

# Department of Geography Alumni Newsletter

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

Summer 2010

## *Special points of interest:*

- ND GIS Users Conference Annual Meeting
- News about Homecoming 2010
- Alumni News
- Student Accomplishments



Dr. Rundquist was an invited speaker at SDSU Geography Convention.

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## **Chairperson's Corner**

Wow! Where did that year go! It seems like it was not too long ago that I wrote this column for the last newsletter. It was another fun and rewarding year for the UND Department of Geography.

This newsletter contains a summary of several exciting events that took place in 2009-2010, highlighted by the highly successful North Dakota GIS Users Conference. That event surpassed my expectations and broke all NDGIS Conference records, including the number of attendees (210), the number of sponsors (26), and the amount of sponsorship money raised. It was gratifying to visit with so many UND Geography alumni who are succeeding in their careers with sponsor agencies and companies. Also, several current and former students presented the results of their GIS research at the conference. Comments from attendees were almost entirely positive, and so the State of North Dakota has asked us to again host the next meeting, set for early October 2011.

On October 2, 2009, at the Geography Department Homecoming/GTU Banquet, we awarded our first Distinguished Alumni

Award to Dr. Julie Winkler (Class of 1975) who is now a Professor of Geography at Michigan State University. The 2010 award will be given to Mr. Lee Okeson (Class of 1958), who is a retired Deputy Planning Director for the City of San Diego. Lee's biography and details about the 2010 Alumni Banquet are included in this newsletter. We hope you can join us for Homecoming 2010!

The Department won a major university award in February: the 2010 Departmental Excellence in Service Award, in recognition of its high level of service to the discipline, university, and community. The Geography Department has a long history of such service but has never before been recognized formally for its efforts. The award was presented at the annual Founder's Day Banquet, at which Dr. Enru Wang also received a North Dakota Spirit Faculty Achievement Award for excellence in teaching, research, and service.

GTU played a critical role in organizing Geography Awareness Week and GIS Day Activities in November 2009. Graduate Student Michael Boucher was instrumental in getting signed GIS Day proclamations from UND President

Robert Kelley, Grand Forks Mayor Michael Brown, and Governor John Hoeven. Mayor Brown even attended our GIS Day Open House and Reception in GARSL.

We continue to encourage and look for ways to help our students attend professional meetings. Besides heavy involvement in the NDGIS Conference, a large group attended the 2009 Minnesota GIS/LIS Conference in Duluth and the South Dakota State Geography Convention in Brookings, SD. A few students went to the national AAG meeting in Washington, D.C., where we arranged for a small and very fun alumni gathering at a nearby Irish pub. If any of you want to help to organize such an event next year in Seattle, let me know.

You can keep up with what is happening in the Department by visiting <http://www.und.edu/dept/Geog/>. There, you will find photos and other information. Remember to keep in touch. We invite you to return to campus for Homecoming, stop in for a visit and cup of coffee, give us a call, send an email, and/or join the UND Geography Facebook group. We want to hear from you!

## Geography hosts record-breaking ND GIS Users Conference

The 2009 North Dakota GIS Users Conference, hosted by the Department of Geography and co-organized by Dr. Brad Rundquist, Geography Department Chair, and Mr. Bob Nutsch, State of North Dakota GIS Coordinator, was a highly successful event with a record 210 registered attendees from state agencies, counties, cities, higher education, utilities, and the private sector. The conference was Nov. 2-4 at the Alerus Center. Approximately 37% of the participants were from higher education, 28% from the private sector, 11% from state agencies, 10% from counties, 8% from federal agencies, 6% from cities, and less than 1% from utilities. Twenty-five percent of the people were from out of state and two were from outside of the U.S. The meeting also set a record for number of sponsors (26). In fact, the meeting was so successful that the State of North Dakota requested that UND Geography host the next meeting too, scheduled for Oct. 11-13, 2011! Links to presentations, photographs, sponsor websites, and other information can be found at <http://www.nd.gov/gis/news/2009-conference.html>.



Great city support for ND GIS Users Conference.



Sheet cake with campus map in celebration of GIS Day in Grand Forks.

## 2009-10 Geography Department Forums

- Mr. Michael R. Boucher:** Discovering China: Tourism in China, How it Shaped a Nation. Graduate Student, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND, 11 September 2009.
- Dr. Julie A. Winkler:** Climate Change Impact Assessments: from Local to Global. Professor of Geography, Michigan State University, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND, 2 October 2009.
- Dr. Dong Keun Yoon:** Volunteer Firefighters in Rural Communities: A North Dakota Case Study. Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Emergency Management, North Dakota State University, 13 November 2009.
- Mr. Wesley Peck:** GIS in the World of Carbon Management: A Perspective from the Plains CO<sub>2</sub> Reduction Partnership. Energy and Environmental Research Center, University of North Dakota, 11 December 2009.
- Dr. Thomas Baerwald:** Perspectives on Geography's Present and Future. University of North Dakota, 2 February 2010.
- Mr. Cory Mock:** Political Redistricting in North Dakota. Graduate Student, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND, 5 March 2010.
- Dr. Jason Holcomb:** Harvest History, Harvest Labor, and the H2-A Visa. Associate Professor of Geography, Morehead State University, Morehead, KY, 24 March 2010.
- Ms. Amanda Gearhart:** Of Coyotes, Conspiracies & Comparisons: Using Very Large Scale Aerial Imagery for Rangeland Assessment. Research Specialist, NDSU Hettinger Research Extension Center, 9 April 2010.

## Please Join Us for Homecoming 2010!

UND Homecoming is during the week of 4-9 October 2010. The annual Geography Alumni Banquet is scheduled for Friday, 8 October at the Hilton Garden Inn, which is just off campus (5 p.m. social hour, 6 p.m. supper). Mr. Lee Okeson will provide an after-dinner talk. If you are interested in attending, please contact Ms. Cindy Purpur (701-777-4246 or [cindy.purpur@und.edu](mailto:cindy.purpur@und.edu)). The cost of the banquet is \$22 per person. We hope to see you there.



L: Dr. Rundquist presents first UND Geography Distinguished Alumni Award to Dr. Julie Winkler (Michigan State U.) of Oriska, ND.

R: Geography Dept. receives Departmental Excellence in Service Award at UND Founders Day Banquet, 25 February 2010.



## Mr. Lee Okeson to Receive Distinguished Alumni Award

Lee was born and raised on a farm in Walsh County, ND, homesteaded by his grandfather and father who were immigrants from Sweden. Following service in the Armored Corp, US Army he attended UND under the GI Bill, graduating with a geography major with an emphasis in meteorology and climatology, during the era that Dr. Bernt Wills was the Department Chair. He was an active member of Gamma Theta Upsilon. He went on to Southern Illinois University for a graduate degree in Geography with a focus on Urban Development and Planning. For two years he had the good fortune and experience to work as an assistant to Dr. Charles Colby, retired Chair of the Geography Department, University of Chicago, on a development and urbanization study of the Mississippi Valley. Lee was also President of Gamma Theta Upsilon at SIU. After obtaining an MS degree, he became a Planner for the City of San Diego, where he was involved in the early efforts in ur-

ban growth management and community planning in which San Diego was a leader, nationally. Later his role in the planning process involved responsibility for Department interface with the city planning commission and city council. For several years, Lee taught planning courses at Southwestern College Architectural Department, and was frequently a guest lecturer at SDSU and UCSD. Following retirement as Deputy Planning Director for the City, he formed a consulting firm which focused on complex public and private sector development and planning projects. Having acquired and managed residential properties in Southern California he later transferred equities into farm land holdings in Iowa, Minnesota and North Dakota under the Okeson Family Ag – Land Trust for which he is currently co-trustee and business manager.

Lee has been a long time member and Chair of the Rancho Bernardo

Planning Board, one of such 42 community boards in San Diego. He has also served on numerous volunteer boards, commissions and committees. He was inducted into the Rancho Bernardo Hall of Fame and is a member of Urban Land Institute, AAG, and American Planning Association.

Lee is an avid skier, restores collector cars and old boats. He and his wife, Marlene, a graduate of NDSU, spend summers at their lake home near Pelican Rapids, MN. They also enjoy world travel, car shows, boating, and ballroom dancing. They have three children and five grandchildren and are celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary this year.

Lee has been supportive of the Geography Department program at UND and will continue to do so in the future. He believes strongly that the discipline and learning experience obtained at the Department has been highly relevant in achieving diverse professional career and entrepreneurial goals.

## Geography Alumni News

(Your name here! Send us news!)

**Chris Atkinson** (M.S., 2000) recently accepted a position as Visiting Assistant Professor in the Geography Department at UND! He just completed his Ph.D. in the Department of Geography at the University of Kansas, in Lawrence, KS.

**Erik Nelson** (B.S., 2008) is now working as a GIS Technician with Houston Engineering in Fargo, ND.

**Megan Grove** (B.S., 2009) accepted a position as a research specialist with the Energy and Environmental Research Center in Grand Forks, ND.

**Brooks Hansen** (B.S., 2009) has received a GTA stipend from Arizona State University's School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning beginning Fall Semester 2009. Brooks is working on his Masters Urban and Environmental Planning with Dr. Carlos Balsas.

**Justin Braaten** (M.S., 2009) has taken a position as a Research Assistant at the Laboratory for Applications of Remote Sensing in Ecology (LARSE) at Oregon State University, in Corvallis, OR.

**Branden Bornemann** (B.S., 2006) completed his Masters of Environmental Management from the Department of Earth System Science and Policy at the University of North Dakota.

**Chris Atkinson** (M.S., 2000) successfully defended his dissertation in the Geography Department at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, KS. His dissertation title is "Spatial and Temporal Analysis of Extreme Midwestern Blizzard Storm Tracks and Subsequent Federal Disaster Declarations." Chris also accepted a 1-year teaching position as Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at UND.

**Hannah Bloomberg** (B.S., 2007) completed her M.S. in the Geography Department at South Dakota State University, and is now employed as an Imagery Analyst with the National Geo-Spatial Intelligence Agency in Washington, DC.

**Dr. Julie Winkler** (B.S., 1975) received the Charles Brooks Award for Outstanding Services to the American Meteorological Society at the AMS Annual Meeting Awards Banquet held 10 January 2010 in Atlanta, GA.

**Harold Bergquist** is practicing as an attorney at law in Lakota, ND, where he also serves as a Nelson County Commissioner.

**David Swenson** (B.S., 1993) is the new Senior Vice-President of Economic Development for the Charlotte Regional Partnership in Charlotte, NC.

## Graduate Student Achievements

**Mitch Schull** (B.S., 2003) was a co-author on "Global Map of Rainfed Cropland Areas (GMRCA) and statistics using remote sensing." In *Remote Sensing of Global Croplands for Food Security*, Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press. 2009, pp 357-389.

**Shariar Pervez** (M.S., 2005) was a co-author on "Mapping irrigated lands across the United States using MODIS satellite imagery." In *Remote Sensing of Global Croplands for Food Security*, Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press. 2009, pp 177-198.

**Gary Votaw** (M.S., 2006) was co-author on the paper "A Collaborative Approach to Study Northwest Flow Snow in the Southern Appalachians." *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 2009, Vol. 90, No. 7, pp. 979-991.

**Christina Cummings** successfully completed the course 'HAZUS Multi-Hazards for Flood' offered by the FEMA Emergency Management Institute, 7 January 2010, at Emmitsburg, MD.

**Christina Cummings** completed all of the training to be officially recognized as a HAZUS-MH Trained Professional. She will be presented this certification at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual HAZUS Conference, August 23-25 in Indianapolis, IN.

**Christina Cummings** successfully completed the course 'Comprehensive Data Management for Hazus-MH' offered by the FEMA Emergency Management Institute, 4 March 2010, at Emmitsburg, MD.

**Ben Prusa** (B.S. 2008, M.S. 2010) accepted a job as a GPS Specialist with Titan Machinery in Marshall, MN.

**Danny Fasteen** (M.A. 2010) was selected as a student assistant for the 2010 ESRI User Conference in San Diego, California (July 9-16).

**Nate Harsha** secured a teaching position at the Marshall School, a private college preparatory school serving grades 5-12 located in Duluth, Minnesota. He will be responsible for teaching three sections of 8th grade World Geography and two sections of 10th grade American History for the upcoming school year.

**Danny Fasteen** (M.A. 2010) accepted a position as an Appraiser/GIS Technician III with the Assessment Department for the City of Fargo. His duties will focus mainly on land management (splitting /combining parcels, addressing, etc), property assessment, and the application of GIS to property valuation techniques.

**Brian Torborg** (M.S. 2010) was hired as a Site Assessment Analyst for NextEra Energy in Juno Beach, FL. NextEra is the second largest wind energy company in the world.

## Undergraduate Student Accomplishments

Undergraduate geography major **Derrick LaPoint** received a Scholar-Athlete Award from the Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA).

**Megan Ewert** was accepted into the Graduate School of Geography at Clark University in Worcester, MA starting Fall 2010.

**Matthew Fahrenbruch** had an internship with the Bureau of Land Management at the Moab, Utah Field Office. He was a Vegetative Fuels Monitoring Intern.

**Matthew Fahrenbruch** and **Kyle Wikstrom** received 2010 Memorial Union Outstanding Student Leader Awards from the University of North Dakota.

**Matthew Fahrenbruch** was awarded the Alice Rechlin Scholarship for 2010-2011 from Gamma Theta Upsilon, the International Geographical Honor Society. The prestigious scholarship is awarded annually to one outstanding junior or senior geography major selected from a national pool of applicants. Fahrenbruch is only the fourth UND geography student to be awarded a GTU scholarship since 1965, and he is the first since 1994.

R: Matt F. and Kyle W. receive UND Student Leader Awards.



R: Ben, Peter, Matt and Amber volunteer for The Big Event.



## Department Graduates

### M.A.

**Rood, Alison**, "Place, Politics, and Gay and Lesbian Life in Grand Forks, North Dakota." (Chair: Jung)

**Fasteen, Daniel J.**, "A Mixed Methods Assessment of Service Quality in Demand Response Transportation: A Grand Forks Metropolitan Area Case Study." (Chair: Munski)

### M.S.

**Braaten, Justin**, "Landscape Change in the Multi-Use, Multi-Ownership Forests of the Olympic Peninsula, Washington, 1988-2006." (Chair: Rundquist)

**Torborg, Brian**, "A Climatological Analysis of Soil Frost Depth at Fargo, North Dakota, USA: 1981-2001." (Chair: Todhunter)

**Prusa, Benjamin**, "Characteristics of Search and Rescue at Mount Rainier National Park." (Chair: Rundquist)

### B.S.

Seth Hagen (B.S., 2009)

Michael Krueger (B.S., 2009)

Kelli Nelson (B.S., 2009)

Jared Auch (B.S., 2010)

Alan Dale (B.S., 2010)

Alexander DeMaioribus, (B.S., 2010)

Robert Deringer (B.S., 2010)

Megan Ewert (B.S., 2010)

Rhonda Fietzek-DeVries (B.S., 2010)

Adam Jonasson (B.S., 2010)

James Mertz (B.S., 2010)

Aaron Nelson (B.S., 2010)

Michael Tormaschy (B.S., 2010)

Craig Weber (B.S., 2010)

# Geography Faculty Profiles

**Dr. Devon Hansen** reports that the past academic year has proven to be a busy time for her. In the spring semester, she enjoyed teaching a new course in population geography with a focus on contemporary population issues. She has been advising graduate research concerning the out-migration of young people from the state of North Dakota. A survey was conducted with junior and senior high school students in the Grafton community to understand the role that place perception plays in their decision to migrate. In April, professional travel took her to the AAG national meeting in Washington, DC to present research related to the refugee resettlement program in North Dakota. Her research interests regarding the resettling of refugees and their adjustments to living in the communities of the state continues. Dr. Hansen has become involved with the Global Friends Coalition and their work assisting refugees integrate into the Grand Forks community. She is volunteering as an ELL tutor with their Guiding New Americans to Success Mentoring Program.

**Dr. Munski** completed another academic year (32<sup>nd</sup>) which included having more of the descendents of the students he taught in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Although he continues to totter along, he did participate in Canadian Association of Geographers annual meeting in Regina, Saskatchewan on June 2-4, 2010. He also received two campus service recognitions in 2009-10: Friend of UND Trio Programs from Trio (Upward Bound, Talent Search, and McNair Program) and the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Era Bell Thompson Award from Multicultural Student Services. He hopes to see many alumni coming to the 2010 UND Homecoming Program.

**Dr. Brad Rundquist** spent much of the Fall semester organizing the 2009 North Dakota GIS Users Conference, which was Nov. 2-4 at the Alerus Center. The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Geography Action Week Chili Cook-Off was held Nov. 20 at the Rundquist household. Plans are already under way for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual event! In March 2010, Dr. Rundquist was an invited speaker at the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual South Dakota State Geography Convention. Dr. Rundquist also attended the National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education (NSF-ATE) Conference and the annual AAG meeting during last academic year, both in Washington, D.C. A UND Geography alumni gathering was held during the AAG meeting, which was much fun. Dr. Rundquist continues to direct two grant programs: North DakotaView (funded by the U.S. Geological Survey and AmericaView Inc.) and NSF-ATE (awarded in conjunction with Turtle Mountain Community College). He serves as managing editor of *Geocarto International*, which is a time-consuming but interesting and rewarding task. In June, he travelled to an AAG Departmental Leadership Workshop in Boulder, CO. His daughter Ella is finishing 2<sup>nd</sup>

grade and is very involved with dance (she already has five years under her belt!). She will again be in the Summer Performing Arts program, and she auditioned for the Grand Cities Children's Choir. She certainly didn't inherit her singing, dancing, or acting skills from Dr. Rundquist! Autumn is 2½ and she already has finished her first season of dance classes. Dr. Rundquist's sons (Kendall, 18, and Riley, 15) do very well in school and they are actively involved in school-sponsored community service activities.

**Dr. Paul Todhunter** was on Developmental Leave during the spring semester 2010. During the fall semester 2009 he developed an online version of Geog 121: Global Physical Environment that he also offered during the fall semester. He has an in-press paper in *Disaster Prevention and Management* examining the performance (or lack thereof) of the flood forecasting, warning, response system during the Grand Forks Flood of 1997. While on leave he finished and submitted a paper on the assumptions of the flood flow frequency methods used to determine the regulatory flood (100-year flood) in the United States using data from the Red River of the North, and is preparing material for submission from Brian Torborg's thesis on seasonally frozen soils and maximum frost depth over 20 years at Fargo, ND. He is really accelerating into the empty nest phase of life, with three kids in college – Middle Tennessee State U., U. Nebraska-Lincoln, and U Minnesota-Twin Cities; only a lone high school junior remains for him to torment.

**Dr. Greg Vandenberg**, Assistant Professor continues to conduct research on potential water and sediment quality impacts from confined animal feeding operations adjacent to Lake Alice National Wildlife Refuge in north-eastern North Dakota. Dr. Vandenberg had a book review published in *Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing* and a research paper recently published in *Environmental Earth Sciences*. He presented at the AAG West Lakes Meeting in St. Paul, MN in October 2009, the ND GIS Users Conference in Grand Forks in November 2009, and the ND Chapter of the Wildlife Society Meeting in Minot, ND in February 2010. He was also a grader for the Advanced Placement Exam in Environmental Science, in Lincoln, NE in May 2009. Dr. Vandenberg also received a grant from the Office of Instructional Development with Lance Yarbrough, Geology and Geological Engineering, for the purchase of Trimble GPS systems. He currently advises four graduate students conducting research on water quality issues, ice jams, and the natural soundscapes of city parklands. Dr. Vandenberg teaches courses in GIS, Intro Physical Geography, GPS, Great Plains Physiography, Hydrology Field Methods, and Advanced Environmental Geography (Graduate Geography Seminar). The Advanced Environmental Geography class took a field trip to the

## Geography Faculty Profiles (cont.)

Langdon Wind Farm in October and also a tour of the Grand Forks flood protection sites.

Greg, his wife Lara Dando and their two children have been busy exploring the region with trips to many scenic areas. They spent some time hiking and camping in Theodore Roosevelt National Park this past year as well as hiking, fishing, skiing and camping in some of the local parks.

**Dr. Enru Wang** stays busy with teaching, research, and service activities. He had one paper published in *Eurasian Geography and Economics*. He had another paper under revision for resubmission to *Environment and Planning A*. He also gave a presentation at the annual AAG meeting in Washington, DC in April. The past academic year was Dr. Wang's first year as the Director of UND's Peace Studies Program. In addition to providing regular supervising work to Peace Studies majors, he also directed several internships and independent studies in Peace Studies. Dr. Wang served on the University Senate representing the College of Arts & Sciences. He has been active in providing professional services, including reviewing a book proposal for one major publisher and manuscripts for three international journals. Thanks to the recommendation and the support from Dr. Rundquist and the department, Dr. Wang received UND's 2010 North Dakota Spirit Faculty Achievement Award. Dr. Wang always enjoyed the weekend time spent with family. He is happy to see that Austin, who is 17 month old now, is growing into a toddler and quickly picking up language skills. Aurora, who is four and half year old now, is happy with her pre-school life and loves teachers, friends, and activities at the Child Development Center.



You wouldn't believe the one that got away! Graduate students at the Big Fish Supper Club, Bena, MN, en route to the MN GIS/LIS Conference, Duluth.

## Graduate GIS Certificate Update

Dr. Vandeberg has been Director of the Online Graduate Certificate in GIS since January 2008. The Online Graduate Certificate continues to be popular among those currently working in the GIS field, as well as those looking for a career change. Courses have been at capacity for the past two years, and we have had to turn away potential students because of the high numbers of students. The Department is investigating the possibility of hiring a full time person to help cover some of our online courses.



Dr. Vandeberg ice-fishing after a tough day at the University! Actually ... he's collecting samples for a study at Lake Alice National Wildlife Refuge funded by US F&W.



A sharp-looking bunch of our majors at the 48th Annual Feast of Nations at the Alerus Center, 27 Feb. 2010. (Notice how the guys are behind the gals?)

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## Geography Fund / B.L.Wills Scholarship Contributions Total \$5,137 in 2009-10!

## UND Geography on Facebook!

Neal & Charlotte Hnatiuk

Douglas & Laura Munski

Barton & Evelyn Hayward

Paul & Jean Sando

Barbara Serr

Michael Phillip

John Rutten

Chris & Lisa Atkinson

Harold & Susan Bergquist

Donn Baker

Steve Walker

Gerald Rott

Lee & Marlene Okeson

Heather Jorde

Kenneth & Debra Jensen

Billy & Jinnelle Weis

Mark & Myra Kuhn

Dr. Roger Sandness

Paula Lee

**Your Name Here!!**

**Thanks**

**Merci Gracias**

**Gam-Sa Takk**

**Danke Xie Xie**

Last fall we implemented a Facebook site to promote information sharing and networking for UND Geography Department alumni, faculty, and students. If you are interested in being a part of the Facebook site, please visit <http://www.und.edu/dept/Geog/> and click on the Facebook link.

### < Key Numbers >

45 geography majors (37 males, 8 females).

18 graduate students (9 male, 9 females; 7 MA, 11 MS).

14 minors.

22 Graduate GIS Certificate students.



