Thursday, April 24, 2014 - 3:30pm - 5:00pm:

Past/Present/Future: Department of Geography Colloquium

Professor Frank Davis will give a presentation about the UCSB Department of Geography’s meteoric rise from an academic program faced with extinction to an internationally respected Department. Beginning in 1963, the UCSB Geography department was first housed in a WWII Marine bungalow shared with five other departments. Despite its humble beginning, it grew to become one of the largest Geography departments in the United States. Forty years on, the department has 31 faculty, 12 staff, nearly 100 undergraduates, and 75 graduate students, and according to the National Research Council’s last ranking, we are now rated among the top 6 Geography departments in the nation. (To be followed by a Department of Geography Open House)

Thursday, April 24, 2014 - 5:00pm:

Department of Geography Open House

Following the colloquium presentation on the past, present, and future of UCSB Geography, join us for an open house event during which we will showcase some of our achievements and facilities and serve light refreshments. Meet some of our current students, staff, and faculty while walking down the memory lanes of Ellison Hall.

Friday, April 25, 2014 - Start 10:00am:

GAUCHO GeoHunt

Join us for the first ever Gaucho GeoHunt, hosted by the UCSB Department of Geography on the occasion of its 40th anniversary! Starting at Ellison Hall, each team will be given a map and then embark on a campus quest. The Gaucho GeoHunt combines elements from scavenger hunts and geocaching and provides a great excuse to explore our beautiful campus. Using their maps, teams are challenged to navigate to designated points and to then solve riddles that lead to new locations and more riddles! Winners of nifty prizes from local vendors will be selected on the basis of both accuracy and time, so remember the words of Jimmy Buffett: “Without geography, you’re nowhere!”

For more information and to register your team, visit
https://www.facebook.com/events/714412505238144/

Friday, April 25, 2014 - 1:00pm - 4:30pm:

Department of Geography 40th Anniversary Barbecue

Top off your UCSB Gaucho and Geography reunion with an afternoon at historic Stow House. Enjoy games, music, the gorgeous gardens and historic buildings of Rancho La Patera, the adjacent South Coast Railroad Museum, and nearby Lake Los Carneros. This unique and historic gathering place is limited to groups of 200 maximum, so book early! Check out their web site at http://stowhouse.com/ - registration includes a Santa Barbara style BBQ, drinks, a free train ride, a Geography Dept. tote bag, and a t-shirt! Adults $40, Students $20, Children $5 (1-12 years); and for an extra $20 donation, you can sponsor a student. What a deal!

For more information and to register, visit http://allgauchoreunion.com/register
(see page 2 for registration details)
REGISTRATION INFORMATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY’S 40TH ANNIVERSARY BARBECUE

Friday, April 25, 2014 - 1:00pm - 4:30pm:

To register and pay for our 40th Anniversary Barbecue on Friday, April 25th, please go to the UCSB Alumni Association All Gaucho Reunion page: http://allgauchoreunion.com/register

Once at the Reunion registration page, click on “Register Now” in the center. At the top, you should fill in the initial ‘warm-up’ questions, but there is no need to fill in unstarred questions, including your Grad Year and Major if you did not graduate from UCSB, or the Guest Information if you are purchasing event tickets for other people. Below the warm-up questions is the list of individual reunion events you can register for. Friday, April 25th, Geography’s 40th Anniversary Barbecue Event is currently listed 2nd on the list. After you fill that out, click on “Next” to go to the Credit Card Billing page. After you fill that out and click “Next” again, you will end at the Confirmation Page.

SEE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS AT THE BARBECUE!

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UCSB Chancellor Henry Yang sent the following notice to the campus community on January 13, 2014:

Dear Colleagues: In June, I wrote to you about the intention of Executive Vice Chancellor Gene Lucas to retire on December 31, 2013, following 11 years of outstanding leadership as our EVC and a highly distinguished career at UC Santa Barbara spanning nearly four decades. We congratulate Gene on his remarkable achievements and contributions to our academic community, and we wish him and Susan all the best as they embark on a new life adventure together.

Following broad consultation with our Academic Senate and administrative and faculty colleagues, I am pleased to announce that Professor Joel Michaelsen has graciously agreed to serve as our Interim Executive Vice Chancellor, effective Friday, January 17, 2014, pending Presidential approval, until the next EVC is in place.

As a UCSB alumnus and distinguished faculty member since 1982, Professor Michaelsen has lent his wisdom and expertise to help our university in countless ways over the years, including as chair of our Academic Senate from 2006 to 2010 and as department chair of Geography from 1991 to 1997. He is an exemplar of the importance and value of shared governance at UC Santa Barbara and has chaired or served on a broad range of campus committees, including the Chancellor’s Coordinating Committee on Budget Strategy, Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Faculty and Staff Housing, Campus Planning Committee, Design Review Committee, Chancellor’s Campus Sustainability Committee, and many more.

Dr. Michaelsen is a dedicated teacher and mentor and an outstanding researcher, renowned for his expertise in climatology, climate change, and statistics. Within our Department of Geography, he founded the UCSB Climate Hazard Group, which specializes in looking at the climate-related components of food-security in developing nations through the lens of geography.

We greatly appreciate Professor Michaelsen’s long-standing devotion to our campus and his willingness to help ensure a smooth transition by taking on this critical interim role. The search for our next Executive Vice Chancellor is already well underway. Professor Michaelsen is chairing that search advisory committee, and I again extend my sincere thanks to him and to all of our committee members, as listed in my July 8 campus memo announcing the committee’s formation.

Please join me in extending our heartfelt thanks and best wishes to EVC Lucas. Please also join me in welcoming Professor Michaelsen as Interim EVC and thanking him for his willingness to assume the responsibilities of this important leadership position.

Sincerely, Henry T. Yang, Chancellor

Like Father, Like Son: Joel Michaelsen Carries On the Family Tradition

Shelly Leachman, writing for The Current on February 18, posted the following article about Geography Professor Joel Michaelsen who has been named UCSB’s Interim Executive Vice Chancellor - “Like Father, Like Son: UCSB professor Joel Michaelsen named Interim Executive Vice Chancellor, job his dad once held”:

It’s true: the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree. In fact, sometimes the fruit lands exactly where the plant once stood.

Case in point: Joel Michaelsen, professor of geography at UC Santa Barbara, where he was recently named Interim Executive Vice Chancellor. His father, Robert Michaelsen, spent several years as UCSB’s vice chancellor in the 1970s and ‘80s, helping to run the campus from the very same office where he now sits.

The top-floor suite with ocean views is a long way from the cornfields of Iowa that they left behind in 1965, when the elder Michaelsen moved his family cross-country to take a UCSB faculty position — department chair, in fact — in religious studies. Joel Michaelsen had just graduated from high school.

Eager to attend college in California but intent on striking out on his own, the decorated four-sport athlete and former student body president didn’t even apply to UCSB. He instead enrolled in Occidental College, a bit further south, in Los Angeles.

“I had a strong interest in moving away from home, but also, at the time, I thought I wanted to go to a small liberal arts college,” Michaelsen recalled recently. “As it turned out, that was not the ideal setting for me at all. I enjoyed
college a lot more once I came to Santa Barbara. It had a more relaxed, open atmosphere, a larger student body and the quality of education was every bit as good if not better.”

A summer class in what was then only a geography program at UCSB — not a full-fledged department — is what wooed Michaelsen away from Occidental and on to the campus where his father was a distinguished professor and scholar. He never imagined then that he’d end up making a career here.

Graduating in 1969, in the midst of the Vietnam War and the draft, Michaelsen fully expected to be called to serve. Most employers were loath to hire anyone classified as “draftable,” so Michaelsen took a workaday, minimum wage job at a Carpinteria nursery, building greenhouses, planting flowers, installing irrigation systems — and biding his time until he was off to war.

“Eventually they started the lottery for the draft and I got a very high number — very late in the sequence — which meant you weren’t going to get drafted,” Michaelsen said. “I was so fixated on that for years, I wasn’t quite sure how to deal with the fact that I no longer had to worry about the draft. So after being away a year, I came back here to UCSB and entered the teacher training program. I student-taught at Dos Pueblos, back when it was known as ‘Hippie High,’ and got a teaching credential that I didn’t ever use.”

Instead, a part-time job at a local movie theater company grew into a management gig that saw Michaelsen first running a Goleta drive-in (now long-defunct), then rotating between the Granada, Arlington, and other theaters downtown. He was content, he said, but not happy.

“It finally dawned on me that being a student was the one thing I really enjoyed, so after being out of school for five years or so I applied to grad school in geography at Berkeley,” he said. “I thoroughly enjoyed grad school — that’s where I really got into climatology — and when I was almost finished with my dissertation I interviewed at UCSB. I came down with no thought that I’d actually get the job, so I was fairly relaxed about it. To my surprise they offered me the position. I finished my dissertation, filed it and two weeks later I was standing in front of a class teaching.”

It was 1982. Robert Michaelsen was vice chancellor, a role he had ascended to a few years prior, after a stint as chair of the Academic Senate. As a new geography faculty member in his first (and, it would turn out, last) academic position, Joel Michaelsen said, “My father was at the top, I was at the bottom, and almost nobody made the connection.”

Perhaps few people realized the renowned religious studies scholar (Robert) and the newbie professor and climatologist (Joel) were related, but the similarities between father and son soon began to show. The younger Michaelsen became a distinguished academic in his own right, renowned for his expertise in climatology and climate change. He would also go on to chair his home department and the Academic Senate, just as his dad had before him.

And now he’s in the very position his father held before retiring, looking out the same window at the campus that itself became like family. “Being at UCSB, you feel like you’re part of an organization that is making a difference in the world, is improving, is dynamic and attracting great people,” said Joel, who as interim EVC is helming the search for a permanent replacement. “When I retire, it will be the first time in 49 years that there hasn’t been a Michaelsen on the faculty here. This job feels like closing a loop in a sense. And that’s partly why I agreed to do it. UCSB has done a lot for my family. I’ve had a good life here, so it’s nice to be in this position, on my way out, to help with this transition. But if you’d asked me 20 years ago if I was going to end up in here, I’d have said, no way.”
Siegel Assesses Role of Biological Pump in Global Ocean Carbon

Nothing dies of old age in the ocean. Everything gets eaten and all that remains of anything is waste. But that waste is pure gold to oceanographer David Siegel, director of the Earth Research Institute at UC Santa Barbara.

In a study of the ocean’s role in the global carbon cycle, Siegel and his colleagues used those nuggets to their advantage. They incorporated the lifecycle of phytoplankton and zooplankton — small, often microscopic animals at the bottom of the food chain — into a novel mechanistic model for assessing the global ocean carbon export. Their findings appear online in the journal Global Biogeochemical Cycles.

The researchers used satellite observations including determinations of net primary production (NPP) — the net production of organic matter from aqueous carbon dioxide (CO2) by phytoplankton — to drive their food-web-based model. The scientists focused on the ocean’s biological pump, which exports organic carbon from the euphotic zone — the well-lit, upper ocean — through sinking particulate matter, largely from zooplankton feces and aggregates of algae. Once these leave the euphotic zone, sinking into the ocean depths, the carbon can be sequestered for a season or for centuries.

“What we’ve done here is create the first step toward monitoring the strength and efficiency of the biological pump using satellite observations,” said Siegel, who is also a professor of marine science in UCSB’s Department of Geography. “The approach is unique in that previous ways have been empirical without considering the dynamics of the ocean food web.” The space/time patterns created by those empirical approaches are inconsistent with how oceanographers think the oceans should work, he noted.

Carbon is present in the atmosphere and is stored in soils, oceans and the Earth’s crust. Any movement of carbon between — or in the case of the ocean, within — these reservoirs is called a flux. According to the researchers, oceans are a central component in the global carbon cycle through their storage, transport and transformations of carbon constituents.

“Quantifying this carbon flux is critical for predicting the atmosphere’s response to changing climates,” Siegel said. “By analyzing the scattering signals that we got from satellite measurements of the ocean’s color, we were able to develop techniques to calculate how much of the biomass occurs in very large or very small particles.”

Their results predict a mean global carbon export flux of 6 petagrams (Pg) per year. Also known as a gigaton, a petagram is equal to one quadrillion (1015) grams. This is a huge amount, roughly equivalent to the annual global emissions of fossil fuel. At present, fossil fuel combustion represents a flux to the atmosphere of approximately 9 Pg per year.

“It matters how big and small the plankton are, and it matters what the energy flows are in the food web,” Siegel said. “This is so simple. It’s really who eats whom but also having an idea of the biomasses and productivity of each. So we worked out these advanced ways of determining NPP, phytoplankton biomass and the size structure to formulate mass budgets, all derived from satellite data.”

The researchers are taking their model one step further by planning a major field program designed to better understand the states in which the biological pump operates. “Understanding the biological pump is critical,” Siegel concluded. “We need to understand where carbon goes, how much of it goes into the oceanic matter, how that affects the air-sea exchanges of CO2 and what happens to fossil fuel we have emitted from our tailpipes.”

Clarke Validates World’s Oldest Map

In a recent news piece on National Public Radio titled “There She Blew! Volcanic Evidence of the World’s First Map,” UCSB Geography Professor Keith Clarke was selected as the expert to render a final verdict regarding what may be the world’s oldest known map: “A new study of volcanic rocks suggests that an ancient mural may indeed depict an erupting volcano, adding new weight to a theory that this image is a contender for the world’s oldest landscape painting or map. The mural was found at a vast archaeological site in central Turkey known as Catalhoyuk. This Neolithic town goes back 9,000 years and was a huge settlement for a time when people were first transitioning from hunter-gatherer to agricultural societies. Thousands of people lived there in mud-brick houses that were crammed together like honeycombs.

In the 1960s, British archaeologist James Mellaart said one mural showed the eruption of a volcano with two peaks — just like the one that lies about 80 miles away. In the mural, the volcano looms over what looks to be a bird’s-eye view of the settlement’s houses, laid out like a kind of schematic plan. This mural has often been called the world’s oldest known map. The results appear in this week’s issue of the scientific journal PLoS ONE. Keith Clarke, a cartographer at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who has a special interest in the world’s earliest maps, says the work impresses him. “I can’t say with 100 percent certainty,” Clarke says, “but I would believe that the evidence is now in ... favor of it actually being a map.” The mural is from a period that’s thousands of years before other accepted maps. But Clarke thinks ancient humans weren’t as primitive as many believe — and that maps probably go back even farther.”
Don Janelle retired from UCSB and his position as Researcher/Program Director for the Center for Spatial Studies on February 28, 2014, and a reception was held in his honor on the afternoon of the 26th. The following letter of tribute by Professor Emeritus Mike Goodchild was read out at the event:

“It’s hard to believe that I’ve known Don Janelle for almost 45 years—we arrived at the department of geography at the University of Western Ontario (now Western University) within a few months of each other in 1969/70 as young assistant professors. When I left London, Ontario for UC Santa Barbara in 1988, Don and I were still actively writing papers together, but Don was soon consumed by other activities, including chairing the Western department. But in 1999, NSF funded UCSB’s proposal for the Center for Spatially Integrated Social Science (CSISS), and I frantically began searching for a suitable post-doc to run its day-to-day operations. Out of the blue I heard from Don Janelle—could he apply for the position? What a brilliant idea, to come to the job with a career of experience as an academic geographer, a worldwide network of friends and colleagues, and solid administrative credentials. Bringing Don to UCSB was one of the most rewarding events of my career.

CSISS funding lasted for five years, and then morphed into the Center for Spatial Studies, which Don currently calls home. His roles in these centers truly demonstrated Don’s outstanding qualities. He is a meticulous organizer, pinning down the kinds of detail that most of us happily ignore but that leave meeting participants singing a center’s praises. He is unfailingly polite and friendly, qualities to be treasured in a center program director. He is ecumenical, prepared to reach out enthusiastically to any discipline where he sees the potential to spread the word about spatial thinking; and yet incredibly loyal to geography.

Don’s core interests and contributions are well known: transportation geography, human spatial behavior, time and space, and spatial demography. Less well-known, perhaps, are his interests in the discipline itself and in chronicling the work of its leaders. He spent many years compiling and archiving the work of William Warnitz, another colleague who moved to UWO from Harvard in 1971 and was an early leader of the quantitative revolution in geography; and he has collaborated with Wes Dow on his Geographers on Film project. In 1987, Don and I published an analysis of the intellectual structure of the discipline, based on membership in the Specialty Groups of the Association of American Geographers.

Don is always willing to blur the distinctions between social, physical, and academic activities. Hiking, canoeing, or caving with colleagues are part and parcel of Don’s approach to academia, and early-morning hikes are now an established feature of center specialist meetings and workshops.

This is not Don’s first retirement, and it may not be his last. In his eighth decade, he is as energetic as ever, both intellectually and physically. I have cherished the years I have spent working with Don, and I look forward to many more of the same.”

Mike’s intimation about this not being Don’s last retirement is well-founded. In a letter to Don, Chancellor Henry Yang states: “In appreciation of your long-standing service to UC Santa Barbara, I am pleased to award you the title of Researcher Emeritus. This distinction, which is effective March 1, 2014, reflects our admiration and gratitude for the many years you have devoted to UCSB, its students, and the quality of campus life.”

The title of Researcher Emeritus is relatively rare and is reserved for outstanding research contributions, and Don Janelle certainly qualifies. Ironically, Don has never been a UCSB Geography “faculty” member. However, he was on the faculty of the U.S. Air Force Academy for four years and spent 30 years on the faculty of the University of Western Ontario, where he chaired the Department of Geography for five years, served as Assistant Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, and is a Professor Emeritus. For more about Don Janelle, see the December 7, 2010 article, “Dapper Don Janelle, Professor Emeritus.”
THANK YOU, DONORS!

The UCSB Department of Geography would like to thank the following people and institutions for their generous support during the past 12 months:

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“You, as alumni and friends of the Department, have a lot to be proud of. We, in turn, are grateful for your continued involvement with our educational mission.”

Dar Roberts
Chair, UCSB Department of Geography
Would You Like To Donate?

Gifts of support for the Department of Geography at UCSB are deeply appreciated. All gifts, large and small, help us in our mission of teaching and research and promote the study and understanding of planet Earth and its inhabitants.

Gift Options

For the following accounts, please make checks payable to: UC Regents:
- Geography Department Support: Unrestricted support.
- Landon Romano Textbook Scholarship: Landon Romano, 1999 alumnus, established textbook fund to give back to the department that made a positive difference in his career.

For the following accounts, please make checks payable to: UCSB Foundation:
- <Your Name Here> Scholarship Fund: See: http://www.geog.ucsb.edu/about/giving.php
- The Nicholas Bourdakis Memorial Fund: The Bourdakis Fund was established after the tragic death of Nicholas, who died in February 2001 when struck by a car in Isla Vista. He had just declared Geography his major.
- The Jack and Laura Dangermond Fund: Jack Dangermond is the founder of ESRI (1969), a GIS and mapping software company. He is considered one of the most influential people in GIS worldwide.
- The Jack Estes Memorial Fund: Jack Estes was a Geography faculty member for over thirty years. He built a thriving remote sensing research unit and mentored many students.
- The Reginald G. Golledge Distinguished Lecture Fund: Twenty years ago, the Golledge Distinguished Lecture was instituted to bring highly respected speakers to campus to share their research.
- The David Simonett Memorial Fund: David Simonett was the first Chair of the Geography Department. He built what has become one of the nation's finest Geography Departments.
- The Leal Anne Kerry Mertes Scholarship Fund: Named in honor of one of our distinguished alumna, this award supports undergraduate and graduate UCSB students who are planning or are engaged in scientific field research.
- The Samantha C. Ying Gamma Theta Upsilon Scholarship: Named in honor of one of our distinguished alumna, this award supports undergraduate student(s), based on the criteria of academic achievement, compelling family/personal circumstances, and membership in the UCSB Geography Club.

Descriptions of the above gift options & other gift opportunities are found at: http://www.geog.ucsb.edu/giving/

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The number of unaccompanied child migrants from Mexico and Central America caught at the U.S. border is escalating dramatically. According to a December 23, 2013 article by Mother Jones reporter Ian Gordon, “Over the past five years, the number of undocumented children—mostly teens, but some as young as five—arrested crossing the border without parents or guardians has tripled, rising from 8,041 in fiscal year 2008 to 24,481 in fiscal 2012, with a 52 percent increase from 2011 to 2012 alone. Countless others made the trip without getting caught. A major factor in the increase, known simply as ‘the surge’ to government officials and child-welfare advocates, appears to be the rise in gang violence in Central America. The number of Guatemalan, Honduran, and Salvadoran children crossing alone has skyrocketed in recent years, even as the number of Mexican kids has held steady.”

Elizabeth was interviewed about the phenomenon by Ian Gordon, and she is quoted as saying, “What’s alarming is that there’s an increasing number saying they’re fleeing forcible gang recruitment and gang violence. They were being forcibly recruited into the gangs and didn’t want to be a part of it, and so they had to flee because threats had been made on them or their family members.”

Unaccompanied children barely register in the national immigration debate, where most of the talk about youth has focused on the DREAM Act, the proposed legislation that would legalize some undocumented immigrants brought to the country as kids. (It would require five years of residency and a high school diploma, disqualifying most of these more-recent migrants.) Legal-aid groups have pushed reforms such as government-appointed lawyers for unaccompanied children. Many of them, advocates note, actually qualify for asylum or other legal relief, but will never know it because they don’t have legal representation.

Mike Alonzo Wins 2014 Colwell Memorial Fellowship

The American Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) awards the Robert N. Colwell Memorial Fellowship annually in order “to encourage and commend college/university graduate students at the PhD level who display exceptional interest, desire, ability, and aptitude in the field of remote sensing or other related geospatial information technologies, and who have a special interest in developing practical uses of these technologies. The Award is made to a graduate student (PhD level) currently enrolled or intending to enroll in a college or university in the United States or Canada who is pursuing a program of study aimed at starting a professional career where expertise is required in remote sensing or other related geospatial information technologies.”

UCSB Geography graduate student Mike Alonzo is this year’s recipient of the honor which includes a check in the amount of $6,000 and a one-year student or associate membership (new or renewal) in ASPRS. Applicants are chosen on the basis of remote sensing or other related geospatial information technology courses taken; grade point average; work, research, publishing, and teaching experience related to the field; letters of recommendation; and statements of research goals relating to remote sensing, or other related geospatial information technologies and the applications of these technologies for mapping, monitoring and/or assessing land (including coastal) resources and helping solve land resource planning or management issues.

Mike was an outstanding candidate in terms of all the criteria listed above, but he feels that one of his strongest points may have been his publication of an article (with Keely Roth and Dar Roberts) in Remote Sensing Letters and pending publications in other journals relating to classifying trees in an urban area: “This would make Colwell happy because it is quite applied. In this paper we classified 15 common Santa Barbara urban tree species with 86% accuracy using imaging spectroscopy (AVIRIS sensor). In a paper that builds on this paper (Remote Sensing of Environment, in revision) we classify 29 common species with 83% accuracy using fused imaging spectroscopy and lidar data.” Other obvious strong points include Mike’s previous job in urban forestry at the DC non-profit, Casey Trees, and the fact that he helped to found and became the first president of a UCSB student chapter of ASPRS (Shane Grigsby is the current president).
Forest Cannon Takes Third Place for Poster at AMS Annual Meeting

Geography Associate Professor Leila M. Vespoli de Carvalho (Meteorology and Climate Sciences) recently wrote to say that graduate student “Forest Cannon was notified by the American Meteorological Society (AMS) that his poster presented at the 94th Annual Meeting (2-6 February, Atlanta, Georgia) got 3rd place in the climate variation and change category. The annual AMS meeting is the most prestigious conference in meteorology in the U.S., where hundreds of participants present the state-of-the-art in atmospheric sciences.

Forest, who is a 3rd year graduate student in geography, first year PhD, will receive a certificate and a small check for his outstanding work (good enough for a couple of beers, some cheese, or maybe a good bottle of wine :). The most important thing, however, is that he did a great job and demonstrated the potential of our geography students to advance in many disciplines. Forest has been studying the winter westerly disturbances affecting the Western High Asia Mountains. This project has been supported by NASA and NSF grants.”

According to Forest, “The title of the poster was ‘Multi-Annual Variations in Winter Westerly Disturbance Activity Affecting High Mountain Asia: Large-Scale Circulation and Regional Precipitation.’ The basis of the research is to investigate atmospheric conditions leading to extreme snowfall events in the Karakoram and Himalaya Mountains. Once we identified the mechanisms responsible, we explored how these systems have changed over the past few decades and how they are connected to global modes of atmospheric variability. Through this, we hope to better understand the hydrologic cycle of High Mountain Asia.”

Grant McKenzie Furthers Sustainable Development

Geography grad student Grant McKenzie works part time for a company called “Spatial Development International,” based in Seattle, Washington (he was formerly full time and a founding member). “SpatialDev” is a group of creative consultants supporting sustainable development through spatial technology: “We help our clients by putting maps and location-aware databases in place to make their work more efficient and effective. We hold an agnostic view of the tools we employ, letting our clients’ requirements drive technology selection. Our goal is to deliver information systems that make sense for our clients and support their effort to make a difference.”

According to a blog titled “A Web Mapping Solution for Resource-constrained NGOs,” “NGOs are often on the front lines of service and innovation for international development. Operating as not-for-profit entities dependent on the largess of donors, they are natural economizers and that often means they forego investments in tech tools like GIS, mobile, and web solutions. The ESRI non-profit program is going to shepherd in a significant expansion in the use of GIS in international development. The cost barrier has been removed, but it will be some time before the human capital gets to the point where it can fully exploit the new tools available. SpatialDev recently had the opportunity to collaborate with a project designed to raise awareness of land tenure issues as they relate to people living in extreme poverty. The project wanted a series of maps that helped to tell the story of how natural endowments of the land, climate, and land use provide context to the discussion if land rights.” (source).

This week, a project that they’ve been working on in conjunction with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was the subject of a brief article in Wired Magazine, “5 Maps That Could Help Solve Some of the world’s Most Daunting Problems”: “Before households can rise out of poverty, they need access to financial tools: the basic banking, payment, credit, and insurance services that Westerners take for granted. So in January, the Gates Foundation’s Financial Services for the Poor program launched an ambitious geospatial project in Nigeria. 30 surveyors undertook a three-month campaign in Nigeria to pinpoint all of the services available—from bank branches to microfinance institutions to post offices and more. They logged GPS coordinates and took photos. (The program had to rescue one surveyor from the police after he aroused suspicion at a bank.)
Kirk Goldsberry Defends Geography Education

A recent opinion piece by Kirk Goldsberry (PhD 2007), visiting scholar at Harvard University, gained a good deal of attention because it advocated for a return of a geography department to that august institution. Sensors & Systems (S&S) special correspondent Matteo Luccio spoke with Goldsberry about his background, about the need to reveal spatial patterns, and about the importance of geography and got this reply: “I don’t know what motivates most college students to study geography. I’ve seen many types of students pass through geography courses. It is depressing that most people like myself find geography by accident. I think that’s partly because it’s not thought of as a major major, if you will, in American universities, and that might be in part because it’s not in the high school curriculum anymore. Once college students understand what geography actually is as a discipline and what it can be applied to as a reasoning process, they are at least motivated to get to know geography a little more, whether they want to major in it or not. Once students realize that geography can help you understand everything from climate change, to electoral distribution, to redistricting, to urban planning and public health, that’s when we see the motivation. That’s when you get that “Aha!” moment. Geography professors and administrators at universities need to do a better job of getting the word out there, and that’s not easy. I’m not saying that I could do it better, but I do think that’s what the challenge is.”

When asked, “What is your best argument as to why Harvard, or any university, should have a geography department?” Goldsberry replied: “Every university should have a geography department because thinking spatially, reasoning spatially, quantifying things spatially, and communicating things spatially are ridiculously vital in the “big data” era. There are many disciplines that can help you learn to do some of that, but I believe in my heart that geography has a huge seat at that table. I haven’t encountered any other departments at any university where our kind of emphasis on spatial reasoning is nearly as strong, and so as we race headlong into the big data era and all these things have huge spatial components, I think there’s an easy argument to make about why we need these students to have geographic education. Put another way, what is your best argument as to why these departments should not exist?”

Kyle Cavanaugh Quoted in the New York Times

“Much of the Florida shoreline was once too cold for the tropical trees called mangroves, but the plants are now spreading northward at a rapid clip, scientists reported Monday. That finding is the latest indication that global warming, though still in its early stages, is already leading to ecological changes so large they can be seen from space” (New York Times Science article, December 30, 2013).

According to the EurekAlert! public release from Brown University, “Mangroves expand north as Florida freezes decline.” “Mangrove forests have been expanding northward along the Atlantic coast of Florida for the last few decades not because of a general warming trend, but likely because cold snaps there are becoming a thing of the past. That surprising finding, reported by a team of ecologists the week of Dec. 30 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, provides a new and unique illustration of the speed and scale on which alterations in climate extremes have affected crucial ecosystems.

Going back 28 years, as the study based on a sophisticated analysis of satellite imagery does, a resident of Palm Coast could have encountered some mangrove forest, but the size of those forests would now be about 100 percent greater according to the researchers’ measurements of the coastal area mangroves now occupy. “Before this work there had been some scattered anecdotal accounts and observations of mangroves appearing in areas where people had not seen them, but they were very local,” said study lead author Kyle Cavanaugh (PhD 2011), a postdoctoral researcher at Brown University and at the Smithsonian Institution. “One unique aspect of this work is that we were able to use this incredible time series of large scale satellite imagery to show that this expansion is a regional phenomenon. It’s a very large scale change.”

“The expansion isn’t happening in a vacuum,” Cavanaugh said. “The mangroves are expanding into and invading salt marsh, which also provides an important habitat for a variety of species.” The next question is to understand how these changes affect the lives and interactions of the species in each ecosystem. “There’s an enormous amount of uncertainty as to what these changes mean for the food webs,” Cavanaugh said. For now, what’s apparent is that changes that are well underway in Florida’s climate have seemingly led to significant changes along hundreds of miles of coastline.”
Kate Deutsch-Burgner Wins AAG Grad Dissertation Award

The Chair of the Transportation Geography Specialty Group of the AAG recently announced award winners for 2014, and alumna Kathleen E. Deutsch-Burgner took honors for her PhD student dissertation:

“Like last year, we had a number of high-quality nominations/applications, and they were difficult to distinguish. The TGSG board members carefully evaluated each nomination, and the following individuals are awarded in the upcoming AAG conference in Tampa, Florida:

The Ph.D. student dissertation award ended in a tie between Kathleen E. Deutsch-Burgner (PhD 2013) of the University of California, Santa Barbara and Abu Toasin Md Oakil of Utrecht University, the Netherlands, and both will be receiving the award in the upcoming AAG conference. Kathleen’s dissertation, titled “An Investigation in Decision Making and Destination Choice Incorporating Place Meaning and Social Network Influences,” was supervised by Konstadinos G. Goulias. Abu’s dissertation, titled “Temporal Dependence in Life Trajectories and Mobility Decisions,” was supervised by Dr. Dick Ettema and Dr. Theo Arentze.

Kate recently started her own company in Santa Barbara, called Data Perspectives Consulting. Regarding her award, Kate graciously commented: “I’m honored that the work in my dissertation was selected to receive the TGSG PhD award. I’m really thankful for all the people and conversations that propelled me along the way in my dissertation work, especially the Geotrans members and my committee members Kostas, Stuart, Martin, Kouros (University of Illinois, Chicago), and Antonio (McMaster University). Receiving this award is like putting a capstone on a great time spent in the Geography department at UCSB!”

Lisa Berry (BA 2012) Reflects On Life At UCSB

“Life after UCSB: Not as Bad as I Thought It Would Be”

Going to school at a beautiful college such as UCSB made going anywhere else difficult. The idea of moving from Isla Vista to anywhere else sent shockwaves through my system and left me with many questions. What kind of help would I get? Would the people be as nice? What on earth would I do with my degree? And most importantly, would the weather be as amazing?

Graduate school is not meant for everyone and is not guaranteed to land you a dream job, but I can personally say that it was the single most important choice I made towards my career in GIS. Attending University of Redlands threw me into a world that was very unfamiliar to me. Small classes, 7 week terms (with no breaks in between), moving back into university housing, and dealing with only 4 professors. This was a major jump from the UCSB setting. But it also taught me a plethora of lessons I now consider every single day. Just to name a few: Meeting a client, collaborating schedules with a project manager, communicating cordially with difficult people, communicating your issues or needs, and creating a professional image for yourself.

The program not only taught me how to act professionally, but it obviously taught me a whole new technical skillset for GIS use as well. We had adjunct professors who worked at Esri, we attended colloquiums regarding the newest applications of GIS, we took Esri-led trainings, and we were constantly challenged by the faculty. Overall, the experience taught me personal, professional, and technical skills that will always stick with me.

Ultimately, my experience helped me network and communicate to a point where I was introduced to the hiring manager for Esri. Once a connection was created, I was bounced around until they found a position to match my skillset as well as my interests. I have only been working at Esri for six weeks now, but if this is what being a “real world adult” is like, then I don’t mind at all. I pick my hours, grab a beer with my boss after work, and honestly love coming to work each day. I love making maps, and now I get paid to do it!
In a recent email to all Geography graduate students, José Saleta, our Student Programs Manager, commented: “As some of you have heard, I have accepted a new job at the Santa Barbara Unified School District. It is a great opportunity for me, and I am very excited about my new job, but I have mixed feelings, as I also enjoy very much my job here in the Geography department. At the end, I have decided to move on. I expect my last day in Geography to be next Friday, January 17. At the risk of sounding corny, I want to express what a pleasure it has been for me to have gotten to know and work with all of you. You are an exceptional group of people, and you’ve made my job in Geography really enjoyable. Thank you!!!”

Originally from Madrid, Spain, José came to Santa Barbara and the Department in 1990 as a graduate student after earning a degree in Forestry at the Polytechnic University of Madrid. He married a UCSB PhD grad student in Anthropology and graduated with an MA in Geography in 1995, having specialized in remote sensing for natural resource management. He then returned to Spain where he taught GIS, remote sensing, and surveying at the Public University of Navarre in Pamplona for four years. José and his wife returned to Santa Barbara in 2000, became naturalized US citizens, and then had their second son. An avid potter in his graduate years, José says his only hobbies now are his children, Pablo and Oscar.

José worked as a development engineer at the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management’s microscopy facility for several years before taking a staff position in Geography as an Administrative Assistant to Geography Professor Reg Golledge in August of 2006. He became the Student Programs Manager for the Department of Geography in 2009, and he has taught several introductory Geography classes since that time, making him, literally and figuratively, a maestro de la geografía—at least insofar as “maestro” means both master and teacher in Spanish. We will miss him.