The Department of Geography at the University of North Alabama (UNA) comprises eight full-time faculty, five adjunct faculty, and one administrative assistant. Our main focus remains the study of places and the relationships between people and their environments. We continue to train students to explore both the physical properties of Earth’s surface and the human societies that spread across it. In order to make that happen, we have assembled state of the art technology housed at the Freddie Wood Geographic Research Center. With student success as our number one goal, our dedicated faculty have designed exciting courses and developed innovative instructional techniques tailored to spark curiosity and creativity among students. We hope to challenge our students to discover their passion and utilize their full potential - earning geographic knowledge and a skill set that sets them apart from their peers.

Between when students declare the Geography major and when they graduate, we make sure they have plenty of opportunities for: GIS internships in the area, research assistantships, graduate assistantships, research opportunities in funded faculty research projects, conference travel and presentation, co-ops, field courses in various parts of the US, study abroad programs, and many other exciting programs.

The 2013-2014 academic year has been a busy one for UNA Geography faculty. During the year, both Dr. Greg Gaston and Dr. Michael Pretes were on faculty development leave. With two faculty members on leave, the remaining faculty stepped up to the plate to make sure that the quality of our course offerings and programs was unaffected. Following the retirement of former department chair Bill Strong, Geography faculty also conducted a successful search and hired a new faculty member Dr. Mario Mighty from Jamaica. We are proud to note that Dr. David Brommer and Dr. Francis Koti were both promoted to the ranks of Associate Professor and Professor respectively. While Dr. Sunhui Sim travelled to Germany to attend a conference, Dr. Jonathan Fleming conducted a GIS training workshop at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

As indicated in other sections of this Newsletter, our students were involved in various activities both in class and outside the classroom. Whether this was field courses to the Mountain West and also Southeastern US, study abroad to Tanzania, tailgating a home football game, whitewater rafting in the Ocoee River, or just ‘overnighting’ in the GIS lab ahead of project deadlines, the goal was the same: enjoying the college experience without compromising excellence in all aspects. The University of North Alabama Geography Alumni conference in October 2013 was a major highlight of our calendar year during which we commissioned the ribbon cutting of the Freddie Wood Geographic Research Center in our department presided over by the late Dr. Freddie Wood himself.

We are pleased to announce that the offices of our department have relocated to the former Dean’s offices in Wesleyan Hall. Please stop by to see us in Wesleyan Hall Suite 109. Space provided in this Newsletter is inadequate for the numerous events, activities, and accomplishments by our faculty and students in the past year. We hope you will visit our website at http://www.una.edu/geography/ to learn more about our academic offerings, new and innovative teaching approaches by our professors, faculty and student research publications and conference presentations, local and international field course offerings, our instructional resources, among other things.

With the support we continue to receive from our College of Arts and Sciences, the University, Geography Alumni, our parents and friends, we believe UNA Geography’s best days lie ahead.

Dr. Francis T. Koti
Professor and Chair
Dr. Francis Koti chairs the Department of Geography and simultaneously fulfills many other roles for the University and for the Shoals community. As professor, Dr. Koti regularly instructs courses including: Physical Geography, Climate; Urban Geography; Urban and Regional Planning; Geographical Thought; GIS; and the Geography of Africa. Under his leadership, the Department has continued its tradition of excellence with the creation of the Geospatial Human Computer Interaction-User Experience (GEOHCI/UX) minor. He also helped create and currently leads the study abroad program to Tanzania. In the community, Dr. Koti serves as an appointed Commissioner in the Florence City Planning Commission and volunteers as an assistant soccer coach. He has also led or participated in many talks and workshops including at the University of Connecticut, Auburn University, and at the annual conference of the AAG. On campus, Dr. Koti served as a Director of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, member of the University Strategic Planning Committee, and faculty advisor of the African Students Organization. His advice—“use every opportunity...to acquire new knowledge”—shows why he has accomplished so much with his dedication to his family, and to the community.

Dr. David Brommer is an associate professor and Coordinator of the Graduate Program for the Department. His research interests concentrate on weather and climatology, meteorology, nature-society interaction, and environmental hazards. He teaches the following courses: Physical Geography, Climate; Meteorology; Environmental Hazards; Nature-Society Interactions; and, among others, Applied Climatology. As Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Brommer facilitates recruitment of potential graduate students, processes applications for admission into the program and funding for graduate assistantships, initially advises first-year students, as well as ensuring that students will be prepared to propose and defend a thesis within the two-year degree track. “Be willing to take risks,” says Dr. Brommer to geography students wishing to succeed, “Be uncomfortable and go out of your comfort zone to look for opportunities.” Dr. Brommer devotes his leisure to spending quality time with his wife, 4 year-old, and newly born child.

Congratulations on baby Eliza!

PROFESSOR AND CHAIR
Francis T. Koti, Ph.D., GISP, B.Ed., 1991, Kenyatta University; M.A., 2000, West Virginia University; Ph.D., 2004, West Virginia University

PROFESSOR EMERITUS
William (Bill) R. Strong, Ph.D., GISP, B.A., 1966, University of Texas; M.A., 1969, University of Texas; Ph.D., 1979, University of Texas

Dr. Bill Strong continues his contribution to the Department through teaching several courses, coordinating the Alabama Geographic Alliance (AGA) since 1987, and jointly with Dr. Keys-Mathews securing a grant of more than $27,500 from the National Geography Education Foundation to support the activities of the AGA. He describes the Department as “a group of dedicated faculty with focused interest on providing the best geography education to our students.” His dedication to UNA is not confined to just the Department of Geography; Dr. Strong is an elected Director on the University of North Alabama Foundation Board of Directors. He is a member of the Association of American Geographers, the National Council for Geography Education, and a Fellow of the Grovesnor Center for Geography Education at Texas State University. If he’s not fulfilling his many departmental or professional roles, Dr. Strong enjoys martial arts (he is one of two Grandmasters of the World Tang Soo Do Association), reading, and traveling. When asked what advice he would give to aspiring geographers, Dr. Strong advises students to “study diligently, practice spatial thinking, and develop a passion for geo-literacy!”

When asked what advice he would give to aspiring geographers in the Department to succeed, Dr. Greg Gaston responded, “Fortune favors the bold.” It’s that “reckless abandon” attitude and his signature bellowing laughter that paints an accurate depiction of Dr. Gaston’s personality and his impact on the Department. Dr. Gaston returns to UNA following his term as Fulbright Scholar at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. He leads courses that are hands-on—Physical Geography, Landforms; Image Analysis and Interpretation; Geomorphology; Field Methods; GIS; along with leading field courses to the US Southwest and West. Recently, Dr. Gaston has completed the following research: “Use of Electrical Resistance Imaging in Locating Burial Sites in N. Alabama”; “The ‘Shale Gale’: What it is and How it Will Reduce the US Trade Deficit and Make Some American Companies More Competitive in World Markets” (published in International Journal of Business and Social Science, March 2014); “Boom and Bust/Energy and Economic Freedom” (published in Mensa Bulletin, June 2014). This year, Dr. Gaston is most looking forward to his son Kit graduating and continuing to scout Italy and Scotland as potential locations for field courses.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
David Brommer, Ph.D., B.S., 2000, Mississippi State University; M.A., 2002, Arizona State University; Ph.D., 2006, Arizona State University

PROFESSOR
Greg Gaston, Ph.D., GISP, B.A., 1981, Wilmington College; M.S., 1990, Oregon State University; Ph.D., 1993, Oregon State University
Dr. Jonathan Fleming will tell you that he has his dream job. As a graduate of the Department in 2006 and subsequent graduate of Mississippi State for his master’s and doctoral degrees, Dr. Fleming returns to the Department as an assistant professor with research interests in fluvial geomorphology, invasive species, GIS, and physical geography. He teaches a variety of courses including: Quantitative Methods; Advanced Geospatial Analysis; Physical Geography, Landforms; GIS; Field Methods; and, among others, Cartography. Dr. Fleming is the voting faculty member on the Student Government Association Budget Oversight committee that allocates funds to student organizations to subsidize the cost of event programming, and he is also the faculty advisor for Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity chapter on campus. Dr. Fleming has various other roles within the Department including Coordinator of the Freddie Wood Geographic Research Center and Geography Club advisor. This summer, Dr. Fleming led two field courses—one jointly with Dr. Koti in Tanzania and another to the Southeast Club advisor. This summer, Dr. Fleming led two field courses—one jointly with Dr. Koti in Tanzania and another to the Southeast United States. If not occupied fulfilling his many responsibilities, Dr. Fleming enjoys gardening, reading, and socializing with friends as his most enjoyable leisure activities. He is currently supervising Jesse Lane and John Tyler Hardin, teaching a course on Geographic Concepts. Dr. Fleming is the voting faculty member on the Student Government Association Budget Oversight committee that allocates funds to student organizations to subsidize the cost of event programming, and he is also the faculty advisor for Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity chapter on campus. Dr. Fleming has various other roles within the Department including Coordinator of the Freddie Wood Geographic Research Center and Geography Club advisor. This summer, Dr. Fleming led two field courses—one jointly with Dr. Koti in Tanzania and another to the Southeast United States. If not occupied fulfilling his many responsibilities, Dr. Fleming can be found fishing in competitive tournaments, hunting, and traveling.

Dr. Lisa Keys-Mathews defines the Department of Geography as “a group of geographers who are each headed in different directions to accomplish the common goal of preparing students for their futures.” She has taken the direction of researching and promoting geographic education in K-12 classrooms and serving as the Director of the Quality Enhancement Plan for the University. Dr. Keys-Mathews, in collaboration with the University of South Carolina, University of Tennessee, and Shippensburg University, is designing a curriculum framework for integrating geospatial technology into K-12 classrooms. Jointly with Dr. Strong, she helped secure a $27,500 grant from the National Geography Education Foundation to support the Alabama Geographic Alliance; additionally- cooperating with National Geographic, Texas State University, and the Association of American Geographers- Dr. Keys-Mathews helped secure a grant from the National Science Foundation to study learning progressions of geographic concepts. Dr. Keys-Mathews and Dr. Strong, supported by graduate students Jesse Lane and John Tyler Hardin, teach a world regional geography/GIS class at Russellville High School through AGA, National Geographic, and state congressional funding.

Dr. Michael Pretes describes the Department as “a great mix of talented professors and students,” and “like a big family,” and he plays a large role in that dynamic. He returns to UNA this year after a faculty development leave in 2013-2014 to the University of Wyoming where he led courses and conducted research. Whether it is his involvement with community organizations such as the live music recruiting organization for the Shoals (On Stage), his role on the editorial board of McGraw-Hill Series on Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism, or his extensive travels and teaching experience, Dr. Pretes is responsible for much of the credibility for the Department’s cultural and human geographical component. His research interests include geography of finance, sovereign wealth funds, national parks, tourism, Polar Regions, Australia and the Pacific, and western North America. Dr. Pretes cites traveling, hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, gardening, reading, and socializing with friends as his most enjoyable leisure activities. He is currently supervising Jesse Lane in his graduate thesis and says that he is looking forward to meeting new students and traveling even more this year.

Dr. Sunhui Sim advises aspiring geographers to “find out what you like and find a good mentor.” Her advice is heeded by her students- Dr. Sim is chair of four master’s committees and serves on three committees, including one external committee. Her expertise and experience is derived from her research interests including urban geography, remote sensing, crime with spatial statistics, and hazards. Dr. Sim’s research on new urbanism communities in Alabama and Florida was published in the International Journal of the Constructed Environment in 2013. She also collaborated on crime research funded by the Department of Justice COPS grant. Dr. Sim’s involvement is not only with the Department—she has also served on the UNA Faculty and Staff Welfare committee since 2011, built partnerships for the Department—she has also served on the UNA Faculty and Staff Welfare committee since 2011, built partnerships for the University with outside communities, is the assistant editor for the International Journal of Geospatial and Environmental Research, and a board member of the Association of Korean American Geographers. Dr. Sim looks forward to graduating the first round of master’s students under her supervision, visiting Brazil for the 2015 International Cartographic Conference, and leading the urban field course to New York City next summer.
The Department of Geography is pleased to welcome Dr. Mario Mighty to UNA and to the Department. “My research focuses on the impacts of globalization of markets on the agricultural sector in small islands,” says Mighty. He also notes that “[he has] been working with the Jamaican coffee industry, seeking to develop strategies that will help them better compete on the international coffee market.” Dr. Mighty contributes his success and achievements in academia to his foundation of faith, and he aspires to guide the Caribbean agricultural industry to utilize geospatial information in decision making. He is teaching World Regional Geography, Economic Geography, and two sections of Human Geography this semester and plans to continue attending and presenting research at AAG and SEDAAG conferences as Assistant Professor. Some of his favorite leisurely activities include exercising his sporting skills in badminton, soccer, and volleyball; reading and playing board games; and community service and outreach through his church. Dr. Mighty looks forward to cultivating his research interests with students and is excited to join the Department as a professional geographer.

Welcome, Dr. Mighty!

Special Thanks to Ms. Pam Bishop

Year after year, Ms. Pam Bishop is the glue that holds together the Department. Whether it is helping a student change his or her major to Geography, looking at an academic transcript to check graduation requirements, filling the endless requests of faculty and students alike, or passing along words of encouragement, Pam plays a critical role in the family dynamic of the Department of Geography. Thank you for your tireless dedication to the faculty and to the students of the Department.

Administrative Assistant

Pam Bishop

Special Mentions

Dr. Koti Leads AAG Workshop at UConn

Dr. Francis Koti, Professor and Chair of the Department of Geography led (with others) the 13th annual Geography Faculty Development Alliance (GFDA) workshop held at the University of Connecticut, Storrs between June 22 and 28, 2014. The GFDA is a project of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) which began in 2002 with funding from the National Science Foundation, to provide early career geographic faculty with professional development opportunities aimed at helping them succeed in their careers. Twenty-seven early career geographic faculty visited Storrs, CT to attend this summer’s workshop. The workshop offered an intensive six-day program on course planning, student assessment, discussion leadership, lecturing skills, field study, and evaluation methodologies. Workshop sessions were also devoted to academic writing and publishing, grant writing, ethics in teaching and research, career planning, and time management. Dr. Koti led sessions on: preparing portfolios; lecturing strategies; job applications; and preparing for tenure review. He also co-led a number of other small-group breakout sessions during the week. Referring to his (Koti’s) involvement, Dr. Ken Foote, former AAG President and Professor and Chair of Geography at UConn and also Workshop Coordinator remarked, “...it is a pleasure to acknowledge the exceptional quality of these sessions as well as the leadership role Francis played throughout the week. His expertise and experience were tremendous assets to the participants and the other leaders. In addition to his role in the GFDA workshop, Francis helped facilitate some of the sessions of the AAG Department Leadership workshop that was held at UConn the same week.” Dr. Koti has already conducted a similar workshop on UNA campus in fall 2014 during the annual conference of the Kenya Scholars and Studies Association (KESSA).

Dr. Francis Koti

Geography hosts Korean Visiting Scholar

Dr. Dong-Ha Lee, an adjunct professor at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, South Korea, joined our department in spring 2014 as a visiting scholar for two years at the invitation of Geography Assistant Professor Dr. Sunhui Sim. The two will work collaboratively in research projects where they will use Geographic Information (GI) for disaster analysis. Dr. Lee received MS and Ph.D degrees in GIS and Geodesy from Sungkyunkwan University (Korea). He has a background in Civil Engineering with a focus on GIS, Geodesy, and disaster research. Dr. Lee is fully funded by a Korean funding agency. We expect that his expertise in GIS and disaster analysis will be a resource for our faculty and students.

Dr. Francis Koti

UNA GEOGRAPHY OFFERS GEOSPATIAL SEMESTER AT RUSSELLVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

The Department of Geography through the activities of the Alabama Geographic Alliance (AGA) is offering Alabama’s first Geospatial Semester course to high school students. Offered as part of UNA’s dual enrollment program, the class is taught on the Russellville High School campus by Professor Emeritus Bill Strong with the help of graduate students Jesse Lane and John Tyler Hardin and AGA Intern Kayleigh Bonee. In addition to introducing a college-level Geography course in a high school environment, the course involves the integration of Geographic Information Systems and Technologies (GIS&Ts) in teaching World Regional Geography (GE 102) — something the Department has not done to this extent. This Geospatial Semester course follows the model that has been implemented at James Madison University, Virginia. The program is funded by the Alabama Geographic Alliance, the Office of Congressman Johnny Mack Morrow, the office of Senator Roger Bedford, and the National Geographic Society — thanks to Dr. Lisa Keys-Mathews and Dr. Bill Strong who have secured the funding to make this possible. This bears testimony to the spirit of innovativeness in our department, our college and the University.

Dr. Francis Koti and Dr. Lisa Keys-Mathews
Neill Jobe is ready for whatever comes his way. His journey from UNA to Senior Vice President at GEO-Jobe is an exemplary success story of a UNA geographer with the desire to apply geospatial thinking and marketing making a splash in the GIS industry. Neill came to UNA on a baseball scholarship after graduating with an Associate’s Degree in Earth Science from Columbia State Community College. He remembers visiting the Department of Geography during a campus visit and meeting Dr. Bill Strong who assured Neill that the Department would be his new home. Like most, Neill spent many a late nights in Wesleyan Hall and appreciated the enthusiasm of the professors that created a challenging but rewarding learning environment. Neill notes that, “After graduation [1997], I left the Geography Program with a set of skills that allowed me to get my foot in the door with several employers. Gaining experience with GIS technology, and coupling that with applied geographic knowledge, certainly prepared me and launched me into the GIS industry ahead of the game.”

Neill had held three GIS positions after graduating from UNA with different municipalities when he decided to launch his own GIS company from his spare bedroom in Nashville, Tennessee. GEO-Jobe GIS Consulting was created in 1999 to provide GIS services to local governments and utilities; in 2002, Neill brought his cousin Richard Duncan on board as a company partner to help grow the company, and in 2009, they sold the company. Today, Neill maintains his enthusiasm for the company he created in his role as Senior Vice President, managing operations and continuing to guide the company to growth and success. His goal for GEO-Jobe is to position the company to become a key research and development group for solutions to global problems.

Neill can’t get enough of UNA Geography. He joined Dr. Koti and Dr. Gaston’s study abroad trip to Tanzania in 2011 and continues progress on a Master of Science in Geospatial Science degree from UNA. Neill says, “I was feeling very burned out on the business side of the GIS industry and found myself asking, ‘why am I even doing this?’” Re-immersing himself in UNA Department of Geography, again thinking critically and spatially, reinvigorated him as a geographer.

Neill stays involved by attending the UNAGAA Conference and continuing communication with the professors via email, phone, Twitter, or Instagram (@neilljobe). He cites traveling the world, photograph, relaxing on his boat, and working on his antique muscle cars as the hobbies that bring him the most joy. It’s that “bring it on” attitude that motivated Neill to start his own company and has fueled his success. So, “bring it on.” Neill is ready.
In keeping with the needs of the GIS Industry and following UNA’s development of interdisciplinary minors in the field of Human Computer Interaction/User Experience (HCI/UX), the Department of Geography has introduced a new minor called Geospatial Human Computer Interaction/User Experience (GEOHCI/UX). GEOHCI/UX is an emerging concept which integrates location-based knowledge, spatial cognition and fundamental aspects of geographic design and representation into the computer-human interaction domain. The need for geospatial information in the marketplace is growing rapidly, and so is the increase in organizations that utilize location-based information. This minor will produce broadly trained geographers with knowledge from other related disciplines that incorporate system development, design and user-experience aspects. GEOHCI/UX is also being offered in other departments in UNA including: Art, Computer Information Systems, English, and Psychology. While the bulk of the coursework will be taken in the home departments, all UNA students pursuing the HCI/UX minor will take the introductory course and senior capstone project together. It is expected that the interdisciplinary minor will broaden students’ perspectives and also enhance their employment chances in the job market. Referring to the HCI/UX initiative, a corporate representative in the Huntsville area who visited UNA remarked, “...we want computer people who are not afraid of people and people who are not afraid of computers.” Since our corporate partners insist they want our ‘best and brightest’, admission to the minor is designed to include a rigorous vetting process. We expect to graduate the first cohort in December 2014.

-Dr. Francis Koti

"How was Africa?" The question so often asked is too simple of a question for such a milestone life experience as is the Tanzania study abroad program. Tanzania is a remarkably beautiful country with endless physical landforms and features not present in the Southeast US—Mount Kilimanjaro, East African Rift Valley, Oldupai Gorge, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, and coral reefs near Zanzibar are just a few notable examples. To study abroad is to commit to unpredictable travel snafus, to diving head first into an unfamiliar culture, to facing and conquering fears. Undoubtedly, the camaraderie among our group grew stronger each day, and we forever share the bond of the 18 days abroad. As did the immortal Dr. David Livingstone, our group too left a part of ourselves in Africa this summer.

story from Robby Thompson

"We are all more similar than we are different." — Dr. Chunsheng Zhang
The 2013-2014 academic year was an active one for the Geography Club. Dr. Jonathan Fleming led hiking excursions to Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve and to the Dismals Canyon. The Club maintained its tailgating presence at the top of Spirit Hill and hosted movie nights in Wesleyan Hall throughout the year.

“Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized.” — Daniel Burnham

Southeast US

In June, Dr. Jonathan Fleming led a field course of the American Southeast journeying in vans from Wesleyan Hall down to the Wetumpka, Alabama impact crater, across to Cumberland Island in Georgia, all the way up Appalachia to Cherokee, North Carolina. Students were required to meticulously document observations and notes from informal lectures into a field notebook, to gather photographs to support their notes, and to author a reflective essay upon return. Beyond the geographical and historical knowledge gained, students learned self-reliance and the importance of planning.

from stories by Avery Dothan and Skyler Kirchner

FIELD COURSES and STUDY ABROAD

I saw a different side of my professors that I otherwise never would have seen, and they’ve gotten more respect from me as a result. These trips teach the geomorphology of landscapes as well as the culture of the region, all being taught by UNA Geography professors. While on the trip, field notebooks are kept up-to-date with notes/sketches, lists of questions are answered, and photos are taken as part of a picture essay assignment. Upon return, a reflective essay is written, recording things learned while in the field. The most significant thing I learned on this trip was all of the information presented about the national parks—the different ways they were formed physically and the ways that they became national parks. One of the more overlooked things acquired on this trip was the knowledge that I could travel anywhere in the country that I wanted to go in only a few days. I now have the knowledge to actually see the physical geography of the landscape and look at what’s going on behind all of the beauty.

story from Kevin Cornelius

"The whole Rocky Mountain area we explored gave us a new view of the Earth as it has been changing through time...this trip opened students’ views of the world and the possibilities it holds.” — from story by Carrie Keener

"Surround yourself with people who are willing to take a chance and constantly challenge you to think.” — Neill Jobe

The second-to-second trip to the American West offered by the Geography Department was an experience I will never forget. I learned many new things that I couldn’t have dreamed of learning inside of a classroom.

I saw a different side of my professors that I otherwise never would have seen, and they’ve gotten more respect from me as a result. These trips teach the geomorphology of landscapes as well as the culture of the region, all being taught by UNA Geography professors. While on the trip, field notebooks are kept up-to-date with notes/sketches, lists of questions are answered, and photos are taken as part of a picture essay assignment. Upon return, a reflective essay is written, recording things learned while in the field. The most significant thing I learned on this trip was all of the information presented about the national parks—the different ways they were formed physically and the ways that they became national parks. One of the more overlooked things acquired on this trip was the knowledge that I could travel anywhere in the country that I wanted to go in only a few days. I now have the knowledge to actually see the physical geography of the landscape and look at what’s going on behind all of the beauty.

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"The whole Rocky Mountain area we explored gave us a new view of the Earth as it has been changing through time...this trip opened students’ views of the world and the possibilities it holds.” — from story by Carrie Keener
GRADUATES

Bachelor of Science in Geography

Geographic Information Science

Matthew Bruce
James Burgess
Brianna Clark
Hunter Daws
Nathan Dumont
Hannah Faulkner
Lauren Hinton
Joshua Holland
Justin Jeffreys
Joshua Lentz
Clay Letson
Chris Marlowe
Jud Mize
Nick Niedzwiecki
Patrick O’Kelley
Darren O’Neal
Nicholas Proctor
Jordan Risener

Master of Science in Geospatial Science

Martin Leavitt
Robert Nall

Gary Robertson
Dan Sasser
Kassie Terry
Jake Tucker
Matthew Walker
Matt Worth

Business Geography
Robby Thompson

General Geography
Trey Alexander
Austin Brass
Gabrielle Jenkins
Lacy Jones
Ethan Lacher
Guy Lambert
Samuel Michaels

Graduate student Craig Martin Leavitt was inducted into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation’s most selective all-discipline academic honor society. Under the mentorship of Dr. David Brommer, Martin presented at the Association of American Geographers national annual conference in Tampa, Florida, in April, 2014. His presentation was titled “Examining Student Severe Weather Behavior During a Hypothetical Tornado Scenario” In spring 2014, Martin submitted and successfully defended his Master’s thesis, “Examining Student Severe Weather Behavior During a Hypothetical Tornado Scenario”, under the direction of Dr. David Brommer. In May 2014, he graduated with a MS in Geospatial Science degree from the Department of Geography’s graduate program at the University of North Alabama.

-Dr. Francis Koti

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Gabrielle Jenkins

Undergraduate student Gabrielle E. Jenkins was awarded the prestigious Distinguished Academic Achievement Award. This honor is awarded by the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost to students in the graduating class with the highest GPA in the entire University – only 7 students received this award in the graduating class of May 2014. In 2013, Gabrielle also won a competitive campus-wide Undergraduate Research Grant from UNA Office of Sponsored Programs. In this research, she used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to create a framework for risk and vulnerability assessment of flooding. Under the mentorship of Dr. Sunhui Sim, Gabrielle presented the findings of her funded research grant at the national annual conference of the Association of American Geographers in April, 2014 in Tampa, Florida. The title of her paper was: Population Evacuation: Assessing Biophysical Risk and Social Vulnerability to Floods. In 2013-2014 academic year, Gabrielle served as a research assistant for Dr. Sim’s funded research grant where they used remote sensing and GIS techniques to analyze crime distributions before and after natural disasters in the US. During the same time, Gabrielle served as a Student Vice President of the UNA Chapter of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation’s most selective all-discipline academic honor society. In summer 2013, Gabrielle was awarded a travel grant by the Phi Kappa Phi national office to attend the Student Vice President National Summit at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA. In 2013, she worked with Dr. Francis Koti to develop and publish an annual Newsletter for the Department of Geography. Gabrielle graduated with a 4.0 (4.0 scale) in May 2014 with a BS in Geography and a minor in International Studies and has been admitted to University of Sydney in Australia where she will pursue a MS degree in Environmental Science.

-Dr. Francis Koti

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Martin Leavitt

Graduate student Craig Martin Leavitt was inducted into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation’s most selective all-discipline academic honor society. Under the mentorship of Dr. David Brommer, Martin presented at the Association of American Geographers national annual conference in Tampa, Florida, in April, 2014. His presentation was titled “Examining Student Severe Weather Behavior During a Hypothetical Tornado Scenario” In spring 2014, Martin submitted and successfully defended his Master’s thesis, “Examining Student Severe Weather Behavior During a Hypothetical Tornado Scenario”, under the direction of Dr. David Brommer. In May 2014, he graduated with a MS in Geospatial Science degree from the Department of Geography’s graduate program at the University of North Alabama.

-Dr. Francis Koti

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Robby Thompson

Undergraduate student Robert B. (Robby) Thompson was awarded the University of North Alabama Hall of Fame Award. Chosen by a faculty-student committee, the Hall of Fame award recognizes no more than four seniors who have fulfilled their academic goals with excellence and have made outstanding contributions to the University through multiple student organizations. This award is given by Office of Student Engagement to graduating seniors who have gone above and beyond to provide service and demonstrate leadership on UNA campus – only 4 students in the 2013/2014 graduating class received this award. Call him a globetrotter, between 2012 and 2014, Robby completed three study abroad programs to Germany, France, and Tanzania. Robby is a member of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation’s most selective all-discipline academic honor society. In 2012, and 2013 was the recipient of the Department of Geography Endowed Scholarship. Robby has been a UNA Navigator, an active member of the Student Government Association, and President of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity. Robby graduated in May 2014 with a BS in Geography. He graduated with highest overall GPA in the Business Geography concentration in the Department of Geography. Since graduation, Robby has been admitted to the Department of Geography graduate program at the University of North Alabama where he is pursuing MS degree in Geospatial Science. He is also the editor of this Newsletter.

-Dr. Francis Koti
Sworn in by Governor Robert J. Bentley in April of 2013, Secretary White retired from Energen Corporation in January of 2013 after 33 years of service. While with Energen he served in numerous capacities including serving as Chief Information Officer and Senior Vice President of Business Development, as well as 10 other various positions.

As part of his duties as Secretary of Information Technology, Mr. White serves on the Super Computer Authority Board, the Geographical Information System Board, and the Homeland Security Council.

Mr. White has been active in the community serving on the boards of over 20 different nonprofit organizations. His is a trustee emeritus and past chair of the National Arthritis Foundation. Secretary White is a graduate from the University of Alabama’s School of Commerce and Business Administration. He is a graduate of Leadership Birmingham and Leadership Alabama. He is a member of The Rotary Club of Birmingham and he serves on the Executive Committee of the Greater Alabama Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Secretary White lives in Vestavia Hills with his wife, Dell, and two sons.

from Alabama Office of Information Technology website

The 2014 University of North Alabama Geography Alumni Association Conference is scheduled for October 2-3 in Wesleyan Hall and the newly constructed Commons Building. The keynote speaker is Brunson White, Alabama Secretary of Information Technology. Other presentations include Keith Cooke from ESRI, roundtables led by Dr. Francis Koti and another led by Dr. Sunhui Sim, Dr. Lisa Keys-Mathews on the GeoMentor program, and student presentations.

The Freddie Wood Geographic Research Center is equipped with HP Compaq 6000 Pro computers complete with ESRI ArcGIS 10.2, ERDAS IMAGINE, IDRISI Selva, and CityEngine 2014.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Brunson White
Alabama Secretary of Information Technology