FALL 2021 ISSUE NO. 3

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THE SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Congratulations to Dr. Pan on his promotion!

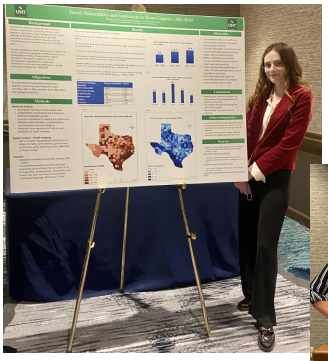
A MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

BY STEVE WOLVERTON

First, congratulations to Dr. Feifei Pan on his promotion to Full Professor! And second, welcome back! We've been fully back on campus since September, and the energy is palpable. Prior to the semester we received the news that Dr. Chetan Tiwari would be joining Georgia State University (congrats to Chetan!), which means that we've had several growth opportunities this year with new educators coming on board. We'll be searching for a new faculty member to fill Chetan's shoes this spring. Chetan will always be part of UNT Geography, and we wish him tremendous success (read more here!). In addition to this substantial change in our faculty and to being back on campus, several new programs launched this fall, including our new Bachelor's degree in GIS + Computer Science, as well as three new certificates (Water Resources, Health & Medical Geography, and Applied Geospatial Analytics). Check out our website (geography.unt.edu) for details. From our world to yours, we wish you the best at the close of 2021.

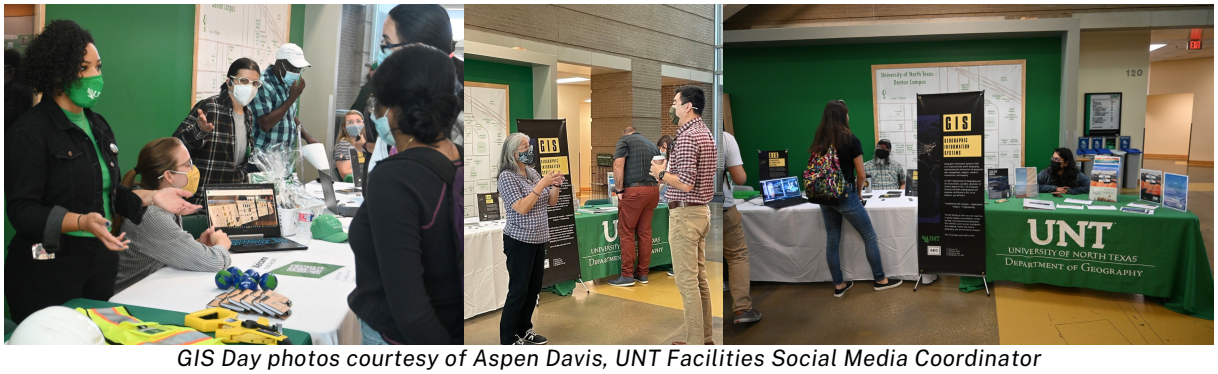
Steve

PROGRAM NEWS



In October, UNT Geography students and faculty went to the **2021 SWAAG Annual Meeting** in Oklahoma City and represented well! Madeline Crawford *(1st picture on the right)*, a senior working on her BS in Geography, won first place in the Undergrad Poster Competition, with her topic of "Social Vulnerability and Septicemia in Texas Counties 1980-2019". In addition, Ashley Green *(2nd picture)*, a senior BA in Geography student, won third place with her poster "Vernacular Rephotography of Texas Parks: Everyday Exploration of Place, Past & Present". Two of our graduate students *(3rd picture)* took the top two places in the Graduate Paper Competition. Kate Lester (current PhD student in Environmental Science, MS in Applied Geography, 2014) won first place with her paper "From Rural Penalty to Suburban Resilience: Untangling the Geography of Suicide Mortality, Urbanization, and Race/Ethnicity". Zach Tabor (current research master's student) won second place with his paper "Big Game, Big Decisions, and Big Government: Identifying Chronic Wasting Disease and Feral Hog Management Strategies". To cap it off, our students (aka the Mean Green Guessers) participated in the World Geography Bowl and took home the trophy, with Richard Kirk (research master's student) receiving 3rd place as an individual winner!

November 17 brought **GIS Day** back to UNT as a hybrid event. Thanks to a great partnership with UNT Facilities and Megan Smith, Facilities GIS Specialist, we had an online presence through an ArcGIS website (featuring how GIS is used on campus as well as student story map projects) and in-person participation in the EESAT building. Undergraduate Geography student Ronney Phillips won the best story map project for his work on building a low-cost air quality sensor network, with the assistance of Dr. Lu Liang. We're already looking forward to next year's event!



GIS Day photos courtesy of Aspen Davis, UNT Facilities Social Media Coordinator

CROSSCURRENTS

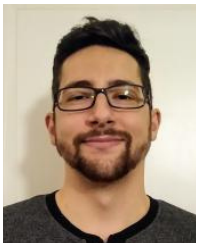
This Fall 2021 semester kicked off another Crosscurrents Seminar Series, with a total of 6 speakers, and focused on "Hazards, Vulnerability, and Geography", hosted by Dr. Joseph Oppong and Dr. Harry Williams. A special thanks to our guests for sharing their knowledge and expertise to our department!

Dr. Elyse Zavar (Assistant Professor, UNT Emergency Management & Disaster Science) spoke on Sep. 10 about "Managing Hazard Risk through Relocation: Stakeholder Perspectives on Buyouts". She covered the challenges of buyout program implementation and resident outcomes. Using several case studies, she also critically examined the long-term experiences of buyout communities through both resident and government official perspectives in an effort to improve these complex yet increasingly popular programs.

Dr. Sara Hamideh (Assistant Professor of Coastal Resilience, Stony Brook University) was our guest speaker on Sep. 24. Her topic was on "Post-Disaster Housing Recovery: Disparities and Trajectories" and she presented research on long-term recovery trajectories after Hurricane Ike (2008) in Galveston, Texas using parcel level data for multifamily, single-family, and duplexes over an eight-year period.

Dr. Laura Siebeneck (Associate Professor, UNT Emergency Management & Disaster Science) spoke on Oct. 8, with her topic of "Returning Home: Experiences of Households in the Aftermath of Hurricanes Sandy and Harvey". She spoke about the need for better understanding of how to facilitate the safe and efficient return of residents back to disaster-impacted communities. She shared an overview of the return-entry process and findings from recent research examining the experiences of returnees.

On Oct. 21 **Dr. Michael Desjardins**, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Spatial Science for Public Health Center at Johns Hopkins University, gave a seminar on his topic "Spatiotemporal Surveillance of COVID-19: Successes and Lessons Learned for Infectious Disease Mitigation". He provided examples of spatiotemporal COVID-19 case surveillance, a mobile syndromic surveillance application, and geovisualization techniques, and discussed the role of geography in infectious disease mitigation, and the impact on other endemic infectious diseases with both similar and different transmission pathways.



Dr. Brian Richardson (Associate Professor, UNT Communication Studies) spoke on Nov. 5 and his topic was "Surviving Ike's Surge: Lessons from a Small Town's Recovery from the 2008 Hurricane". He talked about his research into the apparent successful recovery of Downey, a small town in Texas, following Ike's devastation and about his study's emphasis on theoretical and practical implications of disaster recovery from a communication standpoint.

Dr. Mei-Po Kwan (Professor, Geography & Resource Management at the Chinese University of Hong Kong) was our final speaker on Nov. 12. Her topic was "Uncertainties in the Geospatial Analysis of COVID-19 Risk and Geoprivacy Issues of COVID-19 Control Measures". She discussed the spatiotemporal human big data and its studies on the pandemic. She also highlighted the importance of geographic context and culture in shaping people's privacy concerns for and acceptance of various COVID-19 control measures that use private location information.

DEPARTMENT FACULTY UPDATES

Dr. Lu Liang's lab received several awards to support monitoring, mapping, and modeling research. One NSF grant was awarded to investigate the effects of urban pollution on the thermal environments of cities. A USGS grant was recently received to integrate state-of-the-art deep learning algorithms and fine-resolution aerial imagery to map different irrigation practice types on agricultural landscapes. She published five journal articles in Fall 2021 (one student-led, one sole-author, one first-author, and two prestigious *Lancet* Commission papers). Her Intro GIS class has become robust, with over 100 students each semester. One major course development is the transition to ArcGIS Pro, which will better prepare students for an evolving job market. Most proudly, Dr. Liang has met and worked with some amazing UNT undergraduate students *(see picture on the right, with undergrad Ronney Phillips)* and graduate students from Geography and other departments.

In Fall 2021, **Dr. Yuting Li** brought in a new class, Oceanography, that is a combined section with both undergraduate and graduate students. She enjoyed interacting with students of different backgrounds and discussing a variety of oceanic and societal topics. Students had opportunities to comment and write on many interesting fields including Ocean Acidification, Global Climate Change, Great Pacific Garbage Patch, El Niño, Water Energy, etc. Students also held a final debate event at the end of the semester that dug deeper into some topics that they chose based on their interests and independent research. Dr. Li is impressed with the high-quality collaborative work and critical thinking that students showed in this new oceanography class. She also taught three sections of physical geology and worked as the new lab coordinator for GEOL 1610. Another new challenge for her was to take the role of undergraduate advisor in our department.

Dr. Lisa Nagaoka recently published a book chapter in a volume called Effective Approaches to Human Ecology Education that describes the pedagogy behind projects she uses in GEOG 3240 Applied Biogeography. She is a co-PI on an interdisciplinary NSF grant submission led by Dr. Wolverton that will use ancient DNA to document changes in small game populations to determine if they were harvested sustainably. She also received a UNT mentoring grant to develop workshops for faculty to incorporate data analytics techniques into their courses. She continues to coordinate the GEOG 1710 labs and work on departmental curricula as the chair of the Undergraduate Committee.

Dr. Reid Ferring assumed the chair of the Graduate Committee this fall, and has been working with Drs. Liang, Fry and Rice on improving our application and evaluation procedures as well as promoting the program at other departments and universities. He participated in the International Field School for Dmanisi this summer, giving lectures on the geology, archaeology, and occupation patterns of the site. He is currently revising a manuscript on the geology of the Dmanisi site that was reviewed by the *Journal of Human Evolution*. Dr. Ferring is also preparing for his last semester of teaching, and is working with a biology student doing soils analysis. On November 21st he gave an invited lecture at the Ft. Worth Public Library on the prehistory and native cultures of North Texas.

Dr. Murray Rice has had a busy year serving as Executive Director of the Applied Geography Conference (AGC). The last 12 months have been especially challenging as the AGC board has been assessing its position and role in contributing to the advancement of geography as a whole. Following from this assessment process, Dr. Rice led the AGC board in initiating a rebranding to become the "AGX", simultaneously expanding its mission beyond a focus on an annual conference to undertake outreach efforts throughout the year. He introduced the AGX rebranding and repositioning to the geography community at the final "AGC" conference in Fall 2021. Beyond his AGX role, Dr. Rice maintained an active research program in conjunction with several former and current UNT Geography students, with new publications anticipated in 2022.

Dr. Matthew Fry worked on several collaborative research projects in 2021. He is a co-author on research examining natural gas contracts in Mexico, which is under review in *Geoforum*. A second project was funded by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and examines municipal landscape policies in DFW. A third project titled 'The Geo-imaginaries of Potential in Mexico's Burgos Basin' was published in October in *Political Geography*. A fourth project was published in *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* and came out of research conducted in the Ecosystem Geography Lab, which was part of a long-term examination of bird feathers as biomonitors. His other collaboration was a UNT-Mentor Grant that took him and several UNT students and colleagues to parks and towns around North Texas, including Mineral Wells, LBJ Grasslands, and the Johnson Branch Unit at Ray Roberts Lake. Dr. Fry also began working with three new graduate students – Kaitlin Stewart, Marissa Greer and Ben Lyke – in addition to continuing projects with Zach Tabor and undergraduate Ashley Green. Most of them presented their proposed research or preliminary findings at the SWAAG meeting in Oklahoma City. For 2022, he's looking forward to offering the 'Texas Parks Field School' during the Maymester, starting up face-to-face field trips again in his 'Our Energy Futures' class, continuing research on urban environmental policies and oil and gas geography in Texas, and working with a great group of student researchers.

Dr. Steve Wolverton taught Research Design and Geographic Applications (GEOG 5800) this fall with another cohort of excellent graduate students. In addition, he continues to work with graduate student researchers with a broad range of interests in geography and environmental science. Dr. Wolverton continues to enjoy collaborations with researchers on zooarchaeology in Argentina and on historical ecology in the Mesa Verde region of the southwestern United States. Several former students are gaining traction in their careers with The Nature Conservancy, Integrated Environmental Solutions, and in academic job searches and postdoctoral research positions (you all know who you are, so congrats! You make us proud.). Dr. Wolverton is wrapping up 2021 with an NSF grant proposal on small game hunting in northwestern Patagonia during the late Holocene and by working on a paper integrating historical ecology and environmental justice.

Dr. Pinliang Dong was invited by The Third Millennium Institute in Iran to give a 45-minute presentation on "LiDAR Remote Sensing and Applications" on GIS Day 2021. In his presentation, Dr. Dong introduced LiDAR principles, data processing methods, and applications in forestry, urban environments, and geosciences. This semester, Dr. Dong taught two courses: GEOG 4525/5525 "LiDAR Data Analysis in GIS" and GEOG 3760 "Geography of China: Environment and Society". Dr. Dong's "Geography of China" covers a variety of topics on China, including history, physical geography, natural resources, population, agriculture, economic geography, urban geography, environmental challenges, transportation, e-commerce, food culture, coastal regions, and peripheral regions.

Spring and Fall 2021 were productive semesters for the Ecosystem Geography Lab, headed by **Dr. Alexandra Ponette-González**. Three undergraduate lab members presented research at UNT Scholar's Day in the spring and at SWAAG in the fall. As part of the Hazy Views over U.S. Public Lands mentoring grant, Savannah Thomas and Cody Kimpton co-presented their research on COVID-19 impacts on US National Park Visitation Trends in 2020. As part of a UNT Seed Research Grant, Roman Rangel presented a poster on integrating tools to assess wildfire smoke influence on atmospheric nutrient deposition. Lab alumnus Katherina Kang presented her M.S. thesis research on soil black carbon storage at the annual AAG meeting and began a new position as Education Director at Groundwork Dallas. Thomas Williamson and Jennifer Ellis *(pictured on the left, working in the lab)* both defended their theses and received their M.S. degree in geography. Alexandra was appointed to the US EPA Clean Air Scientific Advisory Board and elected to the American Association of Geographers (AAG) Honors B Committee. She received a CLASS Advisory Board Award for Excellence in Research. She also delivered an invited seminar at Boston University.

FACULTY PROFILE: DR. HARRY WILLIAMS

This semester's faculty profile is on **Dr. Harry Williams**, a long-time faculty member in the Department of Geography and the Environment. He has been teaching at UNT and making an impact on students' education journeys for 32 years! Before starting his teaching career here in our department, Dr. Williams received his Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Plymouth in Devon, England, his Master of Science degree at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, and his PhD at Simon Fraser University, also in Vancouver. We're glad to feature Dr. Williams and we hope you enjoy reading more about him.

Dr. Williams (pictured right) in Vietnam with former student Patrick Elliott

What led you to the field of Geography as an academic pursuit and career? I was better at Math and Physics, but I liked Geography more, especially the field trips and getting to explore new places. For example, at the University of Plymouth there was a big field trip each year that all geography students went on; Yorkshire in 1978, Wales in 1979, and Barcelona in 1980.

What is special about UNT and our department? The feeling of growth and moving forward and the diversity of subject matter covered by our classes and the diversity of our students.

What research are you focused on right now? My focus for the last 15 years has been hurricane sedimentation in coastal marshes. This is important because sedimentation counters sea-level rise and the loss of coastal habitats due to submergence. One consequence of climate change is that bigger, slower, and wetter hurricanes, like Hurricane Harvey, are predicted to increase. These hurricanes cause compound flooding events (terrestrial flooding and storm surge flooding at the same time). As a result, a more recent aspect of my research is discrimination of terrestrial flood deposits and storm surge deposits in coastal environments, using multiple proxies, including X-Ray Fluorescence elemental analysis.

What is your favorite class to teach at UNT? Geomorphology - it's the only class I teach that has mini field trips that take place during class time. I also like that I can use the local region to provide examples of features that come up in class. For example, the City of Denton is a great example of the effect of geology on landscapes: the east side of Denton sits on sandstone, the west side sits on limestone. As a result, the east side is hilly and covered in oak trees, the west side flat and covered in grass.

What do you enjoy most about teaching? The moment when students "get it" and it changes their lives.

What are your most recent accomplishments? A goal of all researchers is to publish their findings in refereed journals. This year I've published two articles in the *Journal of Coastal Research*, and I have another article in review with *Marine Geology*.

FALL 2021-SPRING 2022 TEACHING ASSISTANTS

In September, the Dept. of Geography and the Environment welcomed new teaching assistants. As UNT pivoted to all in-person this September, our TAs have done a wonderful job teaching their labs and providing support to faculty. For this Fall 2021 semester, we have nine new teaching assistants (Shwarnali Bhattacharjee, Spencer Esmonde, Eric Gilmore, Marissa Greer, Kamrun Keya, Douglas Smith, Kaitlin Stewart, Abigail Windham, and Bryce Workings) and eight returning teaching assistants (Anna Baker, Kanan Dave, Samantha Espinoza, Richard Kirk, Ciara Mason, Zach Tabor, Jacqueline Torrecillas, and Kerra Unal). Below are a few of our new TAs!

Kamrun Keya (TA for GEOG 1710)
Major professor: Dr. Paul Hudak
Area of Interest: Contemporary hydropolitics of water and water justice issues in developing countries
Fun facts: I'm a foodie, from Bangladesh, and I love debating - I was the champion in an inter-university debate competition.

Kaitlin Stewart (TA for GEOG 1710)
Major professor: Dr. Matthew Fry
Area of Interest: Immigration and Southeast Asia
Fun facts: I have a dog named Indiana Jones and in my free time, I like to quilt and play the trumpet.

Abigail Windham (TA for GEOL 1610)
Major professor: Dr. Harry Williams
Area of Interest: Geology and Geomorphology
Fun facts: I have been playing classical guitar and piano for over 12 years.

Bryce Workings (TA for GEOG 1710)
Major professor: Dr. Steve Wolverton
Area of Interest: Political Ecology of the rural American West
Fun facts: I'm a PADI-certified scuba diver and I've had a couple of poems published in a literary magazine.

Our TAs and faculty in action!

CLASS HIGHLIGHTS IN FALL 2021

Our Fall 2021 GEOG 4220/5220 (Applied Retail) class (taught by Dr. Murray Rice) partnered with the parent company of Outback Steakhouse to complete a real-world market and site assessment. Outback (a casual dining restaurant chain) is starting a new fast casual chain, Aussie Grill by Outback. Outback challenged the class to identify the potential demographic profiles that could be best targeted by the new chain, to locate communities in major metropolitan areas across the country that fit the identified profiles, and to assess potential restaurant locations that could best serve the targeted communities. The students were advised and evaluated by management from Outback and Intalytics, a leading market and site assessment consultancy that serves an extensive list of Fortune 1000 clients. In total, this project provided the students with the ability to use the classroom content they learned and to gain experience that positions them well for applied geography careers.

In GEOG 4195/5195 (Geospatial Data Analytics), taught by Dr. Lisa Nagaoka, students conducted group projects with Denton Community Food Center (DCFC) as clients. DCFC is the largest food pantry in Denton. Through monetary donations and an extensive network of commercial donors, they provide a full range of groceries (e.g., canned goods, dairy, meat, vegetables, etc.). DCFC requested three deliverables: 1) analysis of client demographics and spatial distribution; 2) database of other food pantries in Denton County, and 3) evaluation of client access to grocery stores and markets. Students applied data acquisition, extraction, cleaning, database design, exploratory data analysis, and visualization.

In Dr. Nagaoka's GEOG 2110 (Foundations of Geographic Research) class, students conducted group research projects on campus, in which they develop a research question, collect and analyze data, and present their findings as oral presentations, story maps, and executive summaries. The topics included evaluating campus parking, bus route ridership patterns, pollinator distribution, landscaping plant diversity, and availability of water bottle filling stations.

ALUMNI FEATURE

Here at UNT Geography and the Environment, we do more than just provide an education. In addition to helping students gain knowledge and earn their degrees in Geography, we guide them in learning transferable skills towards interesting and relevant career paths. During their time here, we lay the groundwork for connections – to connect and collaborate with their professors, to connect and grow with their peers, and to connect and join with professionals out in the field. Our department is but a small part in people's journeys into the world of geography . . . and we are glad that we have the opportunity to make an impact in our students' lives.

For our Fall 2021 newsletter, we want to feature three alumni who have walked the halls of EESAT. Though their studies began and ended at different times, because of connections in and out of the classroom, they are making their mark on the world today. Please meet Tim Klein, Angela Green, and Amie Sumpter *(pictured in order, left)* – all employees of Advance Auto Parts and all graduates of UNT Department of Geography and the Environment!

Let's start with **Amie Sumpter**, who graduated in December 2007 with her Master of Science degree in Applied Geography. She studied with Dr. Murray Rice and her thesis was "A Spatial-Temporal Analysis of Retail Relocation & Clustering: A Case Study of Port Huron, MI". Amie had previously received her undergrad degree in Physical Geography from Northern Michigan University. After graduating there, continuing her education was the next step at the time and so, Amie came to UNT.

How did your experience in our department set you apart from your peers educated at other institutions? All of the people I worked with at UNT to further my education were very open and helpful at identifying opportunities that fit my abilities, strengths, and interests. When I graduated I had study abroad experience of a different country, I had work experience due to an internship, and I had teaching experience due to a student teaching position. All of these lead to 'experiences' that aren't usually listed on a resume just out of college.

How did your degree from UNT influence your career path? I hadn't even considered applied geography as something I would be interested in, nor did I even know it was a THING, at the time I started my graduate degree. By chance, I took the class, offered by Dr. Rice, and it lead to my love of geography/business and my realization that location matters everywhere you look and in all aspects of life and the economy!

What do you currently do at Advance Auto? I am a Manager for Market Strategy for Advance Auto Parts Real Estate Department. We forecast sales for potential new store locations and identify benefits of different demographics, psychographics, and site characteristics for our business.

How did you get connected to Advance Auto? What aspects of your job and the company made you excited to pursue employment there? Monster.com! I had a profile on this job website back in 2007 and Advance Auto Parts reached out to me for a work opportunity! I was excited to try out another state! And also excited to use my knowledge and experience from my internship in a different way. My internship was with Buxton, a consulting firm. And this would turn the tables, so to speak, so that I could be accountable to a company for performance measures and site placement.

Do you have a message for our current students? Reach out to anyone and everyone that you know for possibilities. Geography is more than physical and more than the location of states and countries. You never know where you might go and what other interests you might uncover by talking to someone in the field!

What are your fondest memories as a student in the Geography Department? I made a lot of friends while in Denton, and it was just a close and tight-knit community. Everyone always had an open door policy and a true passion for students to succeed!

Tim Klein graduated from UNT in May 2017 with two degrees - a BS in Economics and a BS in Geography. His major professor was also Dr. Rice. Tim's capstone involved group work - his group chose to analyze one of the local food trucks that also had a brick and mortar establishment. They provided advice as to how their food truck could best be used to support business in their restaurant. Since food trucks run on very slim margins, they came to the conclusion that profit alone was not a good enough reason to continue use of their truck, but that by locating near businesses on the other side of town, it could be used to drive additional visibility to their catering program.

After having a meeting with a Career Counselor at UNT, Tim decided that he wanted to use his spatial analysis abilities paired with a strong economic understanding of urban environments to analyze business needs and situations and provide actionable insights to improve the quality of a business's decisions.

How did your experience in our department set you apart from your peers educated at other institutions? I was able to focus my education to subjects and classes that were more directly applicable to my future work needs. I created my own degree plan rather than just following pre-set plans. This meant I was able to choose classes that directly translated beyond the classroom, rather than things that were less connected. From my talks with peers, this was an uncommon approach.

How did your degree from UNT influence your career path? The influence has been quite obvious in this area. After graduating, I contacted one of my favorite professors, Dr. Rice, whose experience I planned to emulate. He had been contacted by my future manager, Amie, about a possible job opening. We connected through him, and I was able to relocate based on the opportunity that his networking created.

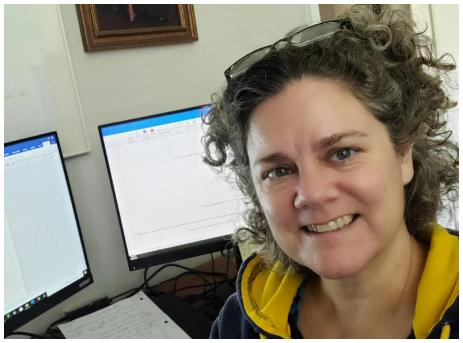
What do you currently do at Advance Auto? I am a Site Selection Research Analyst. I use sales, demographic, and geographic data to analyze prospective sites and forecast what sales could be expected for the first few years if we were to open a store at that location. This is an in-depth process where we account for regional trends, specific site characteristics, and neighboring retail-draw to predict what our trade areas will be. Then we take those demographics and competitive traits and find similar, comparable stores within similar markets where we can then take an aggregated average. We compare this through

multiple lenses such as historical data, previous research, and recent new store sales so that we can provide the best accuracy possible [for successful site location].

How did you get connected to Advance Auto? What aspects of your job and the company made you excited to pursue employment there? As mentioned before, Dr. Rice was my direct networking connection to the Real Estate Strategy team at Advance Auto. After he connected me to Amie, I became excited for the chance to apply what I had learned about location and site characteristics. I also had a strong background with Excel and knew that it could be utilized in this new analytical environment. I was ready for a change from the heat of Texas, so the idea of moving to the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia was exceedingly attractive as well.

Do you have a message for our current students? One of the best decisions I made at UNT was to forge my own degree plan. By picking which classes I wanted early, I was able to see which were available in which semesters. We invest such time and finances into our education, make it fit what you want to use and allow it to then shape your trajectory even beyond the campus.

What are your fondest memories as a student in the Geography Department? Although it already feels like a lifetime ago, I most clearly remember my time spent in the computer lab there. ArcGIS is a fickle master and would often crash for no reason, but that helped the students band together in our assignments to understand it. Students to your right or left would help you recover any lost progress as quickly as possible after a hard reset like that. When you were their helper, it was a great chance to solidify your understanding of the assignment by quickly repeating your process to recover a neighbor's work. As fond as my memories of those hallways and classrooms are, what I miss most is the rock climbing community there *(see picture on the right)*. Summit opened a gym while I was still in school and that furthered an obsession I had begun at the UNT gym. There were always classmates there from the Geography department, and it was the perfect physical outlet for us to temporarily escape our academic responsibilities. It served to deepen any bonds that had been created in the classroom and quickly became a favorite topic when briefly talking to friends between classes.



Angela Green graduated in May 2021, with a Master of Science degree in Geography, and studied under Dr. Joseph Oppong, capping off her time in our department with a comprehensive exam. Angela was a Registered Nurse for the last 26 years but she wanted to study Medical Geography, especially with Dr. Oppong as he is a well-respected professor and researcher in this area. However, in light of the pandemic, Angela began thinking differently about her career plans. She knows that healthcare is big business and coupled with politics, she realized that she was not interested in continuing a medical focus in her career.

How did your experience in our department set you apart from your peers educated at other institutions? I arrived at UNT January 2020 and by March 2020 – the pandemic was in full swing so my experience at UNT was "different". I did learn how to navigate online classes with the full support of UNT on this learning path. My professors were very caring and kind during this process.

How did your degree from UNT influence your career path? My career goal was "to get a good job". UNT helped expose me to many different paths that a geographer can take as a career. I took retail geography with Dr. Rice and didn't realize that this would be the focus of my first geography job.

What do you currently do at Advance Auto? My title at Advance Auto Parts is "Location analyst – Real Estate Specialist". I am part of a team that evaluates locations and markets where "AAP" wants to expand and open new stores; this is called forecasting. I spend all day looking at maps and making maps with the support of data about how successful a new AAP store will or will not be in a certain location–nationwide. A big perk is that I can work from home, just like taking classes at UNT. I did not have to move for this job.

How did you get connected to Advance Auto? What aspects of your job and the company made you excited to pursue employment there? I spent 2.5 months applying for jobs and probably filled out 100 applications. I got an email from Dr. Rice via the UNT email system that AAP was looking to hire. I immediately replied to Amie Sumpter that I was interested in this position. Especially because they said they would train me in that type of work and complicated mapping programs. I knew what a "location analyst" did but was not sure that I had all the skills to be up and running asap. As I talked to Amie and researched the company and what "forecasting" entailed, I knew that this would be a great job for me. It's funny that I would work for an auto parts company – I don't have a lot of experience with autos – except to drive them.

Do you have a message for our current students? To be open and flexible. Your dream job might be different than you expected and that is OK. Career and life paths are not straight. Bumps and curves are what make life interesting. Go with the flow.

What are your fondest memories as a student in the Geography Department? My fondest memories at UNT Geography is hanging out in the beautiful building with all the windows to see the sun, clouds, and rain. Talking to fellow students about classes. I loved all the research posters on the walls and reading them when I had time waiting for classes to start. I always was on the look out for that albino squirrel. I liked that the campus is bicycle friendly and safe. Being a geographer, I loved the diversity of the students and professors at UNT. I learned so much about Mexico, Ghana, China, and India to name a few places.

ALUMNI UPDATES

Gemeral Berry III (BS in Geography, May 2014) recently started working for the City of Dallas (Dallas Water Utilities) as a GIS Analyst. Since he just started with his new role, he has been importing and creating data such as water/sewer lines, meters, manholes, hydrants, etc. Gemeral was previously a GIS Specialist for the City of Midlothian (he was the only GIS professional there so he was basically the GIS department.) In that job, Gemeral did everything: addressing, creating maps for various departments and outside requests, data editing/collection/management, online maps for public use, etc.). He is very excited to be working at the City of Dallas (and in the field in general) and credits UNT to his success!

Robert Chambers (BA in Geography, May 1994 and MS in Environmental Science, May 1996) is a Principal at the Texas-based A-E firm Freese and Nichols, Inc. He has been employed by Freese and Nichols since 1994 and currently oversees the firm's Environmental Science and Coastal Group which has 40+ employees in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

Austin Gibson (BA in Geography, December 2018) is an Environmental Scientist/Planner with Civil Associates, Inc where he performs environment assessments, primarily on transportation projects. His work is incredibly varied and includes field work with GPS equipment, GIS mapping and data collection, and report writing on subjects such as community impacts and environmental justice, biological resources, threatened and endangered species, and hazardous materials among others. Most of his time is spent working from home currently, but some of his more interesting field work he has done recently included a wetland/stream delineation along an urban interstate corridor, a stream delineation and biological site assessment for a new-location roadway in a rural area, and a multi-day trip to Amarillo for a 15+ mile project along a mixed urban/rural highway.

Katherina Kang (MS in Geography, May 2020) is the Education Director and Youth Coordinator for Groundwork Dallas, an environmental non-profit dedicated to providing conservation-based education and opportunities to underserved communities within the City of Dallas. She is in charge of all youth and educational programing and activities, including developing summer conservation work programs for high school students, leading families and youth on free camping trips and adventures in many Texas State Parks, and working with partners and schools developing conservation education curriculums. Using her degree in Geography and experience in urban soil research, she refocused the youth program toward more research-focused learning. When not working, Kat can be found walking the trails looking for birds, napping at home with her two cats and dog, and tending to her too-many plants.

Aaron Kreag (BA in Geography, August 2007) has been a Business Development Manager in technical sales for some years now after a decent GIS career. Aaron currently run all sales, business development and marketing for an electrical engineering firm serving utilities nationwide. He also manages their geospatial and infrastructure asset management practice. Aaron currently lives in Grapevine.

Cassey Llamas (BS, May 2021) is currently in her first semester of the graduate program at UNT, working towards a Master of Science degree in Geography - Water Resources. She has also been working as an Environmental Services Intern with the City of Southlake for nearly a year, doing what she loves - working with water, getting out into the field, and protecting the environment. At Southlake, Cassey collectively utilizes her past experiences from the military, her extensive volunteer background, and her education as a physical geographer. She gets to work on many projects, some of which she has designed or managed. One of the projects is her thesis – essentially, studying urban residential runoff and low impact development. Cassey is happy with the direction she is headed and is grateful for all those who have helped her get to where she is today.

Jared McElhany graduated with his BS in Geography in August 2013. He worked as an environmental consultant doing Environmental Phase I and II inspections for about 6 years. He then switched to the Texas RRC surface mining and reclamation division as a surface mine inspector for about 2 years. Now Jared is working as an senior environmental planning specialist with Terracon and as an environmental consultant. His work concentrates on Section 404 and Section 10 Waters of the U.S. Delineations and Threatened and Endangered Species surveys. He's also working on a Master of Natural Resource Development degree from Texas A&M and researching the value of wetlands in flood mitigation within the Edwards Plateau.

Tim Nolan is a Geography alumnus (BA in Earth Science, August 1991). He took the very first GIS class ever taught at UNT, with Dr. Diane Whalley as the professor and Jeff Coffee as the TA (Dr. Bruce Hunter was a graduate student then). Tim has worked at Collin County since March 1992 and he launched the GIS program at the county. He is currently a Senior IT Manager for Applications (including GIS) and recently completed his Lean Agile Visual Management accreditation. He is also one of only five people on the planet that hold the designation of Visual Management Professional. At Collin County, he helped start a GIS internship program in 1994 that thrives today. Fun fact: Their last two interns are younger than the internship program itself.

Matt Pellegrino graduated in the summer of 1994 with a BA in Geography (earth science concentration) and a minor in Spanish. During his time at UNT, he studied with Drs. Schoolmaster, McGregor, Oppong, Ferring, and Williams; all his professors were outstanding and he learned a lot from them. Matt really enjoyed being in the small corner of the GAB building that housed the department at that time. Though he never pursued anything in Geography, he has fond memories of his time at UNT and in the Geography department. Currently, Matt is the Facilities Manager at the School of Law at Texas A&M and has been for 21 years (he has enjoyed many conversations with several of their environmental law professors over the years). His wife of 27 years is an elementary school teacher and they have a son who is a percussion director at a local high school and a daughter who is a senior in Kinesiology up at TWU in Denton.

If you're an alum of UNT Geography and the Environment, let us know what you've been up to!
Send an email to geog@unt.edu and we will try to include you in our next newsletter.

MISCELLANEOUS

GEOG students and faculty having fun at SWAAG 2021!

Steve receiving his "World's Okayest Boss" trophy

Graduate Student Luncheon & Orientation

Dr. Fry's Field Methods & Mapping Class

LiDAR demo in Dr. Dong's class

GEOG Tea Time with EESAT neighbors

Hot Cocoa Bar and Holiday Party

Happy Holidays from the Department of Geography and the Environment!

For more information, please visit our website as well as our social media platforms:

Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/UNTGeography
Twitter - https://twitter.com/untgeography
Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/untgeog/

Keshia & Michelle at the UNT Homecoming Luncheon