Wayne Koonce (BA, ’71) returned to campus on Friday, November 4th to accept his 2022 GGIS Distinguished Alumni Award, at a ceremony hosted by Department Head Prof. Shaowen Wang in the Russell Seminar Room. After receiving the award, Wayne shared his Illinois experience and career journey and took questions from faculty and students on topics including sustainable buildings and urban development.

He also had individual and small-group discussions with faculty and students throughout the day and enjoyed a return visit to Geography’s former home in Davenport Hall.

Koonce, an investment banker, has been involved in over $8 billion worth of real estate deals, and credits the U of I and a strong geographic foundation for launching him on a path from a family farm in Illiopolis, Illinois to cities and exotic destinations around the world.

“In many ways, growing up on the farm in central Illinois was magical,” he said, but his greatest passion has always been for the ecology of cities, so he enrolled as a geography major with an emphasis on urban planning upon arriving at the U of I. At that time, there were not many study-abroad opportunities but an LAS associate dean “understood my dreams and how interested I was in the world and history and architecture.” A year of study in Vienna, Austria, changed his life and encouraged him to keep exploring.

“Illinois opens up new worlds to people like me, whose experiences may have been rather limited,” said Koonce. “I had strong academic interest in historical, cultural, and political geography with some focus on the growth and shape of metropolitan areas and have been able to use all of these concepts throughout my career.”

Dr. Michael Widener (BA, ’07) received the 2021-22 Geography & GIS Early Career Distinguished Alumnus Award and visited campus this fall to meet with faculty and students and present his research at Friday Colloquium. He earned a bachelor of arts with highest distinction in 2007 and went on to complete a PhD from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 2012.

Widener is a highly regarded health geography researcher currently serving as associate professor in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Toronto, with a cross-appointment in Epidemiology at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health.

His research focuses on the relationship between the built environment, mobility, and health, with current projects in two main areas: access to food and responses to COVID-19. Widener and his team work with a range of stakeholders, including governments, non-profits, and community organizations to ensure that his research can help improve urban food environments and access to healthcare services.

Widener has skillfully adapted his existing research to consider how the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted equity-deserving populations. Specifically, he is tracking how transit riders’ avoidance of public transit due to fears of virus transmission can affect their access to healthcare. His research on COVID-19, urban built environments, and transit demonstrates a strong commitment to using GIS techniques to tackle social justice and equity issues.

Continued Page 4
Getis joined our department in 1977 and served as department head. It was exciting to return to fully in-person learning this fall and see everyone’s tremendous efforts to work through the many pandemic-induced challenges. With full classrooms and plenty of in-person activities, the energy and vibe from students, faculty, and staff have been truly memorable and remarkable.

The department continues to thrive, and our faculty, students, and alumni have received numerous accolades including professional society fellowships, distinguished career awards, and invitations to speak at events and meetings. Earlier this fall, two new assistant professors joined our department: Dr. Marynia Kolak (PhD, Arizona State University) is a geographic information scientist and health geographer, and Dr. Raechel Portelli (PhD, the Pennsylvania State University) is a geographic information scientist and cartographer. Congratulations all!

I shared in last year’s newsletter that several members of our faculty played leading roles in launching the Institute for Geospatial Understanding through an integrative Discovery Environment (I-GUIDE), a $15 million national institute funded by the National Science Foundation that is harnessing the geospatial data revolution to better understand the risks and impacts of climate change and disasters. I-GUIDE recently concluded its first year and you can read about some of our accomplishments in the first newsletter. We are always open to hosting visitors at the beautiful Natural History Building. Check out our website (gis.illinois.edu) and connect with us on social media. Thanks, and best wishes for a joyful holiday season!

Sincerely,
Shaowen Wang

This newsletter was produced by the College of LAS Office of Communications and Marketing, edited by Matt Cohn.

Please visit illinoisalumni.org to update your contact information, submit a class note, and check out the latest news and events for and about Illinois Alumni.

Wayne Koonce, continued

Koonce appreciated the vision and dedication of geography professors who helped him chart his academic and professional journey and has continued to show his gratitude to the department, College of LAS, and campus community ever since—by hosting a Campus Illinois event, joining the President’s Council, and helping to create a graduate fellowship fund in honor of a former professor. Koonce and his wife, Harriet Hentges, even established a bequest gift, the Wayne Koonce Endowment for Liberal Arts and Sciences. Koonce also won the 2017 College of LAS Dean’s Quadrangle Award, given to alumni who maintain significant connections with Illinois.

“I have so many fond memories of the department and I’m especially grateful for all the advice, help, and support I got from department head John Thompson and from professors Joseph Russell, John Jakle, and Janice Monk,” Koonce said. “They tirelessly wrote letters of recommendation, reviewed options with me, and gave sound advice as I applied for graduate programs.”

Koonce landed a Danforth Fellowship shortly after graduation, which would fund his graduate studies including an internship in the Bureau of Budget for then-Illinois Governor Dick Ogilvie. He was an intern for only a month before becoming an assistant budget analyst and then, at the age of 20, moving into a more senior position.

“It was a heady experience for a young guy,” he said.

The experience also ignited an interest in politics, which only intensified when the Danforth Fellowship set him up in the summer of 1972 at the Aspen Institute, a prominent think tank in Colorado where he encountered thought leaders including Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

For the next four years, Koonce attended Harvard University, and after receiving a master’s degree in juris doctor degree in 1976, he moved to Washington, D.C. for the Department of State, where he researched the problem of highly polluting industries moving from Japan to Southeast Asia, where environmental controls were less stringent. He also took up painting, immersing himself in Tokyo’s art world through his teacher, a prominent painter and wife of the prime minister’s chief of staff. “I was fascinated with Japan—the transportation issues, the planning issues, and the highly sophisticated subway and railway systems,” he said.

Koonce came full circle in 1980 when he met Hentges, who worked on corporate responsibility and sustainability issues for Walmart and then the Dutch group Royal Ahold. After years in politics, Koonce said it was ironic that he came back to his first love at U of I—urban planning. The real estate deals he puts together are high-end projects that draw renowned architects and are at the forefront of urban design and planning. One of his first major deals, in 1988, was for the wealthiest family in Japan, who bought InterContinental Hotels worldwide for $2.3 billion—which was at that time the largest hotel deal ever.

In addition, he has put together deals to buy The Sun-Times building, the Drake Hotel, and Peninsula Hotel in Chicago. Koonce has continued to show his gratitude to the department, College of LAS, and campus community ever since.
Dr. Michael Widener has credited our department on multiple occasions for sparking his interest in the relationship between the environment and health, and in geography more generally, as well as giving him the confidence to pursue a career in academia. He proudly carries on this tradition as a teacher and advisor, mentoring several graduate students at any given time, supporting them through research grants and co-authoring papers with them. He has also networked with our PhD students at conferences and via social media, sharing ideas and introducing them to other scholars in the field.

Dr. Widener is a top public health researcher whose work is making a strong local and global impact, thanks to his partnerships with city agencies, community members, and the geography scholarly community. On Friday, October 21st, Widener visited campus to receive the award and give a Friday Colloquium presentation, entitled “Urban Food Environment Research: How time, movement, and (sometimes) big data are transforming the study of food shopping in cities.”

Gary credits his career to the education, faculty, and resources the department has provided him with, especially studying geography, urban planning, and landscape architecture with Professor John Jakle and going on to a distinguished career in the public and private sectors and higher education. He continues as a public policy advocate for transportation, urban design, and planning in his home state of Washington and at the national level.

Gary and Mary Molyneaux have joined the University of Illinois Foundation President’s Council in accordance with this generous gift to the department.

The department gratefully acknowledges Dr. Gary (PhD, ’79) and Mary Molyneaux for establishing an endowment fund to support geography and GIS doctoral students. Molyneaux studied geography, urban planning, and landscape architecture with Professor John Jakle and went on to a distinguished career in the public and private sectors and higher education. He continues as a policy advocate for transportation, urban design, and planning in his home state of Washington and at the national level.

Molyneaux is a founding member of the American Association of Geographers’ Applied Geography Specialty Group and received the Applied National Honor Award in 1996. He has served on several National Science Foundation Transportation Research Board expert panels and was vice-chair of the Urban Land Institute’s research committee. He was also a journal referee for the Annals of the AAG and Professional Geographer and continues to serve on the local arrangements committee for AAG annual meetings held in the Pacific Northwest.

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“Geography provided me with the models, methods, and tools to organize and analyze not only data, but decision-making, goal development, and strategic pathways for successful project and program implementation,” said Molyneaux. “The department’s strong emphasis on writing and presentation skills played a key role in my first major position with the Pacific Northwest’s largest architecture and design firm, and it soon became clear to me that geographers and architects speak the same spatial language.”

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
Charles Fogelman (PhD, 2017) Wins on Jeopardy!

By Ethan Simmons, the News-Gazette

The most stressful part of Charles Fogelman’s appearance on "Jeopardy!" came while watching it at home with his family. Despite knowing the outcome, the pace of the clues — and how many he’d forgotten about since filming the session two months prior — kept the viewing fresh.

"Watching it transpire on TV, it was new to me. The only clues I remembered were the ones I was kicking myself for missing," he said after the show aired on Wednesday, February 16th.

In the end, the inertia of the game took over. Fogelman consistently placed the names of countries, Greek letters, and obscure adverbs from his memory banks and came out on top in his first appearance, earning $10,500.

"I didn’t regret anything, that I’d bet too low on a ‘Daily Double’ or hadn’t rung in something that I thought I knew but wasn’t a sound smart,” he said. "It didn’t go very well.

Then, last summer, a second chance arose: an Instagram audition for professors who hoped to be on "Jeopardy!" He took the initial test — “very much like actual ‘Jeopardy!’ questions” — then another, did a formal audition over Zoom and got an official invitation to the show in November. His appearance, filmed Dec. 13, was a hard-fought match with continuing champion Dave Rapp, a California writer, and Emily Budd, a customer-service rep from Rochester, N.Y. But Fogelman kept a steady lead and finished each round with the highest dollar value.

He selected and nailed the first two “Daily Doubles” of the game: a phrase that appeared four times in a famous 1963 speech (“I have a dream”), and the body of water where North Vietnamese torpedo boats fired on the U.S.S. Maddox (“The Gulf of Tonkin”). Those earned him $2,500 and $1,200, respectively. And Fogelman predictably tore up a category called “The Equator,” naming four territories in succession and earning $5,600.

“I was totally beat and couldn’t form a whole sentence, much less sound smart,” he said. "It didn’t go very well.

What first drew you to the field of geography?

The geography that I should consider as I applied for graduate school was apart from preventable diseases. I knew I had to start addressing health issues, particularly equal access to healthcare in Sub-Saharan Africa. My undergraduate mentor, Dr. Patricia McDowell, had deep empathy and let me know that there was a subdiscipline of geography called health geography that I should consider as I applied for graduate school, which would allow me to build on my current environmental and GIS interests and contribute to global public health. While at UIUC, I worked with amazing advisors Drs. Kalipeni, McAlferty, and Wang from GGIS, and Kingsley Allan, Diana Grigsby, and Marilyn O’Hare Ruiz across campus. Although two of my Illinois mentors have sadly passed, Sara, Shaowen and others colleagues continue to be supportive.

What are your current research projects and interests?

What is your favorite memory of living and studying in Champaign/Urbana?

My main goal as a scholar has been to bridge the gap between the production of research findings on health inequity and seeking solutions through problem-grounded research. To achieve this goal, I have focused my efforts on three interlinked themes: health behavior and health status among disadvantaged populations and communities; health risks, adaptation, and strengthening public health systems; and urban pests. I collaborate with faculty and non-faculty in the U.S. and in sub-Saharan Africa and my current projects are funded federally and by foundations including NIH, CDC, RWJF, the Spencer Foundation, the Chase Morgan Foundation, and The Children’s Trust.

My ongoing research projects include a study to develop and implement a population-based measure that can be mapped geographically to study school readiness and community factors that contribute to disparities in obesity prevalence in targeted Miami-Dade County areas; and prospectively and longitudinally assessing the impact of cumulative greenness exposure on metabolic syndrome among Hispanic/Latinx populations in Miami and San Diego.

ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE
Imelda K. Moise (MS, ’07; PhD, ’12; MPH, UIS, ’15) is associate professor and director of Global Health Studies at the University of Miami, where she also holds secondary appointments in the Departments of Public Health Sciences and International Studies and is affiliated with the Ecosystem Science and Policy Center. She is a Fullbright specialist and serves on various advisory boards including the National Association of County, City and Health Officials Vector Working Group and the Miami-Dade Refugee Task Force. At U Miami, Mase teaches courses on sustainable food, immigrant and refugee health, and health and environmental applications of GIS.
 Alumni Share Job Experiences and Advice with Current Students

Public health, infrastructure, and geospatial data management

By GGIS majors Julia Cogan, Katie Niermann, and Zimo Xiao (BS, ’22)

As members of the Epsilon Epsilon chapter of the Gamma Theta Upsilon (GTU) Geographic Honors Society, we had the privilege of organizing the Spring 2022 Alumni Career Conversations series. It was a great opportunity to meet virtually with alumni and learn about their experiences as we prepare to start our own professional journeys. We heard from alumni working in public health, enterprise IT consulting, and critical infrastructure maintenance.

Kevin Berg (MA, ’12) is a data scientist at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, specializing in spatial epidemiology. “As GIS researchers, or with data science in general, your job is to analyze the data and communicate complex information in a way that is understandable to a wide variety of audiences,” said Berg.

Reflecting on his academic path and the first decade of his career as a GIS researcher, Berg encouraged students to take applied statistical courses and build a foundation in programming languages such as R, Python, and SQL. He also suggested gaining hands-on data analysis experience through internships and undergraduate research.

Zimo Xiao (BS, ’22; computer science + GGIS), a senior at the time of Berg’s talk, was inspired to seek out data science-related jobs that intersect with spatial analysis. “Kevin’s story, research, and suggestions have inspired me to explore careers in many different industries such as epidemiology, logistics, and business analysis. He pointed out that many data science jobs don’t even include the word ‘GIS’ in their job description, yet they can involve spatial analysis skills and methods that I have gained from my GGIS coursework,” said Zimo.

Samuel James (BS, ’19; ESER and GGIS) returned for his second GGIS career conversation and spoke about his new position as solutions engineer with Axiom Geospatial, an IT services and enterprise consulting firm. James uses geospatial and data management techniques to support a wide variety of clients, ranging from the federal government to small businesses. He attributes his success to a diverse educational background and encouraged us to explore our interests.

“Every day looks different and every project is different, but I really enjoy it,” said James. “You have to be good at time management. You also need to have confidence. Often, even if you’re not the expert in something, the client expects you to be so you have to be adaptive and willing to keep learning and exploring new things.”

Esther Lin (BS, ’21; GGIS) recently began working as a GIS analyst with Southern California Gas Company, where she uses a variety of geospatial software to develop gas line location services and solutions. Lin started her career fresh out of college and is the youngest amongst her coworkers. “If you’re new, don’t be scared to reach out to people and ask for help. Understand that the people who are already working there are just so focused on their job that they forget about the new people unless you reach out to them,” Lin said.

She shared how GGIS courses including “Introduction to Geographic Information Systems” and “Spatial Problem Solving” opened her eyes to the power of GIS and recommended that we apply for departmental scholarships. “The Roepke Scholarship really strengthened my CV and set me apart from other candidates,” she said.

Valerie Nelson (BS, ’22) was as a water system GIS/GPS intern for the city of Batavia, Illinois, in Spring 2021 and shared advice on finding and applying for similar internships. This experience helped her realize that GIS techniques are used in a variety of industries. “Immediately my mind would go to big companies like Esri, but in reality there are GIS jobs almost anywhere. The range of places you’ll find GIS job openings is probably a lot bigger than you think so it is worth looking in many places,” said Nelson.

She pointed us to the Illinois GIS Association job center, city websites, and encouraged students to seek out undergraduate employment, internship, and scholarship opportunities. She also shared how important it is to highlight GIS experience, coding languages, and software expertise on our CVs.

Thanks again to our alumni for sharing their experiences, and to Professor Michael Minn for hosting the speaker series. We look forward to continuing these conversations in future semesters!

The Roepke Study Abroad Scholarship supported my Spring 2022 learning experience at VU Amsterdam in the Netherlands. As a geographer, I knew that the Dutch rely on environmental engineering to keep the country above sea level, and while there I heard the expression “God made the Dutch, and the Dutch made the Netherlands.”

I didn’t know what to expect during my study abroad trip due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, and in fact things kept changing throughout my stay. However, my experience not only revealed the beauty of uncertainty but how relationships can become stronger through shared adversity. The multicultural exchanges I’ve had, not only with Dutch culture but with other exchange students from all over the world really broadened my perspective on how vast the world is and the opportunities that are available.

While studying geography and GIS, I have always been aware of how important spatial analysis was for making better decisions in the greater scheme of things. Studying abroad in the Netherlands was a great way to connect to a broader network of people and perspectives, and to learn how different cultures experience space.
NEW FACULTY MEMBERS
Specializing in GIS, Community Health, and Cartography

Marynia Kolak, Assistant Professor

How did you decide to become a geographer?
I began my undergraduate studies here at UIllC with an interest in environmental sciences but switched to geology after taking several of their field courses. I first learned about GIS on the job as a student research assistant with the Illinois Geological Survey on campus, and really enjoyed the challenges of analyzing core samples from Southern Illinois and using SQL to wrangle all the different layers of data.

Still, I pursued a career as a geologist, and went on to intern at the United States Geological Survey in St. Petersburg, Florida. There, in addition to picking microfossils for climate change research and later using GIS to map coastal areas, I worked on multiple community and science education events. I was alarmed at the discord and mixed communications between scientists and community members on issues ranging from fishing quotas to hurricane impacts and decided to improve my own communication skills by getting a MFA in writing, with the goal of improving understanding of science between various communities.

Of course, things took another turn, and the introduction of critical theories in my writing degree shifted my views further. I began to engage my interest in community development with coding and communications, eventually serving as a city community engagement coordinator at the newly developed Institute for Public Health & Medicine at Northwestern University. I learned from the communities I worked with and identified research gaps in emerging views of public health that required new analytical approaches.

Here my GIS skills returned in high demand, as place is crucial to understanding health, and I found a home to integrate my interests. I learned to code, went to civic tech meetups, and joined hackathons. I pursued an online masters in GIS to further hone my GIScience skills and eventually moved across various communities.

In my new role as community engagement coordinator at the newly developed Institute for Public Health & Medicine at Northwestern University. I learned from the communities I worked with and integrated my interests and sense of urgency across humans, environments, and modern analytics in the most insightful way, unafraid of bending beyond the boundaries. Public health needs more geography to engage in the complex, intersecting problems we face as a human society.

What are your current research interests and directions?
My research at the Healthy Regions & Policies Lab centers on how “place” influences health outcomes in different ways for different people. I hope to better understand how structural inequality might be perpetuating social and environmental health disparities, and then develop GIS applications to communicate those results.

What is your most memorable field research experience?
One of the most memorable experiences was during Green City Day, May 2022. Photo courtesy of the Manuseto Institute (chichives.com), our newly released free and interactive web mapping application on environmental and social justice indicators, with the South Side community. We had added live air quality summaries from Microsoft research sensors in Chicago, and integrated data streams from multiple partners in the area. I was able to finally meet collaborators and community leaders in person to talk about the challenges ahead, improve the work we were already doing, demonstrate the work to visiting student groups, and make new connections in the fight for a more just future.

Raechel Portelli, Teaching Assistant Professor

How did you decide to become a geographer?
Two early factors influenced my choice to become a geographer. First, I competed in extemporaneous speaking competitions during high school that required me to stay abreast of world politics, where topics often had a geopolitical focus. After high school, I lived in the Netherlands for a year and a half and got to travel throughout Europe and attend college for marketing and communications. When I decided to return to the United States and go back to school, my experience abroad strongly influenced my decision to take up geography.

What is your favorite geographic topic or concept to teach?
I love teaching portfolio development. In today’s job market, it is essential for geography students to have strong portfolios. With increasing interest in visualization and data science as transitional and remote careers, the competition is fiercer than ever. Through portfolio development, students can apply design skills they learn from cartography to other forms of visual communication. The additional skills in web programming also give students more control over their professional web presence. It gives me great pleasure to think they are gaining skills they can apply to other areas of their lives.

Marynia Kolak, continued

My team from the UChicago Center for Spatial Data Science Research participated in Green City Day at the DuSable Museum for African American History this past summer, where we shared ChIYes (chichives.com), our newly released free and interactive web mapping application on environmental and social justice indicators, with the South Side community. We had added live air quality summaries from Microsoft research sensors in Chicago, and integrated data streams from multiple partners in the area. I was able to finally meet collaborators and community leaders in person to talk about the challenges ahead, improve the work we were already doing, demonstrate the work to visiting student groups, and make new connections in the fight for a more just future.

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I lead the U.S. Covid Atlas, a county-level exploration of the pandemic and social factors across time that will soon include oral histories to integrate the lived experience of COVID-19. I also have multiple projects evaluating how access to medications for opioid use disorder impacts lives over time, exploring the impacts of stigma and identifying potential intervention spots. Finally, my research will continue developing customized tools to empower communities to engage in exploratory spatial data analysis for evidence-based advocacy and policy support related to environmental justice.
Assistant professor Nikolai Alvarado and assistant professor Magdalena Novoa in urban and regional planning received funding to establish the Latin American and Caribbean Cities Collective at UIUC, a collaborative space for faculty, students, and community members to discuss and reflect on the multiple forms of urbanization and urbanism that shape the everyday lives of residents in Latin American and Caribbean cities. The collective was one of several initiatives selected for funding through a grant that the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies received from the U.S. Department of Education’s Title VI National Resource Centers program.

Professor Julie Cidell published a new textbook entitled Introduction to Transportation Geography: Transport, Mobility, and Place (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021) that explores the individual and societal impacts of past, modern, and possible future transportation systems. The book invites students to consider issues such as transport equity and sustainability, and mobility justice.

Professor Murugessu Sivapalan received the Tau Beta Pi Daniel C. Drucker Eminent Faculty Award from the UIUC Grainger College of Engineering. Siva was also elected to the 2021 Class of American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellows.

Assistant professor Marynia Kolak, in collaboration with a research team led by DePaul University geography faculty, was recently awarded a $250,000 NASA grant to work with a Chicago community on an environmental justice project, entitled “Designing for Just Green Enough: A Data Integration Tool for Informing Community Green Space Planning.”

Professor Shaowen Wang received multiple prestigious honors and awards over the past year:
- He was elected as an AAAS Fellow and received the 2022 American Association of Geographers (AAG) Distinguished Scholarship Honors, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the advancement of geography. The AAG award citation notes that “his personal scholarship has been outstanding, as has been his leadership of collective activities, his role in acquiring tens of millions of U.S. dollars in funding for research and related activities, his skillful mentoring of students and colleagues, and his efforts to broaden and diversify the current and future scientific workforce. Through his scholarly accomplishments, Wang has demonstrated the value of ‘big thinking’ and wide-ranging collaboration involving geographers and scholars in a diverse range of other fields.”
- Wang was also appointed as a 2022-23 Faculty Fellow by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation to support his participation on the Research Council of the newly established Taylor Geospatial Institute in St. Louis.

PhD student Sadiul Chyon was awarded the UIUC Graduate College Dissertation Travel Grant for his project “Sand and Gravel Mining in Bangladesh: Nature, Extent, and Sustainable Development.”

PhD candidate Wataru Morioka was awarded the highly competitive Graduate College Dissertation Completion Fellowship for his project “Network Dual K Function: Exact Statistical Methods for Analyzing Co-location on Street Networks and Applications to Living Environment Assessment.”

PhD student Shaowen Wang received the 2022 American Association of Geographers (AAG) Outstanding Early Career Award, which recognizes the overall excellence and potential of a young scholar in the field of geography. Wang was also elected to the 2022 Class of American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellows.

PhD student Sadiul Chyon was awarded the UIUC Graduate College Dissertation Travel Grant for his project “Sand and Gravel Mining in Bangladesh: Nature, Extent, and Sustainable Development.”

PhD candidate Wataru Morioka was awarded the highly competitive Graduate College Dissertation Completion Fellowship for his project “Network Dual K Function: Exact Statistical Methods for Analyzing Co-location on Street Networks and Applications to Living Environment Assessment.”

PhD student YiJun Zhao was awarded a three-year Future Investigators in NASA Earth and Space Science Fellowship for her project “Evaluating the Influence of Biosatellite Technology on the Colorado River.”

2022 AAG Annual Meeting

PhD student Yin Liu won first prize in the Student Illustrated Paper Competition, sponsored by the AAG Remote Sensing Specialty Group, for his poster “CropSow: A Novel Modeling Framework to Estimate Field-Level Crop Sowing Date with Multiscale Satellite Time Series.”

Master’s student Andrea Pimentel Rivera received a Student Field Study Award from the AAG Latin America Specialty Group, as well as multiple UIUC based and external awards to support her thesis research on mobility injustice in Puerto Rico: the Graduate College Master’s Travel Grant, a Whitten Fellowship from the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, a research grant from the Illinois Research Society, a Center for Latin American & Inclusion Fellowship from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning.

PhD student Chelsey Salas received the Geomorphology Specialty Group Graduate Student Paper Award for her project “Spatial and Temporal Distributions of Suspended Sediment Concentrations from Different Floodplain Geomorphic Environments of a Lowland Meandering River.”

Master’s student Lauren Weber received an Urban Geography Graduate Student Fellowship Award, which supports urban-oriented, graduate-level research. Lauren’s funded proposal is “Declaring Surplus, Approving Sale: Redevelopment Logics at the Periphery in Portland, Oregon.”

PhD student Chishan Zhang took second place in the Student Honors Paper Competition, sponsored by the AAG Remote Sensing Specialty Group, for his paper “County-Level Soybean Field Estimation Based on Bayesian-CNN Incorporating Phenology Dynamic.”
people’s living environment, such as accessibility to shopping facilities and other public amenities, as a means of enhancing public life.

Teaching GIS is also one of my prime interests. In February, I led a class on GIS and mapping as part of University Laboratory High School’s annual Agora Days, where teachers and community members are invited to share their knowledge and present topics of general interest. Eight students joined my class to learn about the longitude problem and how the Global Positioning System (GPS) works. They also got to use the opensource web platform Re:Earth to create maps illustrating historical events and locations around Champaign-Urbana. I hope students discovered how fun geography and GIScience can be after connecting these activities to their community. The Urbana Free Library and Champaign County History Museum also supported this project, providing us with a collection of historical photos and documents to explore and reference. I believe this type of community engagement helps advance geography as a multidisciplinary field.

I have enjoyed several other opportunities to share my skills and passion for geography across the Illinois campus. In Fall 2020, I made maps for history professor Dr. Roderick Wilson’s new book *Turbulent Streams: An Environmental History of Japan’s Rivers, 1600–1930*, and I helped urban planning professor Dr. Arnab Chakraborty estimate the socio-economic impacts of maintenance-related bridge closure in Los Angeles. After completing my PhD, I plan to continue researching and teaching in higher education and keep pushing the boundaries and possibilities of GIScience.

Field Research Postcards

PhD candidate Nina Roberts (advisor: Dr. David Wilson) ventured to the American Southwest this spring and summer to conduct fieldwork for her dissertation, tentatively titled “Profit or Peril in the 21st Century City: Climate Change, Gentrification, and the Real Estate State in Flagstaff, Arizona.” Her research was supported by the Charles Alexander and George Beatty endowed fellowships for geography doctoral students and she shared these photos and findings from her travels:

San Francisco Peaks

As seen from Flagstaff, Arizona in November 2021, the majestic San Francisco Peaks, at an elevation of over 12,600 feet, are treasured—and visible—throughout the city and beyond. Flagstaff’s environmental setting within the Coconino National Forest and its proximity to the Grand Canyon have long been major drawing points for tourists, skiers, climate-escapees, and real-estate investors attracted to its high-elevation climate, which in summer can be more than 30°F cooler than Phoenix. The mountains are sacred to the region’s Indigenous peoples, whose tribal lands surround Flagstaff and are integral to the region’s culture.

Villas

While some residents live in these “villas” near Flagstaff’s Continental Country Club permanently, a large percentage of the condos are reserved for vacation rentals. An estimated 25% of homes in Flagstaff are either investment properties or second homes for out-of-towners and sit empty most of the year, creating a housing scarcity that drives prices ever higher and makes living in the city increasingly unaffordable.
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