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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Department of Geography at UNA is one of 19 departments in the College of Arts and Sciences. Our main focus is applied Geography. We have assembled programs that give our majors ample opportunities to apply what they learn in solving everyday problems. We challenge our students to strive for excellence in everything they do. We pride ourselves with a fine group of eight faculty with broad research interests – ranging from environmental hazards, urban geography, geomorphology, biogeography, small island agriculture, to micro finance and ecotourism. Our traditional strength in geospatial technologies is the reason our graduates dominate the GIS industry in the region. Because of success of our graduates, and in order to adjust to industry demands among other things, we have implemented a new standalone major in Geographic Information Science (GIS) in our department. Drawing coursework from both Geography and GIS, we believe that this new major will give GIS majors greater depth and breadth. We expect that this new curriculum venture will open more opportunities for our students.

2015/2016 was a busy year in the Department of Geography. The department co-hosted the annual conference of the Kenya Scholars and Studies Association in September and also the University of North Alabama Geography Alumni Association (UNAGAA) conference in October. At the close of the year, our proposal to offer a standalone major in Geographic Information Science (GIS) was approved by the Alabama Council on Higher Education (ACHE). Whether it was faculty mentoring students to present research at conferences, introducing new courses into our curriculum, study abroad trips, hosting international visiting scholars, or just tailgating activities with the Geography club, both faculty and students stayed busy all year long. In the last four years of my leadership in the department, we were able to accomplish much together including implementing a new MS program in Geospatial Science, hiring new faculty, commissioning the Freddie Wood Geospatial Research Center, expanding our curriculum, the Geomester program in area high schools, new study abroad programs and many other exciting initiatives. This year marks the start of my second term as chair of the department. I am excited about the opportunity to provide leadership to a department with a proven record of excellence as ours.

Besides implementing the new major in GIS, I see plenty of opportunities to take geography and GIS conversations across UNA campus and beyond. Exploring new and innovative ways to reach new markets will define the success of our growth initiatives. While growth may dominate our discussions and initiatives in the next few years, offering programs that set our students apart will still remain part and parcel of our core mission as we seek to advance applied geographic knowledge and inquiry. As we begin a new year, I am excited more than ever, about the leadership and impact Geography has on our campus and look forward to yet another great academic year.

Dr. Francis T. Koti
Professor and Chair
STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

UNA Geography is fortunate to count Robby Thompson as a two-time graduate of the Department. During his time with the Department, Robby was always willing to lend a hand to help out in any way he could; whether it be taking the lead in promoting the Department on social media, representing the Department well at conferences across the country, or simply helping a fellow student with a GIS question, he was always there. Robby presented his thesis research, “Land Use Regulation and Access to Amenities: Exploring Spatial Equity Using GIS,” at the 2016 American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, the 2015 UNAGAA Conference, the 2015 Southeastern Division of the American Association of Geographers Conference, and the 2015 Alabama Academy of Science Annual Meeting. Among the many awards bestowed upon Robby at UNA include the 2014 UNA Hall of Fame Award, the 2014-2015 UNA College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Graduate Student Award, and the 2014-2015 UNA College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Graduate Assistant Award. Robby served as an ESRI Campus Ambassador from 2015-2016, a UNA College of Arts and Sciences Ambassador from 2015-2016 and served as an intern with ESRI in the summer of 2015. Robby is currently a student at the University of Alabama School of Law. We wish Robby all the best in his future endeavors!
Gabby D’Arcy is a Summer 2016 graduate of the UNA Department of Geography. As an advisee of Dr. Jonathan P. Fleming, Gabby conducted a statistical analysis of racial bias in law-enforcement related fatalities at the national, state, and county scales through the use of ArcMap and R for her capstone project. Gabby excelled in the classroom and beyond, being honored with inclusion on the Dean’s List for all three years of her tenure at UNA and inducted as a member to the Phi Kappa Phi and Gamma Theta Upsilon Honor Societies. Gabby also represented the Department at the 2016 American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting in San Francisco. In addition to her academic accomplishments, Gabby volunteered her time with the Florence City Animal Control, Sidney’s Safe Foundation, and the Zip City Volunteer Fire Department. We look forward to seeing all of the great things Gabby will do in the future!

Katie Kelsoe

There are some students that are involved in campus life, and then there are students that come to represent the core values of the UNA Department of Geography -- innovative research, community outreach, and academic success. Katie Kelsoe is emblematic of all these characteristics. As an undergraduate of the Department, Katie conducted research on recycling at UNA; she presented her project “Going Green in the Residence Halls: An Investigative Study into Recycling Behavioral Patterns of Residential Students” at UNA’s 2016 Research Days, winning Best in Session. From 2012 to 2016, Katie was a member of Phi Mu Fraternity, focusing her philanthropic efforts toward Childrens’ Miracle Network Hospitals. Currently, Katie is a Graduate Assistant for the Department of University Residences at UNA, while taking graduate level courses in both Professional Studies and Geospatial Sciences.

Connor Martin

Connor Martin is a Spring 2016 graduate of the UNA Department of Geography. Under the tutelage of Dr. Michael Pretes, Connor developed research about reintroducing a historic streetcar system in downtown Florence, Alabama and the possible economic effects this system would have on the area. Titled “A Vehicle for Development: Historic Streetcar Systems and Economic Growth,” Connor presented his research at the 2015 Association of Pacific Coast Geographers Conference, the 2016 GeoSymposium at the University of Tennessee Knoxville, and the 2016 Alabama Academy of Science Annual Meeting. Connor is an accomplished student, being awarded the UNA Quality Enhancement Program Faculty-Undergraduate Research Grant (2015-2016), the UNA Department of Geography Freddie Wood Research Grant (2015), and the UNA College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Undergraduate Research Award (2016). Connor was also inducted into the Gamma Theta Upsilon Honor Society. Currently, Connor is a Graduate Assistant in the Department of GeoSciences at Idaho State University -- he is conducting archival research on Western United States history, including water rights, historical photography, and ecosystem services. Good luck, Connor!
Oceans present no barrier to inquisitive students wanting to explore the world around them. Ten UNA Department of Geography students traveled with Dr. Francis Koti and Dr. Greg Gaston to Tanzania in the summer of 2016 on a Geography of Africa field course. From seeing Olduvai Gorge where the earliest hominins walked the Earth, to studying the cultural and historical geography of Zanzibar, students made memories that will last a lifetime. The class also examined how fragile tropical ecosystems are changing under the forces of modern economic practices, investigated indigenous cultures and economic systems, and researched the socio-spatial dynamics of settlement in a modern African City in the context of modernization and change with emphasis on Dar es Salaam, Tanzania’s Capital City. We look forward to the next trip to East Africa in 2018!
FIELD COURSES and STUDY ABROAD

Pacific Northwest

Dr. Greg Gaston and Dr. Jonathan Fleming took a group of #unageo students to see the magnificent redwoods, beautiful rolling plains, and majestic snowcapped summits of the Pacific Northwest of the United States during the summer of 2016. Students delved into the physical and historical geography of the region, exploring Crater Lake, Mount Hood, Mount Saint Helens, the Teton Range, and Yellowstone National Park.

Southern Wonders: The Geography of the South

With the Southeastern United States being one of the most biodiverse and topographically heterogeneous regions of the United States, it is ripe for exploration. Dr. Jonathan Fleming and nine students toured Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina, examining the varied physical geography the region has to offer.

Study Abroad Program to Jamaica Announced for May 15 - June 2, 2017

Join Dr. Mario Mighty in Summer 2017 for a Study Abroad Program to Jamaica! Students will have the opportunity to research the Jamaican coffee industry along with the economic and cultural geography of this beautiful Caribbean nation. Contact Dr. Mighty for more info at mmighty@una.edu
Whether it’s tailgating, playing intramural volleyball, or taking the canoes out on Cypress Creek, the UNA Geography Club is always seeking out a new adventure! For every home football game, the Club brings good food, good drinks, and good company to Spirit Hill to cheer our Lions on. The Club also organizes regular game nights, camping trips, and even helps fund travel to geography conferences for members.

**SPECIAL MENTIONS**

- **Department of Geography**: Outstanding International Involvement Award
- **Dr. Francis Koti**: Outstanding Department Chair Award
- **Dr. Mario Mighty**: Outstanding Early Career Teaching Award
- **Md Abu Sayed**: Outstanding Graduate Student Award
- **Dan Wanyama**: Outstanding Graduate Assistant Award
- **Connor Martin**: Outstanding Undergraduate Research Award
- **Paul Michael**: Geography Alumni Award

**College of Arts & Sciences Awards Gala Winners**

**Dr. Bill Strong Wins National Award**

Congratulations to Geography Professor Emeritus Dr. Bill Strong for being presented with the 2016 Gilbert Grosvenor Geographic Education Honors from the AAG! Dr. Strong was awarded in recognition of his extensive contributions to geographic education. Through his foundational work with the Alabama Geographic Alliance and the National Geographic Society’s education program, Dr. Strong has worked, and continues to work, with educators and geographers to improve the teaching of geography at the primary and secondary school levels. Well done!
Dr. Sim and Dr. Fleming: Quality Matters

Congratulations to Dr. Sunhui Sim and Dr. Jonathan Fleming on being named Quality Matters Certified Peer Reviewers! Quality Matters is a professional development program designed to improve online and blended learning, supporting university faculty in the construction of robust online courses. Dr. Sim and Dr. Fleming are the only two faculty members in the UNA College of Arts & Sciences to become Quality Matters Certified Peer Reviewers in 2015/2016. We look forward to seeing the exciting geography courses that they will develop in the future!

Dr. Keys-Mathews Opens ThinkSpace

In March 2016, Dr. Lisa Keys-Mathews opened theThinkSpace in the basement of Collier Library at UNA. The ThinkSpace is a collaborative working area with tools for brainstorming, team problem solving, and research meetings. Students and other members of the UNA community are encouraged to take advantage of the many useful resources located in the ThinkSpace, including, but not limited to, a 3D printer, interactive whiteboard, and virtual reality peripherals. Please see Dr. Keys-Mathews for more information.

Dr. Brommer Elected Faculty Senate President

Dr. David Brommer was honored to be elected Faculty Senate President at UNA by his peers for the 2016-2017 academic year. As President, Dr. Brommer presides over all Faculty Senate meetings and reports to the faculty on policy recommendations. In addition to being elected Faculty Senate President, Dr. Brommer was also selected as one of two candidates from the College of Arts & Sciences’ Emerging Leaders Program -- a new initiative to mentor faculty for leadership positions in the college and also the University Congratulations, Dr. Brommer!

Dr. Koti Awarded Outstanding Department Chair Award

Congratulations to Dr. Francis Koti on being awarded the Outstanding Department Chair Award at the 2016 College of Arts & Sciences Awards Gala! We’re proud to call you our own!
Among the many accolades accrued by Dr. Francis Koti, he has always had one goal in mind: shepherding growth in the Department and student activities. It appears as if Dr. Koti’s path to seeing this goal realized is becoming clearer as the years pass. One of the many areas of Departmental growth that Dr. Koti has nurtured is the implementation of a standalone GIS major in the Department. As of Fall 2016, he can check this off his list; students may now complete coursework to be awarded a degree in Geographic Information Science. In addition to the new GIS degree option, Dr. Koti has conducted research on the water supply market in Athi River town, Kenya, with results of this research presented at two conferences in September 2016. Dr. Koti prides himself on chairing a student-oriented Department, as is evident in the completion of his Master’s student Robby Thompson’s thesis and his role as a member of three other Master’s thesis committees. Dr. Koti is also committed to the success of UNA at large, serving as faculty adviser for the African Students Organization. Outside of UNA, Dr. Koti serves as the Executive Secretary and Newsletter Editor of Kenya Scholars and Studies Association, the Workshop leader with AAG’s Geography Faculty Development Alliance, and as a member of the Advisory Council of the Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries. As a testament to his hardwork, Dr. Koti was awarded the 2016/2017 Most Outstanding Department Chair in the College of Arts and Sciences at the UNA College of Arts & Sciences Awards Gala. When he finds time to carve out of his busy schedule, Dr. Koti enjoys attending his son Milton’s college soccer games, watching college football and basketball, and playing badminton with his daughter Arianna.

Dr. David Brommer has a reputation as a faculty member devoted to ensuring the success of the Department and UNA for a reason: his dedication to bringing out the best in both his students and UNA at large is on display on a daily basis around campus. As Graduate Coordinator for the Department, Faculty Senate President, Chair of Strategic Planning and Budget Study Committee of the College of Arts & Sciences Emerging Leaders Program, and Committee Member for the Vice President of Enrollment Management Search, one can see that he is committed to seeing things thrive around Wesleyan Hall. In other on-campus projects, Dr. Brommer served as a member of the campus committee responsible for developing the transition smoking policy on campus, promoting healthful decisions for students around UNA. Dr. Brommer serves as a member on graduate student Kevin Cornelius’s thesis committee, guiding Kevin toward completion of his Master’s degree. As Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Brommer seeks out the best and brightest to add to the Department’s roster, fostering the development of future leaders in geography and enhancing our Master’s program. Dr. Brommer further engages with graduate students through the Graduate Garden, a garden space in front of Wesleyan Hall where grads experiment with growing vegetables. Researching weather and climate, Dr. Brommer is currently working on a manuscript related to natural hazard perception and shelter decisions. In his free time, Dr. Brommer enjoys spending time with his wife and two daughters.
In any department, young faculty serve as the fuel that fires academic success. Unparalleled in this respect is Dr. Jonathan Fleming, a UNA Department of Geography alum. Dr. Fleming’s passion for geography is wide-reaching, whether it be publishing peer-reviewed papers, serving in academic organizations, or helping students get to the bottom of that frustrating ArcMap geoprocessing tool that just doesn’t want to run. In the past year and a half, Dr. Fleming has published four peer reviewed articles, with the majority focusing on his abiding interest in invasive aquatic plants. Dr. Fleming is involved in professional organizations devoted to invasive aquatic plants as well, serving as Editor for the MidSouth Aquatic Plant Management Society. Dr. Fleming is chairing three graduate students' thesis committees -- Kevin Cornelius, Paul Graham, and Chandler White. Along with his advisees, Dr. Fleming served as a member on recent graduate Md Abu Sayed’s thesis committee for his project, “Intelligent Parking Management System - A Multi Agent Based Model.” Dr. Fleming notes that geography as a discipline is changing more rapidly than any other traditional field except for computer science and technology -- as a result, faculty and students have to work hard to keep up, not solely on knowing the past and present of geography, but also knowing how to prepare for the future. Despite the demands of the future, Dr. Fleming still values the experience of learning ‘on location’ during field courses; Dr. Fleming and 9 students explored the Southeastern United States in his Geography of the South field course. In the future, Dr. Fleming would possibly like to expand his field courses to the Caribbean, where he is currently conducting research. Above all, the highlight of Dr. Fleming’s last year was marrying his wife, Whitney.

If anyone in the Department carries themselves with the ‘never say no’ attitude, it would be Dr. Greg Gaston. Over the course of Dr. G’s long, distinguished career, he has always pushed forward with new research, innovative student engagement, and a laugh that could launch a thousand ships. Conducting a field course this past summer to the Pacific Northwest, Dr. G is passionate about showing students the value of doing work in the field (as an aside, he is keen to mention that he is in fact not a geologist, but a physical geographer). Dr. G returned as instructor of Remote Sensing this past Spring, a class that first sparked his interest in geography. He also serves as a member of graduate student Blake Staggs’ thesis committee. As an extension of his interest in fieldwork, Dr. G adapted research conducted in Tanzania to a publication, “Revealing the Vulnerability of Urban Communities to Flood Hazard in Tanzania: A Case of the Dar es Salaam City Ecosystem.” In addition, Dr. G is always seeking opportunities for professional development -- he attended the ESRI User Conference in San Diego, California from July 10-14, 2016. Dr. G is hoping to lecture in Spain in February 2017, further evidencing his passion for both teaching and traveling abroad. When he isn’t in the classroom or can’t be found in the field, Dr. G enjoys building and fixing things, especially tinkering with his beloved Honda motorcycle.
In the high demand world of present-day academia, teaching sometimes takes a backseat to research. In the case of Dr. Lisa Keys-Mathews, she is not willing to sacrifice honest engagement with students in the classroom, whether they happen to be first graders or college sophomores. Dr. Keys-Mathews’ many avenues for reaching out to students manifest themselves through her involvement with the Alabama Geographic Alliance. Dr. Keys-Mathews serves as Coordinator of the Alabama Geographic Alliance, organizing educational outreach programs with schools across the state. During the summer of 2016, Dr. Keys-Mathews, along with graduate students Tucker Green, Simon Bevis, and Chandler White participated in the National Geographic Society’s BioBlitz campaign at Forest Hills Elementary School, working with first through fifth graders on fun, exciting geographic concepts that stimulate interest in the discipline at an early age. The range of people she works with is not limited to primary school students, however -- Dr. Keys-Mathews opened the ThinkSpace in March 2016 in the basement of the Collier Library. The ThinkSpace is a collaborative working area with tools for brainstorming, team problem solving, and research meetings. Students and other members of the UNA community are encouraged to take advantage of the many useful resources located in the ThinkSpace, including, but not limited to, a 3D printer, interactive whiteboard, and virtual reality peripherals. In her free time, Dr. Keys-Mathews enjoys cycling, walking, watching college football, and spending time with her family.

For Dr. Mario Mighty, his aces aren’t only found on the badminton court. Dr. Mighty is emerging as one of the most accomplished, academically-dynamic faculty members around UNA. When he isn’t instructing students in his GIS and Fundamentals of Sustainability courses, he is conducting research and holding vital positions in organization on and off campus. Dr. Mighty’s research, titled “Competitive Advantage in the Jamaican Coffee Industry: Designing and Implementing Geospatial Methods for Improving the Ability of Stakeholders in the Jamaican Coffee Industry to Compete Globally in the Specialty Coffee Market,” has led to a publication in Globalization, Agriculture and Food in the Caribbean and a study abroad program to be held in summer 2017. He has represented the Department well at the University of Alabama’s GIS Day and the 2016 AAG Annual Meeting in San Francisco, presenting his research. Dr. Mighty also loves his extracurriculars, joining the College of Arts & Sciences Dragonboat team at the Shoals Dragonboat Festival in 2016. Dr. Mighty is also focused on seeing his students succeed; two of his advisees, Simon Bevis and Dan Wanyama, both won UNA Graduate Research Program grants. His hard work is paying off, as he has won the UNA University Research Grant, the Faculty Research and Development Grant, and the Early Career Teaching Award with characteristic flare. The secret to his success? Seeking out information, and not giving oneself the excuse to not know -- there is always something new that you can learn out there.
Some geography faculty are well-traveled, and then some geography faculty are well-traveled. Dr. Michael Pretes has traveled the world over many times and in December 2015 visited the continent of Antarctica. These travels have led to a wealth of knowledge from which Dr. Pretes can draw in his work in the classroom and research projects. Specifically, Dr. Pretes published encyclopedia articles on Australia and Scandinavia, and also an article on Iraq as a failing state for an online handbook. Mentoring students is the element of the academic life Dr. Pretes is most passionate about; he mentored two undergraduate students, Trevor Collier and Connor Martin, who presented their work at several conferences including the SEDAAG and Association of Pacific Coast Geographers annual meetings. Dr. Pretes also serves as a supervisor for Ryan Cook and is a member of the thesis committees for Casey Vinson and Simon Bevis. In addition to his students at UNA, Dr. Pretes serves on a Master’s thesis committee at the University of Wyoming and on a Ph.D. dissertation committee at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. For his efforts in the classroom, Dr. Pretes was bestowed the SEDAAG Excellence in Teaching Award. Currently, Dr. Pretes teaches World Regional Geography, History & Philosphy in Geography, and Geography of Latin America. Geography of Beer, Wine, and Spirits is a new class that will be taught by Dr. Pretes, which corresponds well with his varied interests in cultural and regional geography. In his free time when he is not traveling, Dr. Pretes enjoys snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing, hiking, reading, and gardening.

Dr. Sunhui Sim’s notable achievements continue to grow in number. Whether guiding her undergraduate and graduate advisees to completing their degrees, being awarded fellowships and grants, or being inducted to the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, she excels in every aspect of her career. The thing that makes Dr. Sim special, though, is that she doesn’t treat her responsibilities solely as a career -- she is personally invested in seeing the Department and the people around her become as successful as she is. She cherishes the opportunity to positively impact students’ lives day in and day out: “My most memorable moments as a faculty member at UNA are when students come back to me and let me know that I had a positive influence on their development as geographers.” She saw first hand the effects teachers can have on their students, as her very first high school geography teacher inspired her to travel around the world and soak up as much knowledge as possible. She has carried this passion throughout her life, hoping to similarly impress upon her students the importance of being thoughtful members of the world community. Notably, Dr. Sim received a research grant from the Rural Research Institute of Korea, leading to fruitful work with former visiting scholar Jong-Hyun Baik on the concept of ‘rurbanism.’ Dr. Sim chaired recent graduate students Md Abu Sayed’s and Romeo Gillyard’s thesis committees, with publications expected to follow for both students. In addition to her academic pursuits, Dr. Sim participates in the Big Sister Program in Florence, enjoys running and yoga, attends beer and wine tastings, and takes pleasure in watercolor painting.
Thank you, Ms. Pam!

We sincerely appreciate the invaluable work you do and your continued contributions to the Department of Geography.

Thank you for being an invaluable part of the #unageo family!

Pam Bishop

PROFESSOR EMERITUS
William (Bill) R. Strong, Ph.D., GISProFESSOR EMERITUS

ADJUNCT PROFESSORS
Mr. Jose Atencio III

Mr. Thomas Mathews

Ms. Amanda Smith Oakley

Ms. Selina Pearson

Grad student Tucker Green, Dr. Jonathan Fleming, Graduate Robby Thompson, and Dr. Sunhui Sim participate in ATΩ's annual golf tournament.

The Graduate Students of UNA Department of Geography (left to right, 1st row): Simon Bevis, Randee Jeske, Donald Akanga, Tucker Green, Chandler White (left to right, 2nd row): Dan Wanyama, Romeo Gillyard, Paul Graham, Christian Walker.
UNDERGRADUATE
The Department of Geography at UNA offers two undergraduate degrees, a Bachelor of Science in Geography and a Bachelor of Science in Geographic Information Science (GIScience). Students may choose between two concentrations leading to the Bachelor of Science in Geography degree:
- General Geography
- Business Geography

The Department also hosts three minor programs:
- General Geography
- Geographic Information Science (GIScience)
- GEOHCI/UX (Geospatial Human Computer Interaction and User Experience)

Students can also earn a certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

GRADUATE
The Department of Geography at UNA offers a Master of Science in Geospatial Science degree. This program emphasizes applying spatial knowledge and technology to seek geospatial solutions for contemporary problems.

GIVE TO UNA GEOGRAPHY

www.una.edu/geography/donate.html

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<td>Department of Geography</td>
<td>General fund used in the area of greatest need in the department such as – promotion of academic programs, departmental outreach, community engagement, faculty development, student events, lectureships, promotional activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geography Student Conference Travel Fund</td>
<td>Student travel to conferences, field courses, study abroad as determined by Geography faculty</td>
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<td>Department of Geography Endowed Scholarship</td>
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For Melissa Bailey, the preparation and experience provided to her by the UNA Department of Geography has taken her places. Currently the Director of Planning and Community Development for the City of Florence, AL, a Certified Local Planning Official, and Certified Geographic Information System Professional (GISP), the roots of Melissa’s current professional positions can be traced back to the Department. Melissa doesn’t chalk up her success to simply the rigorous coursework offered by the Department -- she acknowledges that the internship opportunities, collaborative projects, work study assignments, travel programs, and public speaking events all helped in setting her up for excelling in her professional life. Her academic background led to an outstanding career path, serving as Planner with Shelby County, AL, and Transportation Planner and Assistant Planning Director with Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments.

In her current position as Director of Planning and Community Developing for the City of Florence, Melissa is responsible for overseeing the physical development of the city by providing for the orderly growth, development, and redevelopment through policy recommendations, thorough planning, and management of developed plans. As the technical advisor to the Planning Commission, it is her job to provide the powerful nine-member body well-researched data so they can make informed decisions. Melissa is also responsible for guiding and directing Florence’s Community Development programs which provide assistance both directly and through partnerships to low income, disabled, homeless, and elderly individuals. The Community Development program also works to revitalize neighborhoods by removing blight and providing assistance for emergency residential repairs. GIS is a crucial tool for Melissa’s staff and she has the responsibility of ensuring its components are of sound quality. In addition to the aforementioned duties, Melissa is an advisor to the Mayor, City Council, and numerous community organizations on growth, economic, and planning matters. Melissa is also under contract with the Alabama Planning Institute in the UNA Continuing Studies Department as an Instructor in the Certified Alabama Planning and Zoning Official (CAPZO) program.

Melissa will be honored this year at UNA’s Homecoming Celebration with the 2016 UNA Alumni of the Year award -- sincerest congratulations to Melissa on this tremendous distinction and for representing our Department so well over the years. Melissa continues to be involved with the Department, participating in the Geography Alumni Association, where she serves as Conference Chair and speaks to classes about City Planning. Outside of her job, Melissa and her husband, David Bailey (UNA B.S.Ed 1996, M.A.Ed 1999) raise their two wonderful children, John David and Olivia. Melissa takes great pride in watching her children compete in athletic competitions and enjoying a nice college football Saturday.

One doesn’t have to look far to see how successful UNA Department of Geography alumni are -- whether they move on to becoming UNA faculty members, achieve high level positions in local government, or securing rewarding private sector jobs, the students that come through our program do big things. Michael Hughes is no exception. During his time with the Department from 1999-2002, Michael played in the Pride of Dixie Band and was a member of the Geography Club. Using the skills he picked up while an undergraduate, Michael moved on to several GIS-related positions: GIS Coordinator for the Elmore County E911 and GIS Programmer/Analyst at the Alabama Department of Transportation in Montgomery. Currently, Michael works as the GIS Manager for the Franklin County GIS Consortium, where he manages GIS data, software, and hardware for a consortium of eighteen local government, public safety, and utility agencies. Michael has also maintained ties with the Department, working with faculty to implement GIS courses with transfer credit at Russellville High School. As a result of his positive impact on the community, the Department, and UNA, Michael was honored as the Alumni of the Year at the 2015 UNAGAA Conference. In his spare time, Michael enjoys recreational aviation, traveling, hunting, and spending time with his wife Shannon, step daughter Emma, step son Seth, and son Joseph.
For Dr. Bill Strong, his passion for geography began at a young age. Even though poor, his father arranged vacations every summer for their family to visit either the mountains of Arkansas or the beaches at Galveston. As a young boy from the piney woods of East Texas, Dr. Strong was fascinated by these places and environments. He recalls his first trip to Mexico City as a freshman at the University of Texas piquing his curiosity to learn about other places and cultures through international travel. While his undergraduate degree was in anthropology, his passion for geography blossomed as a result of his first geography course during his junior year. The instructor taught him how to read physical and cultural landscapes, to read and interpret maps, and to appreciate the diversity of life on the planet. His eyes were opened to a whole new way of thinking and observing -- he was hooked on geography and the rest is history.

Dr. Strong joined UNA in 1972. When he joined the University of North Alabama, geography was a department of four faculty members, minimal resources, and few majors. Geography at UNA and elsewhere was not viewed as a job-creating major. Satellites had been orbiting only a few years, and personal computers and color monitors were years away as computation was still relegated to giant mainframe computers. Only a few Ph.D granting universities were experimenting with analyzing satellite data and geographic information systems (GIS) were in their infancy. With the advent of personal computers in mid-1980, a revolution loomed on the horizon.

After taking short courses on the emerging sciences of remote sensing and GIS at the National Mapping Division of the USGS at the Stennis Space Center and the University of Georgia, Dr. Strong wanted to participate in this revolution. After becoming Department Chair in 1983, he petitioned a reluctant UNA Vice President of Finance to fund his ideas. At first, the Vice President laughed at Dr. Strong’s audacious request for a department with only six majors and three faculty members. Nevertheless, Dr. Strong left his office with $18,000 and the journey to revitalize the Department was underway.

A second revolution in geography, in fact a renaissance in geography education, began around 1985 through efforts by the National Geographic Society (NGS). In 1987, UNA Geography Department became part of the Network of Geographic Alliances. During the past 30 years, NGS provided almost a million dollars of grant money for K-12 geography education. The Alabama Geographic Alliance (AGA) with UNA geographers extended geography content and technology to teachers throughout the state and influenced the inclusion of geography in the K-12 curriculum. Recently, Dr. Lisa Keys-Mathews, coordinator of the AGA, initiated the “Geospatial Semester” to Russellville and Muscle Shoals High Schools.

“My journey through geography, especially at UNA, has been exciting, challenging, and rewarding: exciting because of incredible benefits that geography brings to the table; challenging because of the expanding landscape of geospatial technologies; and rewarding because of our students who are gainfully employed and whose employers remind us of how skilled they are in their jobs! I am very happy to have been a small part of their education in geography at UNA.”

Dr. Strong recognizes that UNA Geography identified the early trends of innovation and change in geospatial technologies, geography education, curriculum development, and potential employment. With the help of friends, mentors, administrators, NGS, and students, the Department has emerged with a legacy of excellence not only in teaching but also in assisting students find employment. As a result of the accomplishments of the Department and his contributions to the discipline of geography, Dr. Strong was awarded the 2015 Distinguished Mentor Award by the National Council for Geography Education and the 2016 AAG Gilbert Grosvenor Geographic Education Honors. Dr. Strong retired from the Department in 2014 after more than 42 years of service.

In addition to his illustrious academic career, Dr. Strong is intimately involved in the World Tang Soo Do Association. Joining World Tang Soo Do over 30 years ago, Dr. Strong has held several administrative positions in the organization, including membership chair, Technical Advisory Committee Chair, and Secretary-General. More recently, he was promoted to the rank of Grandmaster, 8th Degree Black Belt. As Grandmaster, he travels frequently to many U.S. states and several countries of the world to assist with testing, promotions, teaching, and consulting. For the past 23 years, the Department of Geography has been the principal host of the annual Masters’ Clinic and this past year more than 225 Masters and candidates from the USA, Latin America, Europe and Africa traveled to UNA for their annual training. Each year the Masters give a significant donation to the Department of Geography.

High on Dr. Strong’s agenda is the anticipation of his first granddaughter, who is expected on December 9, 2016. She will be the child of his daughter Rita, who is a graduate of the UNA Department of Geography and is employed by Intergraph Governmental Services as a cartographer.
Dr. Pretes Becomes UNAGAA Faculty Representative & Phi Kappa Phi President

Beginning Fall 2016, Dr. Michael Pretes has undertaken the role of the UNAGAA Faculty Representative. In addition, Dr. Pretes was elected President of the Phi Kappa Phi Chapter at UNA. We congratulate Dr. Pretes and wish him luck in working with our wonderful alumni!

Welcome, Dr. Bill Strong!

We are excited to hear your keynote talk, “Geographic Eyes Wide Open on a Life-Long Journey”!

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

William R. Strong, Ph.D., GISP
Professor Emeritus of Geography, University of North Alabama
Dr. Mighty Becomes New GIS Lab Coordinator

Beginning Fall 2016, Dr. Mario Mighty has assumed the role of GIS Lab Coordinator for the Department. The Department thanks Dr. Jonathan Fleming for four years of dedicated service in that role.

The Freddie Wood Geographic Research Center is equipped with the latest geospatial technologies including:

- Esri ArcMap 10.4.2
- Esri ArcGIS Pro
- Esri Business Analyst 2016
- Esri CityEngine 2016
- ERDAS IMAGINE 2016
- TerrSet Geospatial Monitoring and Modeling System
- R Statistics 3.2.1
- SPSS Statistics

Wesleyan Hall Gets a New Look

Wesleyan Hall received a make over during summer 2016 and students can now enjoy a bit of studying and socializing in between classes! It’s become quite the hang-out spot! Thanks to the Office of the Provost and the College of Arts & Sciences for making this happen!

Stay connected!

Department of Geography

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