Contents

Student Involvement and Highlights.................................2-6

Special Mentions.........................................................6-7

Faculty Features and Other Important People.............8-12

Our Programs.............................................................13

Alumni Spotlight..........................................................14

Internship Highlights and Sabbatical Spotlight..........15

Other Notes.................................................................16-17
Since the last time this newsletter was published in fall 2017, a group of 20 has completed a study abroad in Tanzania, 20 students have spent 17 days in the American Mountain West, at least 6 students gained professional work experience through internship opportunities, students have completed a total of 30 faculty-mentored research projects, student research presentations at professional meetings exceeded 40, while more than 20 students participated in a community event or partnered with Alabama Geographic Alliance to promote geography. What do all those activities have in common? Experiential learning! Presenting opportunities for students to develop knowledge, skills, and values from practical experiences outside a traditional classroom setting is nothing new to the department. What’s different this year however, is that the department went the extra step to formally incorporate experiential learning into the curriculum as a requirement for both the Geography and GIS majors. What this means is that to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in Geography or GIS, a student must participate in a class activity where more than 80% of course credit derives from experiential learning. This can be an internship, co-op, Geography capstone project, undergraduate research, domestic field experience, study abroad, independent study, service learning, and other Geography-related professional work experiences. Geography faculty believe that requiring experiential learning as part of our academic programs will give students a chance to reflect on their learning, take initiative, make decisions, be accountable, fail, succeed, learn from mistakes, and creatively immerse themselves in the “messy” world - emotionally, intellectually, and socially.

There are important things in professional life that we can’t teach in the classroom. With an understanding of the diversity and global outlook of the 21st Century workplace where our students are about to enter, the department has made bold moves to prepare them for that reality. Whether it is through recruitment of faculty, staff, and students, curriculum programing, study abroad opportunities, international and domestic research, domestic field experiences, conference travel, or just conversations and interactions in the hallways of Wesleyan Hall, we have created a learning and social environment that exposes students to a global perspective and also cultivates an appreciation for diversity. Just this morning on my way to my 10:00AM class, I spotted six nationalities in the hallway: American, Kenyan, Korean, Chinese, Jamaican, and Indian – all at once – with the mix comprising two females and four males. While this may represent just but a sliver of diversity based on national origin, our perspective and definition of diversity is much broader. Let’s put 2017-2018 year into perspective. Our GIS major and the MS in Geospatial Science are now Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math-designated programs. Through separate applications to Alabama Commission on Higher Education, the department has successfully changed the CIP codes for these two programs. STEM designation has several benefits to our students: Higher consideration for graduates of federal agencies; greater starting salary for graduates by various organizations; Extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT) for foreign Students from one to three years of employment/practical training after completion of the program; higher recognition of grads by the geospatial industry. These are just but a few of the benefits. To respond to the demand for distance learning, the department has also been approved by ACHE to implement the graduate program 100% Online. This will begin in spring 2019 semester.

Student research activity and conference presentation was perhaps one of the greatest highlights for 2017-2018. A total of 22 undergraduate and 18 graduate research paper or poster presentations were made at professional meetings while geography faculty mentored 6 completed MS theses or projects. Notable this year was a 31% increase in conference activity by graduate students compared to 2016-2017 academic year. The papers and posters were presented at 4 major professional meetings and funded from 8 different sources. This does not just happen. It takes vision, investment in time and resources, a dedicated team of faculty mentors and most importantly – highly motivated students.

Other notable accomplishments for 2017-2018 include but are not limited to: a record graduation of 39 students: 19 GIS majors, 15 Geography majors, and 5 MS in Geospatial Science graduate students (excludes summer 2018); seven undergraduate curriculum initiatives; 5 faculty publications and 25 faculty conference presentations and invited talks; 6 completed MS Thesis (includes summer 2018) – with 100% placement and one proceeding to a funded PhD assistantship at Michigan State University; while geography excelled: Dr. Mario Mighty earned Geographic Information Systems Professional (GISP) honors; Dr. Michael Pretes awarded NCGE’s 2018 Higher Education Distinguished Teacher Award; Dr. Lisa Keys-Mathews appointed Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives & Academic Success; and Dr. Francis Koti appointed interim assistant dean in the College of Arts and Sciences for 2017-2018 academic year.

Looking forward into 2018-2019, the department focus will be the implementation of the Online MS program, revision and restructuring of the GIS major and graduate programs to match their STEM designation, expansion of academic offerings, addition of cutting-edge geospatial science initiatives, explore the implementation of graduate certificates, and faculty development. If you haven’t yet, consider connecting with us on Facebook, following us on Twitter and Instagram, and joining our LinkedIn network for the latest and most exciting news about our activities.

Dr. Francis T. Koti
Professor and Chair
UNA Department of Geography Newsletter    Page 1
Master of Science in Geospatial Science

White, Chandler S. Thesis Title: “Phylogeographic Patterns of Invasive Macrophytes in Freshwater communities.” Supervisor: Dr. Jonathan Fleming

Bachelor of Science in Geographic Information Science


Bachelor of Science in Geography

Geography

Bishop, Pamela M. Cook, Campbell D. Gaston, Matthew H. Jackson, Brianna D.

Certificate in GIS

Clemmons, Christian J. Hamm, Brandy M. Hardwick, James M. Nwodu, Cara R. Oliver, Karlie R

Master of Science in Geospatial Science

Akanga, Donald O. Thesis Title: “Analysis of Spatiotemporal Occurrence of Agricultural Drought in Kenya Using MODIS Satellite Data” Supervisor: Dr. Mario Mighty

Green, Tucker M. M.S. Thesis Project Titles: “Sustainability in Desab, Haiti” and “Military and Urban Expansion around Active Military Installations.” Supervisor: Dr. David Brommer

Miller, Randee M. Thesis Title: “Spatial and Temporal Analysis of Hydrilla verticillata Infestation in Pickwick Reservoir, Alabama” Supervisor: Dr. Jonathan Fleming


Bachelor of Science in Geographic Information Science

Alhassan, Fadil W. Benefield, Adam P. Collins, Ashley N. Gilchrist, Payton N. Guthrie, Dewayne J. Hayse, Ryan A. Head, David B. Hean, George K. Johnson, Carrie E. Quiroz, Ramon Rochester, John T. Thomas, Jakob L. Thompson, Deavon R. Willett, Michael A. Willis, Ethan

Bachelor of Science in Geography

Geography

Adkins, James G. Coffey, Jessica A. Grigsby, Joshua N. Netherton, Adam L. Usery, Justin M. Ward, Joshua E.

Certificate in GIS

Adkins, James G. Coffey, Jessica A. Collins, Ashley N. Gilchrist, Payton N. Head, David B. Usery, Justin M. Ward, Joshua E.
Donald graduated from UNA in spring 2018. His research “Analysis of Spatiotemporal Occurrence of Drought in Kenya Using Modis Satellite Data” won cumulative funding of $3200 from different sources on campus, facilitating participation in various conferences including International Cartographic Conference (2017), Kenya Scholars and Studies Association (2017), Southeast Division of American Association of Geographers – where he was a finalist in Graduate Student Paper Competition, and American Association of Geographers (2018). He was initiated into Phi Kappa Phi and emerged as the winner of the PKP Spring 2018 Graduate Photo Contest. He believes that laughter is the best medicine and always finds something to laugh about. Donald interned at Lawrenceburg Utility Systems before joining Michigan State University in fall 2018 where he is a Ph.D. student and Research Assistant at the Ecological Remote Sensing and Modeling (ERSAM) Lab.

Chandler White

Chandler White is a fall 2017 graduate of the department. Whether he was methodically analyzing nucleotide base pairs for his thesis research, helping students of classes in which he served as a teaching assistant, or tweaking the department website, Chandler could always be counted on to be seen around Wesleyan Hall. Chandler’s classroom experience centered on applied geography – his favorite courses included Advanced Quantitative Methods, Advanced Remote Sensing, and Modeling and Analysis in GIS, all taught by Dr. Sunhui Sim. Working under the guidance of Dr. Fleming, Chandler’s research led to the successful defense of his master’s thesis, titled “Phylogenetic Patterns of Invasive Macrophytes in North American Lentic Ecological Communities.” Chandler is currently serving as the lead GIS Technician for the Transportation and Development Department of Clayton County, Georgia.

Dr. Koti serves one-year term as COAS interim assistant dean

During 2017-2018 academic year, Dr. Francis Koti was appointed by Dr. Carmen Burkhalter, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to serve as interim assistant dean along with two others. The appointment was simultaneous with his role as chair of geography. Dr. Koti’s responsibilities in the dean’s office included but were not limited to: college spaces and facilities administration, international programs, online offerings, course scheduling and approvals, and personnel approvals. In this role, Dr. Koti conducted a complete tour of college facilities and spaces for UNA administrators; coordinated complete needs assessment for the Department of Music; oversaw repairs in Art Department building; coordinated creation of Math Department distance learning classroom; coordinated redesign and creation of office and research space for the Department of Psychology and Foreign Languages Department; coordinated the conceptualization and inception of a new initiative to jointly offer 1+2+1 programs with Chinese universities; and increased by 2 the number of 100% Online graduate programs – Math and Geospatial Science. “It was a special honor to be asked to work as part of the dean’s leadership team. I learned a great deal about how the college works. Balancing between college responsibilities and department needs required self-discipline and focus. The experience was very rewarding”, said Dr. Koti.
2018 was the 5th time in seven years the department offered a study abroad program to Tanzania. Directed by Dr. Francis Koti, the program involved 9 UNA students, and 8 from Northern Illinois University; and two other faculty members, Dr. Greg Gaston (UNA) and Dr. Courtney Gallaher (NIU). Three courses were offered as part of the Program but students could earn up to 6 credit hours from either school. The program took place during the 2018 May Intersession May 13 to 30. Learning activities were based in three regions of Tanzania, 1) Kilimanjaro area; City of Dar es Salaam; and 3) Island of Zanzibar. Below are quotes from student experiences.

“… Now that I have ventured outside of my comfort zone, and seen life from a whole different angle, I want to see it all. When I think of the Tanzania trip in 20 years, I want to think of it as the one that started it all.” Ben Eckl (Junior)

“… anyone can sit in a class room, read journal or articles or any form of information…. But the act of being there, being present in this area, is what I would call the epitome of gaining knowledge…” Trevor Gibbons (Senior)

“My sheltered, small town life is not enough to shape me into who I want to become. This trip truly broadened my perspective on how different life is around the world. I have a deeper understanding of Africa: I no longer have "one story." Sarah Mauldin (sophomore)

“My time spent in Africa taught me more about life in the United States than it did about life in Africa.” Austin Mize (Junior)

“Seeing and experiencing the tribal lifestyle and culture is what I had expected… instead, I experienced a nation that has truly faced a rapid increase of globalization.” Peyton Moran (Senior)

“…this trip was the most amazing experience I have ever been on, and makes me want to travel to other regions of the world to learn about different cultures.” Paden Seale (Junior)

“Not only did the trip change me but I also found that I love going somewhere and learning about the culture and history of places.” Colton Williams (Senior)

“…I bought a (Masai) spear that made me really proud... Just seeing it for the first time brought a smile on my face.” Chase Womack (Senior)
HONORS, AWARDS AND STUDY ABROAD

2017 -2018 Most Outstanding Seniors

Jessica Coffey - Geography       Nathan Fiscus - GIS

Jessica Coffey was awarded 2017-2018 Most Outstanding Senior in majoring in Geography while Nathan Fiscus was awarded Most Outstanding Senior majoring in Geographic Information Science (GIS). Jessica has joined graduate school at Western Kentucky University while Nathan is pursuing a second bachelors degree in Computer Information Systems (CIS).

Roshan Mark Singh Matharu Honored

Roshan Mark is known for his perseverance and optimism. His contributions as a Graduate Assistant at the department and in academics toward the field of Geography are notable. For his thesis he is quantifying and mapping areas of Low Food Security in the state of Alabama to help alleviate food waste and hunger. Apart for his love for research in Geography, he wears other hats: he is a musician, a deep-sea diver, and is on the UNA swim team. His accomplishments include presenting research papers at conferences; he was awarded the Daniel Fellowship and interned as a Geospatial Analyst at Sycamore. He was also awarded the Shoals India Endowed Scholarship in 2018 for his research and is the graduate student representative at the geography department. He is looking at pursuing his Ph.D. after he graduates.

Jamaica Study Abroad Announced - 05/13-30, 2019

Join Dr. Mario Mighty in Summer 2019 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

New Drone Course offered

In the spring 2018 semester, Geography students had the opportunity to take an Unmanned Arial systems (UAS) course with Professor Greg Gaston. The drone class consisted of lecture, lab work and field data collection. The overall foundation of the curriculum was based on discovery. Emphasis was placed on understanding: 1) How to operate a drone safely and in accordance with FAA regulations; 2)The development of drone technology and the sensors deployed on them; and 3)Current and possible future uses for drones. During the course, the students were allowed to operate the university owned drones several times including performing a presentation at a university event. Also, a mapping mission was completed over the LaGrange college site in an attempt to ascertain the location of buried structures. A research project was completed using this material.
Whether it’s tailgating, playing intramural volleyball (Go Wesleyan Warriors!), or hiking out at Cane 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**

Elaine Eckl is a December 2018 graduate of the UNA Department of Geography. Her interest in geography began with taking physical geography classes and developed for historical and environmental geography and mapping. Her research focused on tornado warnings and false alarms rates with Dr. David Brommer. During her time in the department she traveled on two field course trips, filled in for the department secretary when called upon and served as vice president and president of the geography club. Elaine is a member of Gamma Theta Upsilon Honor Society and made the Dean’s List multiple times. During her last semester she worked at Muscle Shoals Electric Board as a GIS Intern.

Students receive Phi Kappa Phi Honors

Congratulations to (left to right, front row) Donald Akanga, Jordan Niedzwiecki, Nathan Fiscus, Katie Kelsoe, and (back row) Paul Graham for being inducted into Phi Kappa Phi in Spring 2018!
SPECIAL MENTIONS

GIS Major Peyton Moran wins College 3-Minute Thesis

In April of 2018, Peyton Moran participated in the University of North Alabama’s annual 3-Minute Thesis competition for the Department of Geography, College of Arts and Sciences, and the University. His research was titled “Bicycle Infrastructure Suitability: How GIS Analysis Can Assist the City of Florence in Bicycle Facility Planning.” 3-Minute Thesis is a competition in which students display their academic and research communication skills to a non-expert audience in only three minutes. The presentation involves just one slide, as well as no use of props. Overall, placed 2nd in the Department of Geography, 1st in the College of Arts and Sciences, and highly competitive at the University level.

Girls in STEAM Camp

During the summer of 2018, the UNA Department of Geography and the Alabama Geographic Alliance partnered with Decatur Youth Services to host a STEAM camp for Girls ages 9-13. Dr. Lisa Keys-Matthews and Mrs. Peggy Mighty, Lead Programs Coordinator for Decatur Youth Services, developed a two-week long summer camp that would introduce participants to science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics through interactive methods. Four days were specifically devoted to teaching geographic concepts and technology. Department of Geography graduate student, Abigail Smith was hired to help develop materials for the camp and to teach the camp. She worked with Dr. Lisa Keys-Matthews to develop exercises that teach spatial thinking skills through the use of robots, drones, and ArcGIS Online. Three camps were held during June and July, and 28 campers completed the program. It was a successful program and will serve as a building block for similar programs in the future.

Dr. Michael Pretes Awarded NCGE Honors

Dr. Michael Pretes, Professor of Geography, was recognized with a Distinguished Teacher Award from the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE). The award is for “excellence in geography teaching and leadership at the post-secondary level.” Dr. Pretes received the award (in absentia) at the annual meeting of the NCGE held in Quebec City, Canada, in August 2018.

Geography Faculty and Students in the Community

In spring 2018 semester, UNA Department of Geography faculty and students partnered with Sheffield City School System Gifted Students Program to conduct the 2018 Sheffield Middle School Geomentor Project. In this project, 14 UNA Geography students mentored 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students from the gifted student program to work on a geography-related project under the theme, “Quest for Adventure: Travel Around the World.” The students were assigned topics about cities, States, regions, countries, and other locations around the World to research and publicly present to parents, teachers, and the public supported by their Geomentors from UNA. A total of 52 middle school students participated. On the presentations day on May 8, 2018, Geography faculty member Dr. Michael Pretes gave a talk on careers in Geography and also offered opening remarks.

Girls in STEAM Camp

During the summer of 2018, the UNA Department of Geography and the Alabama Geographic Alliance partnered with Decatur Youth Services to host a STEAM camp for Girls ages 9-13. Dr. Lisa Keys-Matthews and Mrs. Peggy Mighty, Lead Programs Coordinator for Decatur Youth Services, developed a two-week long summer camp that would introduce participants to science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics through interactive methods. Four days were specifically devoted to teaching geographic concepts and technology. Department of Geography graduate student, Abigail Smith was hired to help develop materials for the camp and to teach the camp. She worked with Dr. Lisa Keys-Matthews to develop exercises that teach spatial thinking skills through the use of robots, drones, and ArcGIS Online. Three camps were held during June and July, and 28 campers completed the program. It was a successful program and will serve as a building block for similar programs in the future.
Francis T. Koti, Ph.D., GISP, B.Ed., 1991, Kenyatta University; M.A., 2000, West Virginia University; Ph.D., 2004, West Virginia University

PROFESSOR AND CHAIR

"Drinking from a firehose" is how Dr. Koti describes his 2017-2018 academic year. He likens it to visiting a busy park—so much going on, so much to do, so much to see, so little time, but a great experience at the end of the day." Dr. Koti was asked to serve as the interim assistant dean of the College of Arts and Sciences along with his regular job as chair of Geography just a few weeks before start of classes in fall 2017. Aware of the enormity of the position, sensitive to the needs of his department, but pleased with the honor, he took on the challenge. Juggling between responsibilities in the Dean’s Office, department needs, serving as Secretary of the Southeast Division of the American Association Geographers (SEDAAG), and teaching a full load required staying focused, self-discipline, and proper time management. Between these roles, Dr. Koti still found time to do something near and dear to his heart—mentoring students. Working with graduate student Jordan Niedziewiecki on her MS Thesis projects was particularly rewarding for Dr. Koti as Jordan was going to school while working fulltime in Huntsville, AL. Dr. Koti’s two other students undergraduate James ‘Jimbo’ Adkins and David Head completed their senior capstone projects with honors. What made this experience special is that all of Dr. Koti’s students completed their independent research projects and presented them at conferences. Between jobs, Dr. Koti also found time to serve in Donald Akanga’s MS Thesis committee, lead a faculty search in the department, serve on committees on campus, volunteer as a commissioner with the City of Florence Planning and Community Development Commission, plan events such as the 13th UNA Geography Alumni conference, and conduct research. His research paper investigating water supply mechanisms in peri-urban towns in Kenya was presented at the annual conference of the American Association of Geographers in New Orleans, LA in April 2018. He also contributed a book chapter in a new book “Etiquette and Taboos around the Word.” The highlight of Dr. Koti’s year however, was planning and executing the 2018 Tanzania study abroad program. The 2018 program was complicated by the fact that it was offered jointly with Northern Illinois University. Long story short, all 17 students and three faculty members landed in Tanzania on May 16 ready for an epic adventure.

Dr. David Brommer is a well-known and widely loved member of the UNA family the Department is fortunate to count him as one of our own. As of August, 2018, Dr. Brommer stepped away as Graduate Coordinator for the Department, completing five years in the role of Graduate Coordinator. He also completed his three-year term serving on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. He still serves as Faculty Senator for the Department of Geography, while also taking a role on the Huntsville Initiative Task Force. This group is charged with developing relationships with industry in and around Huntsville to help foster future internship and employment opportunities for our graduates. He also received support from the College of Arts and Sciences as well as Facilities Management to purchase two drones and a variety of imagers for research, academic, and facilities support. These efforts are continuing into the fall, as plans are being made to expand our fleet of unmanned aerial vehicles and to begin some outreach activities with our area schools to provide students with opportunities to see what we do and how geography could fit in their future. Dr. Brommer was also active in undergraduate capstone projects with five graduating seniors, as well as working with graduate students on their thesis and non-thesis projects. On the research front, he has manuscripts in preparation related to decision-making related to tornadoes and assessing the impact of microclimates on human comfort. Overall, he hopes to continue to support the mission of the department through quality, experienced-based learning that prepare our students for the best opportunities in the field!
Dr. Jian Chen, Assistant Professor, is the newest addition to the Department of Geography at UNA. Dr. Chen brings his extensive R&D experiences in Geospatial Industry into Academia. Prior to joining UNA, he was a Research Scientist/GIS Applications Manager at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (UL Lafayette) and the Co-PI of the NSF Center of Excellence – Center for Visual and Decision Informatics (CVDI). Dr. Chen was awarded one of the NSF Industry-Nominated Technology Breakthroughs in 2016 for his innovative work of spatiotemporal hotspots detection and forecasting on Big Data platforms. His research interests include GIS, Big Data Analytics, Spatiotemporal Data Mining, Natural Hazards Modeling and Risk Assessment, Water Resources, Public Health, and Remote Sensing. Dr. Chen is most passionate about doing research with students and helping them grow professionally. In the past year, he published four papers in the areas of big data analytics and water resources; he was the guest speaker at Opioids Healthcare Summit, UL Lafayette and School of Computing, University of South Alabama. Currently, Dr. Chen is working on establishing his own Big Data lab at UNA in order to continue research investigations in this exciting area. He is also helping the Office of International Affairs at UNA to recruit international students through the 1+2+1 initiative. In the current school year, Dr. Chen is teaching Physical Geography - Landforms, Introduction to GIS, Web GIS, Advanced GIS, and Quantitative Methods in Geography. He wants to encourage every student in the department to expand his/her skillsets by experimental learning through solving real-world problems. In his spare time, Dr. Chen enjoys fishing and playing soccer and basketball.

Dr. Greg Gaston is currently on leave. He has been at UNA for 16 years. He is a physical geographer who strongly believes in experiential learning - especially field-based learning and problem-solving. His research focus is physical geography, remote sensing, geomorphology, climatology, GIS, and North America. He has previously worked both as a geographer and geologist. Among his passions while here at UNA has been:
- Domestic field experiences
- Student mentorship
- International field experiences
- Remote sensing and GIS
- Teaching
Dr. Lisa Keys-Mathews has had quite the year of “new beginnings” much of which resulted from a mid-career self-reflection and pondering “what’s next?” To start the academic year 2017-2018 off, Dr. Keys-Mathews received funding from the National Geographic Society’s Committee on Research and Exploration; thus making Dr. Keys-Mathews a National Geographic Explorer—a title that every geographer wants to achieve (https://tinyurl.com/LKM-ExplorerBio). Her funding is different than any other explorer, in that it is to bring the science, research, and advocacy of NatGeo Explorers into the Alabama K-12 classroom by introducing students to exploration through science, geography, history, math, English, and art lessons prepared by teachers. This is only project like this in the country! Dr. Keys-Mathews attend Explorers’ Festival at NatGeo last summer where she was able to meet many of NatGeo’s most prolific explorers who all are interested in her project. Fast forward to September 2018, Dr. Keys-Mathews was selected to present at TEDx Wilson Park, Florence’s first TEDx project (https://tinyurl.com/LKM-TEDxPressRelease). She presented on the importance of teaching children to “think like an explorer” by incorporating creativity, curiosity, teamwork, and problem-solving into all aspects of the curriculum. The presentation was very well-received and has, along with the NatGeo Explorer project, started opening more doors for geography education in Alabama and beyond. The biggest professional change has been Dr. Keys-Mathews’s move to the Office of Enrollment Management. She is the new Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives and Academic Success in a group that includes the offices of Admissions, Registrar, Financial Aid, Diversity, and the University Success Center. Dr. Keys-Mathews is responsible for leading Lean Management processes both within and outside of Enrollment Management, as well as working with each group to increase their data-driven decision-making. She is specifically focused on working with the Admissions and EM team to increase UNA’s Fall 2019 freshmen class by 15%. As it turns out, student recruitment is inherently a geographical problem that answers questions like: Where do our current students come from? How are they described academically? and Where are more like them that we aren’t interacting with yet? Luckily, and most appropriately, Dr. Keys-Mathews’s new office is located one floor above Starbucks in the Wendell Gunn Commons, Room 213. Stop by for a visit when you are on campus!

Dr. Mario Mighty continues to build on his integral roles in the UNA Department of Geography through teaching, research and service. Dr. Mighty introduced a new course, GIS for Business in Fall 2017 and a new 8-week format for the course People, Place and Culture in Spring 2018, providing greater flexibility and course options to students. In July 2018, Dr. Mighty obtained his GISP certification, continuing to raise the profile of the Department. Along with continuing his research on the Jamaican coffee industry, he has begun research collaborations with professors at the University of Kansas and the University of Florida. Over the past year he has presented research at the SEDAAG and AAG annual meetings and secured research grants from the College of Arts and Sciences and the University of North Alabama. Dr. Mighty has also reaped great success in student mentoring: he has mentored research projects that have been presented at university, regional and national conferences. These projects were conducted by undergraduate students Cara Nwodu, Samuel Schafer and Peyton Moran, and graduate students Donald Akanga and Roshan Mark Singh Matharu. In addition, he serves on a number of graduate student committees. Dr. Mighty serves as the GIS Lab Coordinator, managing the operations of the Freddie Wood Geographic Research Center which has transitioned to a cloud-based Virtual Desktop Infrastructure interface. Dr. Mighty currently teaches a study abroad field course to Jamaica as well as the courses People, Place and Culture, GIS for Business Geographic Information Systems, Economic Geography, Business Geography Global Environments and Societies and Fundamentals of Sustainability. Beyond the classroom, Dr. Mighty enjoys spending time with his family, playing badminton, soccer or enjoying a good board game.
Dr. Michael Pretes is a consummate teacher and researcher, with his work in the classroom being nationally-recognized as among the best in the discipline. In 2018, the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) recognized Dr. Pretes for his accomplishments by bestowing upon him the Higher Education Distinguished Teacher Award. Mentoring students is what Dr. Pretes is most passionate about. This past year, Dr. Pretes mentored two undergraduate students, John Crowell and Hayden Wilkes, in their research projects. Dr. Pretes advised John on his project on youth visitors in national parks, which involved field work in Crater Lake and Redwood national parks in Oregon and California. He advised Hayden with his work on tourism geography related to the popular television series Breaking Bad, which involved field work in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Both John and Hayden, together with Dr. Pretes, will present their research at the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers conference in Reno, Nevada, in October, as well as at the SEDAAG conference in Johnson City, Tennessee, in November. In addition to working with students, Dr. Pretes also now serves as the department’s coordinator for graduate studies, and sits on several thesis committees. Over the past year he was a guest speaker at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Kilby School, Florence Audubon Society, Institute for Learning in Retirement, and Belgreen Middle and High School. Dr. Pretes continues his work on the Colorado River explorer Frederick Dellenbaugh and on California and the making of the National Park Service. Currently, he teaches Global Environments and Societies, Geopolitics, History and Philosophy of Geography, Historical Geography, and National Parks and Public Lands. When he is not teaching or conducting research he is usually traveling or hiking.

“We will love only what we understand and we will understand only what we have been taught” from Baba Dioum. Dr. Sunhui Sim uses this quote often in the classroom. Those words represent her love on teaching, research and working with students. Dr. Sim is internationally active in her research. She got invited to speak her sustainability research using GIS and remote sensing at University of Dar es Salaam, Friday, June 1st 2018 and ITC, University of Twente, Tuesday, November 21st 2017. She presented her work on “Tracing Arrival Neighborhoods in South Korea” at East-West Center Conference, Seoul, South Korea, August 23 – August 25, 2018 as well as "comparative study of urban growth and its change in Europe and USA” at International Land Use Symposium 2017, Dresden, Germany, November 1-3, 2017. Notably, Dr. Sim received a 2017-2018 university research grant and 207-2018 Ben H. Craig Professorship award for her work on "slum mapping in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania". Dr. Sim has carried her passion throughout her life, hoping to similarly impress upon her students the importance of being thoughtful members of the world community. Dr. Sim served on the thesis committee of recent graduates, Randee Miller and Donald Akanga and currently chairs Sandor Dibble and Abigail Smith’s theses committee. Dr. Sim is currently collaborating with former graduate students Chandler White, Md Abu Sayed and Jimmy Hilley in research to be published in the coming year. She is a travel scholarship sponsor for the Korea-American Association for Geospatial and Environmental Sciences (KAGES). "Sim Student Travel Award” was established in 2010 to provide financial assistance to graduate students in the research field of geography, geospatial technologies and environmental Sciences. Her personal highlight for Dr. Sim was spending her sabbatical semester in Germany during fall 2017 and staying at home with her family summer 2018. Dr. Sim is looking forward to graduating two master students under her supervision next spring and visiting Kathmandu, Nepal as a volunteer on Women’s Education project next summer.
Department welcomes Ms. Marissa Gatlin!

Marissa is the new Senior Administrative Assistant for the Department of Geography.

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

ADJUNCT FACULTY
Mr. José R. Atencio, III
Mr. Bradley Baker
Ms. Tama Nunnelley
Mr. Robert Nall
Ms Amanda Oakley

RECENT GAMMA THETA UPSILON INDUCTIONES

Fall 2017
- Brianna Jackson
- Hunter Haney
- Christian Clemmons
- Isabella Wilson
- James Hardwick
- Cara Nwodu
- Savannah Watson
- Tucker Green

Spring 2018
- Elaine Eckl
- Nathan Fiscus
- Alexander Gould
- Paul Graham
- Kevin Hean
- Rachel Hill
- Brody Knight
- Peyton Moran
- Randee Miller
- Lacie Rowe
- Morgan Sanders
- Dara Schwind
- Roshan Mark Singh Matharu
- Adrienne Swindle
- Chase Womack

The Graduate Students of the UNA Department of Geography (left to right, front row): Adam Benefield, Jenna Miller, Abbie Smith, Priscilla Lema (left to right, back row): Mark Singh Matharu, Paul Williams, Sándor Dibble, Steve Osoro
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS
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).

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

Students may also pursue one of four GIS certificates offered by the Department:
- General GIS Certificate
- Business GIS Certificate
- Community Development and Planning GIS Certificate
- Environmental GIS Certificate

GRADUATE PROGRAM
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.

MS IN GEOSPATIAL SCIENCE BECOMES STEM DESIGNATED

100% ONLINE!
Starting spring 2019, the Department of Geography will implement the MS in Geospatial Science 100% Online along with the current program. We expect the online component will attract busy professionals needing the flexibility to advance their education.

2 STEM PROGRAMS
Our GIS major and the MS in Geospatial Science are now Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math-designated programs. Through separate applications to Alabama Commission on Higher Education, the department has successfully changed the CIP codes for these two programs. STEM designation has several benefits to our students: Higher consideration for graduates of federal agencies; greater starting salary for graduates by various organizations; Extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT) for foreign Students from one to three years of employment/practical training after completion of the program; higher recognition of grads by the geospatial industry. These are just but a few of the benefits.

GIVE TO UNA GEOGRAPHY

www.una.edu/geography/donate.html

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund Name</th>
<th>These funds support...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography Student Conference Travel Fund</td>
<td>Student travel to conferences, field courses, study abroad as determined by Geography faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Geography Endowed Scholarship</td>
<td>One established annual competitive undergraduate scholarship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mason Matthews - ‘99

Mason Matthews, a 1999 graduate of UNA, never passes on an opportunity to tell people about the impact that UNA and the Department of Geography has had on his life. “UNA is one of the best things to happen to me both professionally and personally. The opportunity to co-op at the Montgomery Water Works Board not only reaffirmed my interest in working with utilities, but more importantly it helped form relationships that are still an important part of my life today.” Upon graduation Mason worked at Utility Automation Integrators (now Trimble Energy), where he was promoted to the position of Manager of the Water Business Unit. He then went on to serve as GIS Manager at Magnolia River Services as that firm first expanded into the geospatial business. Mason has spent the last eleven years at Athens Utilities. In 2012 Mason earned a Master of Engineering degree from UAB. He stays busy serving on the board of directors and as second vice-president of the Alabama Natural Gas Association, vice-president of the UNA Sportsman’s Club, and on the boards of the Athens Rotary Club and Athens Main Street. Mason met his wife Allison at UNA and the couple were married on campus. They love to travel with their three-year-old son, Ben.

Brent & Lauren Sams - ‘09 & ‘10

Brent and Lauren (Kimbrell) Sams graduated from the UNA Department of Geography in 2009 and 2010 respectively. Starting in the fall of 2010, the two began graduate studies in the Geography Department at Virginia Tech. They were married in November 2010, surrounded by other geographers. Upon graduation in 2012, Brent accepted a position as Research Viticulturist at E&J Gallo Winery, the largest winery in the world. His work in understanding spatial variability of vineyards has led to his current doctoral studies at the University of Adelaide in Australia. Lauren also accepted a position at E&J Gallo Winery upon arrival in California, working with hundreds of grape farmers on vineyard logistics. She recently accepted a position at Delicato Family Vineyards, where she is a Business Relationship Manager working with winemakers, vineyard managers, and IT specialists to incorporate new technology into their processes. The couple now live in Lodi, CA, when not travelling, with their two Italian greyhounds, Alistair and Enzo.
**Audrieauna Beatty interns again at Oak Ridge National Labs**

As a summer intern in computational sciences and Geographical Information Science & Technologies Department, Audrieauna researched manufacturers in North Korea by using ArcMap to categorize manufacturers, calculate floor space, population, and digitized buildings. All sources obtained in ArcMap are uploaded to PDT (Population Density Tables database that project members use to upload sources that are needed for research). She also was able to help out in re-designing PDT and was able to help write a paper on funeral practices in North and South Korea that will be later added to PDT.

**Abigail Smith Selected for ESRI Student Assistantship**

This past summer, Abigail Smith was selected for an ESRI Student Assistantship that allows students to attend and work at the 2018 ESRI User Conference in San Diego, California. This highly selective program is open to fourth-year undergraduate and graduate students from around the world. She traveled to San Diego in July and helped ESRI staff with registration, technical workshops, and running the ESRI store. She was the only student in these year’s Student Assistant class from Alabama. The Department of Geography and the College of Arts and Science sponsored her travel.

**John Crowell’s interest in geography was sparked when he watched his sister do her geography homework. He was further inspired in his Global Environments and Societies class with Dr. Pretes and decided to become a GIS major. He is very interested in research and received two UNA Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) grants to conduct field work with Dr. Pretes at four national parks on the Pacific Coast, as well as other research grants for a total of $4800. He has presented his research at the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers conference in Chico, CA, and will present again in Reno, NV. In the summer of 2018, he was a paid intern at LiDAR USA in Hartselle, Alabama. He credits Dr. Pretes for helping him learn and grow in the field of geography. He plans to graduate in spring 2019.**
Dr. Joseph Kerski is a geographer with a focus on the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in education. Dr. Kerski was the President of the National Council for Geographic Education in 2011. He has served as geographers in 4 major sectors of society, including government (with NOAA, the US Census Bureau, and the US Geological Survey), academia (with Sinte Gleska University, the University of Denver, and as MOOC instructor for Penn State University, Elmhurst College, and eNet Learning), private industry (as Education Manager for Esri), and non-profit organizations (with roles in the National Council for Geographic Education, the American Association of Geographers, and others).

ESRI’s Dr. Joseph Kerski in the house!

Every year, the University of North Alabama Geography Alumni Association’s (UNAGAA) Conference serves as an important link between past and current students of the Department. It is more than a collection of presentations — it provides an opportunity for individuals working in every corner of both the academic and professional geospatial spheres to network, share ideas, and experience again the bond of being in Wesleyan Hall. The 2018 UNAGAA Conference will be held October 11-12 at Wesleyan Hall on the beautiful campus of the University of North Alabama. This year, an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) demonstration is scheduled, highlighting the emergence of this technology in our industry.
FREDDIE WOOD GEOGRAPHIC RESEARCH CENTER

Graduate research lab upgrades underway

Geography Department GIS Lab Manager Dr. Mario Mighty has confirmed that plans are underway to upgrade the graduate research lab with the installation of Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI). The upgrade is expected to increase computing resources for advanced GIS and RS processing.

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

- Esri ArcMap 10.6.1
- Esri ArcGIS Pro 2.2
- Esri Business Analyst 2017
- Esri CityEngine 2018
- ERDAS IMAGINE 2018
- TerrSet Geospatial Monitoring and Modeling System
- R Statistics 3.5.1
- Fragstats 4.2
- GRASS GIS 7.4
- QGIS 2.18.24

Dr. Mario Mighty Awarded GISP!

To earn the GISP certification, you must meet a number of criteria as well as pass a comprehensive technical exam. Some of the requirements include:
- Have 4 years equivalent full-time geospatial experience
- Submit a portfolio documenting your education, work experience, and contributions to the discipline
- Take and pass the GISCI Geospatial Core Technical Knowledge Exam.

Dr. Mighty was awarded his GISP in summer 2018. He joins four other Geography faculty in the coveted GISP club.

SOCIAL MEDIA
Stay connected!

Find us at: University of North Alabama Department of Geography

Tweet us: @una_geo #unageo

Search Groups for: University of North Alabama Department of Geography

Follow us: @unageo #unageo

www.una.edu/geography

UNA Department of Geography Newsletter   Page 17
University of North Alabama  
Department of Geography  
One Harrison Plaza  
UNA Box 5064  
Florence, AL  35632-0001  
www.una.edu/geography  

Produced by Dr. Francis Koti and Paul Williams  
Please forward any inquiries to Dr. Francis Koti at ftkoti@una.edu