

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY



Paleolimnology and Global Environmental Change - core sampling at Tumblesons Ponds, London, ON

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

By James Voogt

The past year has been a busy one with more changes in Geography. Professors Graham Smith and Chris Smart retired in July and we learned late in the summer that Professor Adam Yates is leaving us to take a position in Biology at the University of Waterloo in January. We are now in the midst of a faculty search for a new appointment in the area of GIScience and Urban Environments, with a start date of July 1, 2020 and are optimistic that our request for two new faculty positions in support of Physical Geography and Urban Geography will be approved for next year.

In September, we welcomed an incoming class of 16 graduate students who have since got to know each other better through our annual Graduate Retreat, supported by the Judy and Maurice Davidson Fund, and through their mandatory course "Debates in Geographic Thought" where they discuss topics of broad relevance to all Geographers including: the Anthropocene, resilience, wicked

problems, Big Data, and the duality of human and physical geography. We were particularly pleased to welcome back to grad school our two Gold Medalists from the Undergraduate Program this year and to celebrate our dual winners of Trudeau Scholarships, Vanessa Ambtman-Smith and Steven Vanloffeld.

In late February we hosted an Urban Development Program recruiting event featuring seven of our alumni who spoke to Prof. Godwin Arku's second year urban development class. In May, we undertook our first ever High School Day event with nearly 90 Grade 11 and 12 students participating in various activities to get a sense of Geography at the university level. The interest of high school students related to climate change has spurred our faculty to begin planning some new courses and a module related to climate change, recognizing its wide implications to society at large. We are excited about the opportunity these may provide to attract more students to our program. Most recently, we celebrated the 25th

Anniversary of Geography's United Way Talent Show, with a big thanks going to Karen VanKerkoerle for organizing. And, on the topic of celebrations, we congratulated Angelica Lucaci as a 2019 winner of the Western Award of Excellence, recognizing her outstanding contributions to our undergraduate programs; to Jason Gilliland's Human Environments Analysis Laboratory for being selected as a finalist in Community Innovation Category of the Pillar Community Innovation Awards, and to Dan Shrubsole for his CAGONT Service to Ontario Geography Award and his selection as a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. Looking forward to 2020, we are planning a renovation of the departmental GIS lab to improve the teaching space for students and upgrade the technology. And the Department has just signed on to host the Ontario Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers fall meeting in October 2020. Happy Holidays and best wishes for 2020 on behalf of everyone from Geography at Western.

GEOGRAPHY WELCOMES AREA HIGH SCHOOLS!



May 1, 2019 saw our first Geography High School Day designed to show prospective students what it means to be a part of Geography at Western. Students had the chance to browse the department, participate in hands-on labs, meet current undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and much more. Plans are already underway for a joint high school day in early spring with the Department of Anthropology.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WELCOMES ALUMNI

Photo by James Shelley

In late February, we hosted an Urban Development Program (UDP) recruiting event. This event was intended to provide students with information about the UDP and career possibilities that exist for its graduates.

It was conceived by our UDP Advisory Board as a way to encourage more students to enroll in our Honors

Specialization Program in Urban Development. The event was organized and hosted by Prof. Jason Gilliland, UDP Director and Prof. Godwin Arku as part of Prof. Arku's Introduction to Urban Development course. It featured short presentations by UDP Alumni including Mark Fieder, Michael Dal Bello, Joseph Shaw, Philip Runions, Dianne Ramos, and Marisa Banuelos. These alumni represent a range of career stages and employment sectors. Their presentations provided students with a description of their current position, the path they took to that position and how that path was influenced by their UDP training, and their views on career opportunities for current and future UDP grads. To broaden the reach of the event, the presenters also graciously allowed us to conduct video interviews about the UDP, available from our website.



GEOGRAPHY 3901 CHINA FIELD COURSE

Led by Dr. Clare Gordon, and supported by funds from alumna Dr. Cecilia Yau, our China Field Course (Geog 3901) invited students to explore various sites of interest in the Yangtze Three Gorges area. Over 11 days, the students covered about 800kms on land and during a river cruise, from Chongqing to Wuhan, visiting the Three Gorges, observing power plants and the dam itself, learning about electric infrastructure, flood control, and water management. The trip also visited archaeological and cultural sites and examined cultural changes and economic benefits that have arisen from the Three Gorges project.



OGS - Ontario Graduate Scholarship (Masters)
Malcom Little

NSERC Scholarship (Masters)
Kayla Goguen

OGS - Ontario Graduate Scholarship (Doctoral)
Kilian Atuoye (Int'l) Corey Dawson
Kevin Ng Elana Nightingale

CGS/PGS (Doctoral)
Merlin Chatwin Rosalind Ragetlie

SSHRC Scholarship (Masters)
Drew Bowman Gabrielle Bruser
Sydney Phillips Angela Piaskoski
A.J. Wray Bianca Ziegler

MAKING HISTORY WITH OUR TRUDEAU SCHOLARS



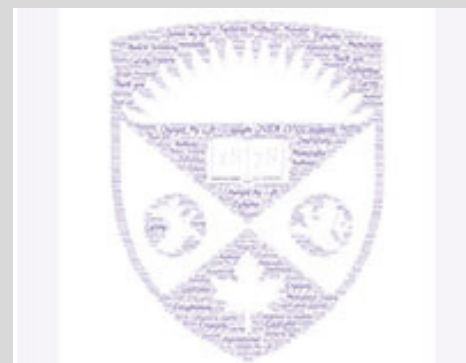
Vanessa Ambtman-Smith and Steven Vanloffeld are both PhD students in the Department of Geography working with Prof. Chantelle Richmond. This is the first time when two scholars from the same institution and working with the same supervisor have been awarded Trudeau scholarships. The scholarships are awarded to students who are “engaged leaders who are conscious of the impact of their research, connected to the realities of the communities in which they work, and open to non-conventional forms of knowledge.” Ambtman-Smith and Vanloffeld are focused on community-engaged research, connected to Indigenous communities. Ambtman-Smith identifies as Métis-Cree. Vanloffeld is a member of the Chippewas of Saugeen. For Ambtman-Smith, the experience and involvement with a network and community will be most rewarding. “There is a group of diverse recipients and you get to see how your ideas and work can grow,” said Ambtman-Smith. “To get the call saying you’ve been chosen as a scholar is humbling,” said Vanloffeld. “I did the work, but I wouldn’t be here without the support of my supervisor, the faculty, the department and the wider institution.”

2019 RETIREES

The department saw the retirement of two faculty this year: Prof. Chris Smart and Prof. Graham Smith. As a parting gift, Cartographer Karen Van Kerkoerle created a cartogram and wordcloud to showcase Chris and Graham's geographical areas of research and teaching. We will greatly miss their contributions to the department. We wish them great happiness in all their future endeavors.



Dr. Chris Smart's Cartogram



Dr. Graham Smith's Wordcloud

2019 WESTERN AWARD OF EXCELLENCE HONOUREE

Photo by Paul Mayne



The Western Awards of Excellence are the highest honour for staff member achievement. The awards recognize staff for their exemplary service, creativity and innovation, the ability to share their knowledge and expertise and their capacity to foster their values of integrity and respect across campus. Angelia Lucaci, Undergraduate Assistant and Program Advisor in the Department of Geography is a recipient of a 2019 Western Award of Excellence. Angelica promotes leadership opportunities, career opportunities, and extra activities for students to get the most out of their Western Experience. Congratulations Angelica!

EMERITUS PROFESSOR BRIAN LUCKMAN HONOURED BY PARKS CANADA

On September 8, 2019, Parks Canada dedicated a bench in Dr. Brian Luckman's honour at Mount Edith Cavell in Jasper National Park. The plaque on the bench reads as follows: “The Lucky Bench. Recognizing the work of Dr. Brian Luckman. Since 1968 his research and interpretation of this environment have enriched our understanding of the Canadian Rockies.”



Allen K. Phillbrick Scholarship (Doctoral) Moses Kansanga

The Edward G. Pleva Fellowship Award Duncan Spilsbury — Marcello Vecchio

Michael J. Troughton Student Busary (Masters) Carelle MangBenza

ESRI Canada GIS Award A.J. Wray

The Brian Luckman Award Samantha Claessens

E.G. Pleva TA Award A.J. Wray — Bianca Ziegler

Professor Elaine Bjorklund Award Yat Ho Cheung
YanqiLi

Faculty Association Scholarship Samuel Alexander Fleisher

DISTINGUISHED LECTURER DR. SUSAN CUTTER

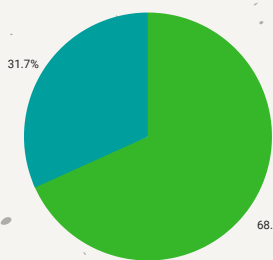


On Nov. 14 and 15 Geography welcomed Professor Susan Cutter as our Distinguished Lecturer for 2019-2020. Professor Cutter is a Geographer and world-recognized expert in the area of disaster vulnerability and resilience science, and how vulnerability and resilience are measured, monitored and assessed. Her policy-relevant work focuses on emergency management and disaster recovery at local, state, national, and international levels. Susan’s presentation focused on the “Social Construction of Risks and Hazards”. It recognized the critical role of humans and society in the production of “disasters” and that there is no such thing as a “natural disaster”. It covered five important considerations: (1) the context and driving factors of change that govern risk production, impacts and the nature of extremes; (2) social vulnerability and resilience influences who bears the burdens and impacts of hazards and the capacity to recover; (3) the evidentiary basis for decision making is

essential; (4) equity and fairness are necessary elements in management of relief and recovery resources; and (5) time and space compression of events creates a perverse multiplier effect (cascading events) reducing adaptive capacity. The geographical nature of the work was emphasized in its combination of both physical and social sciences, for example the coincident depiction of physical environmental hazards and that of the Social Vulnerability Index that Prof. Cutter developed, as well as in the application of spatial analysis using GIScience. In the examples shown, the exposure of Indigenous populations was also a reoccurring theme. Prof. Cutter’s visit to Western coincides with an increase in interests related to Hazards on campus. For two decades, Western has been a formal partner with the Institute of Catastrophic Loss Reduction, a not-for-profit research institute for multi-disciplinary disaster prevention research and communication. More recently, a new Interdisciplinary Initiative in Multi-Hazard, Risk and Resilience has been supported by Western. It has created a new collaborative graduate program and supported a workshop on Multi-Hazard Risk & Resilience. Its members are drawn from Earth Sciences, Statistical and Actuarial Sciences, Civil & Environmental Engineering and Geography.



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



172 In-program Undergraduates
80 MA/PhD Students



Full-Time Staff : 8
Research Staff : 5



Full-Time Faculty : 20
Part-Time Faculty : 19
(8 Standing Appointment, 11 Limited Duties)



Research Expenditures
(January 1 -November 31)
\$1,515,412.78

THANK YOU

The Department of Geography is grateful to its alumni and friends for their financial support over the years. Our donors have had a big impact, making a difference not only to the Department as a whole, but also to the lives of many individual students. There is always a real need for funds to support academic departments. As we strive for higher standards and increasingly broader opportunities for our students, we depend on the caring and generous nature of alumni and friends like you to meet these ever increasing financial needs. Your gift to the Department of Geography can take many different shapes. If you’re interested in giving a gift that best meets your needs, the impact you want, and the way you want to give, please contact Alumni Relations & Development at 519-661-4200 or 1-800-423-9631 for more information.

Faculty Scholar Award
Godwin Arku

**Fellow of the African Academy
of Sciences (AAS)**
Isaac Luginaah

**Imran Jaffer Award in
Urban Development**
Joy Anne Tigchelaar

Atlohsa Peace Awards
Chantelle Richmond

**J.E. Kennedy Scholarship in Urban
Development**

Joy Anne Tigchelaar

CAG Award

Bianca Ziegler Duncan Spillsbury

McIntosh Prize in Geography

Nolan Alexander Frew