’m from the Adirondacks in upstate New York. I completed my undergraduate studies at the University of Oneonta and graduated in the spring of 2008 with a BA in Philosophy and Geography. While at GW I plan to study the political and economic sides of geography, focusing on Southwest and Southeast Asia. During my free time I enjoy rock climbing, traveling and sleeping.

Jonathon Wasser
Permafrost, which is defined as any earth material at or below 0 degrees Celsius continuously for two or more years, occupies nearly a quarter of the Earth’s terrestrial surface and has profound effects on the ecology, hydrology, geomorphology, and human occupation of cold environments. With respect to permafrost, two key changes have occurred in the circumpolar region in recent decades. Those are an increase in human activity and warming, thawing and disappearance of permafrost because of global warming.

Everywhere in the vast permafrost domain, a relatively thin layer of earth materials between the ground surface and the top of the permafrost undergoes an annual cycle of freezing and thawing. The importance of this “active layer” is much greater than its limited vertical extent suggests, because it is here that most biological, geomorphic, and hydrological activity in the permafrost regions occurs. A substantial increase in the thickness of the active layer promotes thawing of the permafrost and can lead to ground settlement and irregular subsidence of the ground surface (thermokarst) that, in turn, disrupts drainage patterns and can cause severe damage to buildings and transportation facilities. Near-surface permafrost “locks up” substantial amounts of organic carbon that, if released to the atmosphere, could amplify greenhouse warming.

The goal of the NSF-supported Circumpolar Active Layer Monitoring (CALM) program is to investigate long-term impacts of climatic warming on active-layer and near-surface permafrost. The project involves an extensive field work at an array of sites distributed throughout Arctic region and the development of coherent datasets, incorporating long-term observations on the active layer and upper permafrost that are suitable for assessing changes in polar terrestrial ecosystems. The CALM project is a continuation of the monitoring and data analysis efforts initiated by the international permafrost scientific community in the early 1990s. Over the years, CALM has developed into a coherent global-change observational program and the world’s primary source of empirical information about the active layer, its spatial patterns, and temporal trends. The CALM data serve as source of fundamental information for climate change assessments such as Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports. The recently-funded 5-year project will be administered through GW’s department of geography (PI Shiklomanov) in collaboration with Co-PI Nelson (University of Delaware) and scientists from eight Russian research and educational institutions. The project will greatly complement Shiklomanov’s research on Arctic-specific impacts of climate change. It will also provide ample opportunities for interested GW geography students to get actively involved in field and analytical Arctic research.
Graduate Student Participates in Arctic Research

By Christopher Marques

Last August I was invited to go to the Arctic with the department’s new physical geography professor, Nikolay Shiklomanov, for about ten days. He is an expert in permafrost and travels to the Arctic annually to conduct his field research. It was quite the unique experience for me to partake in data collection as well as go to a place where not many have gone before.

After meeting with Professor Shiklomanov at BWI airport, we headed to Fairbanks, landing late in the evening of August 12th. The next morning we left for Barrow, the northern most point in the United States. Barrow is the largest town on the North Slope made up of 4500 people or so. It is also very different than any populated place I have ever been to. Due to permafrost, buildings were on stilts and there was not a single paved road in town. We reported to the Barrow Arctic Science Consortium (BASC), an old converted military base where researchers come from around the country to study the Arctic.

Over the next few days we worked out on the tundra taking measurements of the active layer (annually thawed surface layer) over the permafrost. We also used a GPS device to measure if the land had heaved or depressed due to the expansion properties of ice. The data we compiled will be added to past collections of observations.

When we were done doing data collection in Barrow, we travelled by small Cessna aircraft to two other sample sites on the North Slope. One, Atqasuk, a village south of Barrow with a population of 200, and the second, Ivotuk, which is located on the foothills of the Brooks Range with a population of zero. The scenery was incredible in these locations making the work quite a pleasant experience.

Despite the long treks over the tundra working in less than perfect weather, we managed to have a lot of fun in our free time. I found time to visit the native Inupiat Museum, saw a polar bear, and even jumped in the Arctic Ocean. On our return home, we flew to Prudhoe Bay and picked up a government truck and drove the 500 miles south on the famous Dalton Highway back to Fairbanks to catch our flight. I saw incredible scenery of Alaska’s interior along the way. On our flight home to the lower 48, our plane went past Mount McKinley. It was a fitting end to such great trip.
Accra is the subject of a five-year research study focusing on the urban environment and its effect on women’s health, funded by the National Institutes of Health.

Over last summer, Professors David Rain and Ryan Engstrom along with grad student Henry Jewell walked the streets of Accra, surveying neighborhood boundaries, recording GPS waypoints, taking photos and asking local residents questions about where they live. In the end they finalized the names and boundary definitions of the over one hundred neighborhoods. These will be analyzed in conjunction with the results of a survey of the health of over 3,000 female respondents.

Urban fieldwork in Ghana involves riding in tro-tros (the local public transportation, which can best be described as overstuffed minibuses), trying to stay cool, and at the end of the day, savoring local restaurant offerings.

While in Accra, the geographers made multiple courtesy calls and data-gathering visits to the Ghana Statistical Service, the Survey Department, local government offices, the university campus, GIS contractors and the Ghana water company, all of which have a keen interest in GIS.

Some highlights included:

Visiting with the local government office responsible for a pilot project to create digital property maps for Accra. Tax collection runs about 25 percent because owners can’t be found. Graft is also pervasive. The new cadastral mapping system uses satellite imagery and GIS to create a digital database including owner names and addresses, so that revenue can be collected.

Meeting the veteran cartographer, Mula, at the Ghana Statistical Service and talking for several hours about the history of particular neighborhoods in Accra and how the city has changed. Delving into the intricacies of land ownership, the role of nationalism and ethnicity in the evolution of the city, and the stories behind particular neighborhoods’ names were immensely satisfying.

Attending the Ghana Environmental Film Festival, which included films such as Who Killed the Electric Car and the Age of Stupid. One evening’s panel about traffic in Accra included the statistic that over 70 percent of car trips in Accra were by public transportation, versus 5 percent for the US.

With the population of Accra doubling every five years, stresses on urban infrastructure will only increase. There’s a pressing need for better planning, skills development, and service delivery. With the discoveries of oil along the western coast of Ghana and production of 10 billion barrels a year, life will significantly change for most Ghanaians, hopefully for the better. In any case, it will be interesting to see what happens to the city that the GW geographers are beginning to understand very well.
This fall, eleven students enrolled in Professor Atia’s Geography of the Middle East and North Africa course, will be the first George Washington University students to participate in the Soliya Connect Program. The Connect program is a cross-cultural educational exchange between students in the Arab and “Muslim world” and students in the West. Using a customized web-based videoconferencing program, Soliya has connected over 2000 students at 60 universities throughout the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, the U.S. and Europe. The NGO aims to develop a new generation of leaders with the cross-cultural knowledge and communications skills to foster a more informed, just and peaceful world.

Under the guidance of trained facilitators, the students meet in online groups for eight weekly two-hour sessions, during which they will discuss topics such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the war in Iraq, culture and stereotypes and the role of the media. The students will engage in intensive dialogue, create media projects, blog and reflect upon their exchanges. Professor Atia hopes that as a result of their participation in the program, students will think critically, improve their media literacy, develop a deeper understanding of the region, and foster constructive relationships with their peers at universities across the Middle East.
Over the summer Professors Elizabeth Chacko and Ryan Engstrom had the pleasure of continuing their work with Vietnamese colleagues examining the impacts of climate change on their country. This work has been in conjunction with the Partnerships of International Affairs (PISA) group in the Elliot School. This summer, PISA hosted a Summer Institute on Global Climate change where over 20 Vietnamese government employees and academics came to GW for a three week stay to learn about climate change and to meet people interested in the field here in the Washington DC area. As part of the institute, Professor Engstrom went to Shenandoah National Park to examine first hand, the impacts of climate change on the park. While there, everyone was able to see the magnificent views and attended a lecture on the impacts of climate change on the flora and fauna of the region. Other field trips included meeting with the Chesapeake Bay foundation and members of the Earth System Science Interdisciplinary Center (ESSIC) at the University of Maryland in College Park.

One of the major contributions of the Geography department was an introduction to geospatial research. This was a hands-on experience in the Spatial Analysis lab. Nuala Cowan provided an introduction and put together a wonderful tutorial of how to use GIS and remote sensing applications that were specific to Vietnam. For many of the participants this was their first experience using GIS and Remote Sensing data. As one can imagine, it was a great learning experience for all involved and everyone was very excited about using this technology in the future.

For more information visit the following press release: http://www.gwu.edu/~media/pressrelease.cfm ann_id=31787

Class of 2009 Student Awards

Every year at graduation the Department awards two undergraduate prizes, the Muriel Parry Award and the Robert Campbell Prize. The Muriel Parry Award is given to the graduating senior with the highest GPA. In May 2009, Allison Schultz was awarded the prize. The Robert Campbell Prize is given to a Geography senior with an excellent record of scholarship and who has enriched the department through service and leadership. This year’s recipient is Allison Bybee.

Allison Bybee, recipient of the Campbell Award graduated with a double major in Geography and Environmental Studies and a minor in Public Health. She is a member of both the Golden Key Honour Society and Gamma Theata Upsilon, the International Geographic Honor Society and was on the Dean’s List throughout her career at GWU. Allison is a founding member of the GWU Environmental Club. Allison is currently pursuing an MPH degree at Yale University.

Allison Schultz won the Parry Award for the highest GPA in the graduating class of 2009. Allison has moved on to the University of Washington where she is currently working on a Master’s Degree in Geography. She plans to pursue a PhD, possibly at UW, and would like to someday teach, hopefully not in the middle of nowhere.
Morgan Gmelch
Morgan plans to do his thesis on the causes of traffic congestion in the Napa Valley, its effects on quality of life and the tourism industry, and possible solutions. He lived and worked in the Valley for two years prior to school and plans to return for a month this winter to conduct research.

Henry Jewell
Over the Summer, Henry, along with Professors Engstrom and Rain, went to Accra as part of the research project funded by the NIH. The aim of the research was to produce a neighborhood map of Accra. He did this by walking around virtually all of the city and gathering information from local residents. This year, he will be focusing on writing his thesis (using remote sensing to delineate slums) taking classes, 'Development in Africa' and 'Africa and Africans in the World' and continuing to work on the Ghana research project.

Katie McWilliams
Katie spent the summer researching as an intern for the Climate Institute, a non-profit organization working to increase public awareness about climate change issues. This year she will be continuing her research on weather and climate issues, specifically focusing on urbanization and its long-term effects on climate patterns in the U.S.

Amy Noreuil
Amy worked with the Department of State as a graduate intern under the Office of Politics at the American Embassy in Libreville, Gabon. A week after she landed in Libreville, Africa's longest ruling leader, President Omar Bongo, died and political factions began to compete for power. During her three month stay in Gabon, she shared her time between the office and the field. At the Embassy, Amy assisted with monitoring the presidential campaign which recently ended in the August 30th elections bringing former President Bongo’s son to power. In the field, she assisted on the evaluation of programs support through the U.S. Self-Help Assistance Fund encouraging local participation in efforts to increase social and economic well-being.

Scott Pospeich
Scott spent a lot of time at the Jersey shore. Surfing and being out in the sun are always big parts of his summers. He enjoys cycling and running and hopes to compete in triathlons in the near future. Scott is a big believer in using alternative transportation, so he is demonstrating this with his own life choices. Scott is enrolled in classes on the Middle-East and Latin America this semester. His goal is to explore new parts of the world that most Americans do not really have an opportunity to study. Not understanding different areas of the world is a huge part of the problems of the 21st century.

Mark Revell
Mark remained in the D.C. area most of the summer, with the exception of a month spent in Virginia Beach. This summer Mark began collecting data for his thesis, which will focus on lifestyle center (mixed-use, outdoor shopping mall) developments and how they function as forms of public space.

Dan Riva
Dan spent the summer in Dhaka, Bangladesh on the Critical Language Scholarship Program and enjoyed tons of conversation, mangoes, and homemade curry.

Nicole Svaalenka
This summer Nicole worked for the Migration Policy Institute as a research intern. She spent her time engaging issues such as the relationship between federal and local enforcement of immigration policy and best practices in language access for the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. In addition, Nicole began her thesis research, which focuses on the geographies of scale, integration, and immigration policy in metropolitan Washington, D.C. Nicole looks forward to continuing the research process this year!
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

MA student Christianna Ludlow presented a paper “Flood Modeling in a Data-Poor Region: A Satellite Data-Supported Flood Model for Accra, Ghana” at the annual meeting of the Association for American Geographers in Las Vegas, Nevada.

MA student Mark Butman presented a paper “Urbanization in Post-Conflict Liberia: Development and the Question of Rural Return” at the annual meeting of the Association for American Geographers in Las Vegas, Nevada.

MA student Lindsay Withers presented a paper “Community Health Center Use and awareness among the Washington, D.C. area Hispanic and Latino foreign-born population” at the Annual Meetings of the Association of American Geographers in Las Vegas.

MA Student Zach Schulman presented a paper “Cryopolitics and the New Geography of the Northwest Passage: Implications for Canadian Sovereignty” at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Las Vegas, NV March 27, 2009

KUDOS TO OUR STUDENTS, ALUMNI AND FACULTY!

Dr. Mona Atia (Assistant Professor of Geography), received the Distinguished Dissertation Award, University of Washington, 2008. Her dissertation, Building a House in Heaven: Islamic Charity in Neoliberal Egypt, was selected as the best dissertation of the year.

Allison Bybee (BA 09 in Geography) received a Pickering Graduate Fellowship. She is attending the Yale School of Public Health and will join the State Department after obtaining her M.P.H. degree.

Cathy Cooper (MA 99 in Geography) – was awarded a National Geographic Fellowship for 2009-2010.

Nathaniel Lewis (MA 07 in Geography) received a Vanier Graduate Scholarship, the most prestigious and sought-after scholarship in Canada, for his doctoral research on the relationships between migration decisions and mental health in the gay community in Washington, DC and Ottawa, Canada.

Dr. Marie Price (Professor of Geography) and Cathy Cooper (MA 99 in Geography) received the Best Content Article Award in 2008 for the Journal of Geography, given by the National Council for Geographic Education. The award recognized their article “Competing Visions, Shifting Boundaries: The Construction of Latin America as a World Region”

Abdul Rahim (BA 09 in Geography) received a Shapiro Fellowship to study transnational migration and its effects on Bangladeshi socioeconomic development. He will be in Bangladesh for one year (in Dhaka and Chittagong) and plans to pursue a graduate degree in Geography or Anthropology when he returns.

Wesley Reisser (MA 07 in Geography) was awarded a Dissertation Year Fellowship at UCLA for researching and writing his dissertation, “From a World of Empires to a World of Nation States - America at the Paris Peace Conference.”

Dana Thomson (BA 08 in Geography) received the Charles Downer Fund Award for graduate study in the School of Public Health at Harvard University.

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

Books


ARTICLES


BOOK CHAPTERS


FACULTY PRESENTATIONS

Mona Atia. “Development and the Global South.” Discussant on panel at the 2nd Antipode Summer Institute for Geographies of Justice, Manchester, UK. 2009


Lisa Benton-Short “The Mess on the Mall: challenges to managing the National Mall in Washington, DC” Invited talk at Ohio University, Athens, OH, October 27, 2008


Elizabeth Chacko. “La Fiesta DC: Marking Latino Identity in Public Space”. Invited paper presentation at the 4th Race, Ethnicity and Place Conference in Miami, FL. November 7, 2008

Elizabeth Chacko. “Labor Migration from South Asia to South East Asia”. Invited panelist at Sigur Center roundtable discussion on Globalization and Migration in Asia: A View from Three Angles. November 12, 2008


Elizabeth Chacko. “Climate change, population and development” invited speaker at Leadership Institute on Creative Responses to Global Climate Change in Hanoi, Vietnam organized by PISA (GWU) and the Ford Foundation. October 24, 2008.

Elizabeth Chacko. “Models of Development and International Health” invited speaker at the Pan American Health Organization workshop “Towards a New Construction of a Conceptual Model of International Health” at the National School of Public Health, University of Antioquia, Medellin, Colombia. October 9, 2008


Marie Price. “Gateway Cities, Transnational Networks and the Politics of Place: Mapping out the Bolivian Diaspora.” Invited presenter to the Integration Futures Conference, 22-24 October, Monash University Prato Centre. Prato, Italy.


David Rain. “Seven Things to Know about Africa”: Invited lecture to the CIA University, Reston, VA. February 9, 2009.


Faculty Notes

**Greg Schnarr** who taught Energy Resources in Fall 2008 accepted a position at an environmental consulting firm in Santa Barbara, California beginning January 2009.

**John Cromartie**, who regularly teaches population geography, has published several interesting reports on population changes in rural areas as part of his work with the Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service. His recent reports “Baby Boom Migration Tilts Towards Rural America” and “Broadband Internet’s Value for Rural America” have garnered considerable attention. The reports can be downloaded from [www.ers.usda.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov)

**Wesley Reisser** (MA 2006) is teaching political geography and energy resources in the Department this year. He is currently ABD from UCLA and working fulltime at the Department of State here in Foggy Bottom. In March he had a prominent opinion piece in The Guardian, a London paper, on the myth of energy independence in the US. Here is the link: [http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/cif-green/2009/mar/20/oil-america-energy-independence](http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/cif-green/2009/mar/20/oil-america-energy-independence)

In October of 2008 we had a visit from Margaret Gordon during the Department’s Open House. Margaret is the daughter of **Marv Gordon**, who was a Professor here from the 1960s until 1990 when he retired. Dr. Gordon is doing well and living in California with his daughter.

Alumni Notes

**Adam Eckstein** (BA ’08) is off to Chaing Mai in northern Thailand this fall for one month of training in English as a second language. He will be posted in Thailand for an academic year teaching English. On the way to Thailand, we will visit friends in Japan. He hopes to go to graduate school in fall 2010 in human geography or urban planning.

**Jeff Gustafson** (BA ’08 Environmental Studies) is living in DC and working at Border. He is putting his organization skills to good use working for an international climate change non-profit.

**Marisha Peña** (BA ’07) is working for the Peace Corps in Guatemala as a Municipal Development Volunteer. She works with the local government of San Antonia Huista, in the department of Huehuetenango, about an hour away from the Mexican border. Specifically she works with the planning office providing technical support and working with community-based groups.

**Jill Wilson** (MA ’03) continues to work at the Bookings Institution in the Center for Urban and Metropolitan Studies. In September she has an article published in *Population, Space and Place*, vol. 14 based, in part, on research she did for her MA thesis. The article is co-authored with Shelly Habecker and titled “The Lure of the Capital City: An Anthropogeographical Analysis of Recent African Immigration to Washington, DC.”

**Emily Phillips** (BA ’06) has a lot on her plate. On February 1 Owen Henry was born. She began her MPH program at Johns Hopkins University this fall. Congratulations, and good luck!

**Tim Conroy** (BA ‘07) is enjoying his job with GeoEye. “Let the doubters know,” writes Tim, “that there are jobs out there for geography majors.”

**Tanja Schroeder Szabo** (MA ‘01) is teaching English as a Second Language in Arlington, VA and is enrolling in a doctoral linguistics program at George Mason beginning in January 2010. More news, Tanja married Leonard Szabo earlier this year.

**Richard “Cheech” Villadonogia** (BA ’98) reports that he married Lisette this June in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The couple spent the summer in Turkey and Spain. Cheech is still happily teaching Middle School Geography in Florida, which he has done for the past 12 years.

**Eloisa Moreas** (MA ’93) and Marie Price connected in Rio de Janeiro this June at the Latin American Studies Meeting. Eloisa is pursuing a PhD in urban planning at the Universidad Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, in Porto Alegre.

**Jason Ordene** (BA) is currently attending Rutgers Law school.

**Derrick Hiebert-Flamm** (BA ’08) is in Seattle and pursuing a Masters degree in Urban Planning at the University of Washington.
Samantha Carter (BA’08) is at the Yale Forestry School pursuing a MA in Urban Ecology and Sustainable Design. She joins Tom Gibbons (BA’04) who is also studying at Yale after working for several years for ESRI. And, in the expanding Yale connection, Allison Bybee (BA ’09) is also attending Yale this fall to pursue a Masters in Public Health.

Dana Thomson (BA ’08) is now at Harvard University in the School of Public Health pursuing MPH. She left her job at the World Bank and was replaced by Galen Evans (BA’09) who is overseeing many of the World Bank’s GIS needs.

Devin Keithley (MA ’05) writes that he is pursing a Master’s degree at Ohio State University in City & Regional Planning and is living in Columbus.

Kelly Cornell (MA ’05) is enjoying her work as a transporation planner for the County of Arlington, Virginia.

Cathy Cooper (MA ’99) is working at National Geographic Society in the educational division as an intern this spring. She plans to finish her PhD in geographic education from Texas State, San Marcos. It’s great to have Cathy back in the neighborhood.

Yu-Chun “Frances” Chen, (BA ’09), is currently interning full-time at the UN Information Centre here in DC. She hopes this will lead to a full-time position.

Recent graduate Justin Bland (BA) received a partial fellowship to the Pratt Institute for the graduate program in City and Regional Planning.

Ashley McCawley (BA) is in the “intel school” at Dam Neck (just 20 miles south of Norfolk”. She says she likes her experience so far, but “being in other educational programs just reminds me that GW was the best school…I really miss geography classes!”

Jesse Goldman (BA) is currently at Hunter College in New York City working toward the Masters of Urban Planning.

After several years working at PADF, Corrie Drummond (MA ‘06) is now at USAID in the Office of Transition Initiatives.

Sarah Moseley (MA ’05) is now working at the Pan-American Development Foundation (PADF), which is based in Washington, for their remittance program.

Dale Gwak (BA) and his wife Sophie had a second child, Sophie Jr., on August 7, 2009. Dale, who was a Sargeant in the South Korean Marines will be moving to Baltimore, MD to attend nursing school in Spring 2010.

Emily Sciarillo (MA ’08) and Enrique Zudaire welcomed a daughter, Maya Carmen, on April 24th. Congrats to the new parents!

In Memoriam

Jim O’Neal (MA 1957)
Mr. O’Neal, 81, who died on Nov. 1, 2008, was a cartographer and geographer with the U.S. Geological Survey and for the Army Corp of Engineers. He conducted extensive field work in South America and Antarctica. In 1970 he received the Interior Department’s Antarctic Service Medal. He retired in 1981 from the Army Corps. Jim received at Master’s in Geography in 1957 and later he taught cartography classes for the Department for many years. Survivors include his wife of 60 years, Betty H. O’Neal of Gaithersburg; a daughter, Cindy Keefer of Westminster; a sister; and five grandchildren.

Matt Zolotor (MA 2002)
Matt passed away in September 2008 after a two-year battle with cancer. He was 31 years old. Matt earned his Bachelors degree from James Madison University, concentrating on Geography and GIS. He pursued his interest in GIS, and worked for both Michael Baker Engineering and Booze Allen Manilton as a GIS analyst. While in the Geography MA program, Matt’s primary research interests focused on historical and political geography and he wrote his final thesis on “The Influence of Jewish Immigration and Land Settlement on the Historical Geography of Palestine, 1882-1929.” He loved the field and hoped to someday pursue a PhD. Matt is survived by his wife Sandy and two children, Gabriel and Joshua.
Congratulations to the Class of 2009!

MA in Geography
Thomas Buckley
Mark Butman
Sterling Johnson
Christianna Ludlow
Daniel Malessa
Patrick Phillips
Zachary Schulman
Lindsay Withers
Jamie Worms

BA in Geography
Maria Arnal
Jennifer Bonar
Leighanne Boone
Allison Bybee
Alison Bye
Yu-Chun Chen
Gordon Culver
Alexander Curlin
Kristen Engel
Galen Evans
Kristin Frontiera
Michelin Frosolone
Paula Halicek
Sarah Hank
Julie Kohn
Benjamin
Koppenheffer
Kevin Kozlowski
Allyson Lang
Giovanna Luppino

BA in Environmental Studies
Maria Arnal
Kelley Bradin
Allison Bybee
Meghan Cratty
Alexander Curlin
Jenael Falcao
Allyson Lang
Giovanna Luppino
Nicholas Marolda
Kate Maude
Christine Megariotis
Keara Mehlert
Jason Ordene
Abdul Rahim
Timothy Reeves
Allison Schultz
Alexander Stegmaier
Ivey Wohlfeld
Marcela Zeballos

Nicholas Marolda
Kate Maude
Christine Megariotis
Keara Mehlert
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Abdul Rahim
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Upcoming Events

Fall 2009 Speaker Series:

OCT 28 Dr. Ralph Buehler—Assistant Professor in the Urban Affairs and Planning Program at Virginia Tech’s Alexandria Center.

NOV 11 Dr. Firoz Verjee—Professorial Lecturer with GWU’s School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and Senior Research Associate at GWU’s Institute for Crisis, Disaster & Risk Management.

NOV 18 Dmitriy Streletskiy—Doctoral Candidate in the Permafrost Group, University of Delaware.

DEC 2 Amanda Huron—Doctoral candidate in geography at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. "Dwellers on the Brink: Solidarity Economies of Housing in Washington, DC."