



2025/26 NEWSLETTER

HIGHLIGHTING RESEARCH, AWARDS, AND VARIOUS
ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM OUR STUDENTS AND FACULTY
FROM THE 2025/26 SCHOOL YEAR

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A YEAR OF GROWTH AND ACHIEVEMENT

A Message from the Outgoing Interim Chair

It is a true pleasure to write to you after serving as the Interim Chair of the Department of Geography and Planning. I have greatly enjoyed my time at the top of Rankin Science West. As I reflect on the academic year, I am struck by the incredible energy and dedication that define our community. It has been an honor to steward our department's strong tradition of excellence in teaching, research, and service through such a landmark year. We had a lot of milestones and accolades to celebrate:

Faculty hires: We were fortunate to have Dr. Kristen de Graauw and Dr. Jacob Warner join our ranks as tenure-track Assistant Professors in August. Their expertise has already begun to reshape our research capabilities and enrich our classrooms at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

We conducted a successful search for a new tenure track Planning professor. Dr. Garret Zastoupil joined us in August as an Assistant Professor. He came to us from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension after serving as their Community Development Educator. Thanks to the search committee for excellent work in securing Dr. Zastoupil.

PAB Accreditation: One of the year's most significant hurdles was the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) visit to ASU in November and our committee's meeting with the PAB in April at the APA meeting in Detroit. I am happy to share that the campus visit was a resounding success. **In June the PAB announced that our program was granted PAB accreditation!** This was a massive undertaking that has helped secure the future of our Planning Program for years to come. A big thank you to Dr. Elizabeth Shay and Dr. Chris Quattro for their tireless leadership during this process. And to the faculty, students, and alumni who participated in interviews and preparations as part of this process, your advocacy was pivotal.

This was also a big year for faculty and student accolades: Dr. Elizabeth Shay was awarded the 2026 UNC Board of Governors Excellence in Teaching Award. This award goes annually to one faculty member at each school in the UNC System. She was honored at the Awards of Distinction ceremony in April.

Dr. Maggie Sugg co-authored the 2026 Article of the Year in the Journal of Rural Health for a paper on maternity care in rural North Carolina. According to the journal, Dr. Sugg's article won because of its relevance, innovation, and applicability. Sarah Ulrich '24 was also a co-author on the paper.

Dr. Chris Quattro won the 2025 Journal of the American Planning Association Emerging Scholar Award. This award was based on a paper she co-authored on San Antonio's Infill Development Zone (IDZ).



The Department of Geography and Planning cleaned up at the Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies Awards program.

Dr. Maggie Sugg was one of two winners of the 100 Scholars Research Award. Her nomination letter noted that “her innovative research has garnered attention not only within the field of geography but also across interdisciplinary boundaries of medicine, climatology, and public health.” As an added bonus, she was also inducted into the Academy of Outstanding Mentors.

Geography graduate student Caleb Blackburn '21 won the Domer Research Award from the Graduate School for his research on the effects of climate events on mental health. His nominator described him as “driven, capable, and self-directed.”

Geography graduate student Caroline Fehlman won the Outstanding Thesis Award in the science and technology category. Her thesis focused on maternal healthcare access and was described by her nominator as “among the top 1% of theses” that they had reviewed in their career.

Geography graduate student Chris Lucero '24 won the Wachovia Environmental Research Award for his work in flood magnitudes following Hurricane Helene. This work involved months of fieldwork to identify high water indicators throughout the Watauga and Upper New River basins.

Fall and Spring Graduates: To all of our 2025/26 graduates - congratulations! You have navigated a rigorous curriculum and emerged as skilled geographers and planners ready to tackle the world’s most pressing spatial and social challenges. Whether you are heading into industry, public service, or further academia, you carry the reputation of this department with you. We are immensely proud of your hard work and cannot wait to see the impact you will make.

To our distinguished alumni, I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to our devoted friends and alumni. Your generous gifts to the Department of Geography and Planning Fund this past year have been transformative. Your support does more than just fund programs; it provides the scholarships and resources that allow our students to focus on becoming the next generation of leaders. Thank you for your continued advocacy, your mentorship of our students, and your commitment to our shared mission.

It was a remarkable year, and I look forward to seeing the Department of Geography and Planning continue to flourish.

Warm regards,
Bill Anderson



Caleb Blackburn '21, center, receives the Domer Research Award Photo by Kyla Willoughby)



Chris Lucero '24, center, receives the Wachovia Environmental Research Award (Photo by Kyla Willoughby)



Maggie Sugg, center, is presented the 100 Scholars Award and inducted into the Academy of Outstanding Mentors. (Photo by Kyla Willoughby)

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HELPING OUR STUDENTS?

Ways you can help:

- Share internship opportunities
- Share job openings
- Donate to our food pantry
- Contribute to scholarships

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STUDENT AWARDS & ACCOLADES

Appalachian State Celebration of Student Research

The university hosted their annual "Student Research Day" in April, an event that showcases research and creative activities while giving students the opportunity to hone in on their presentation skills. One undergrad student and three graduate students were selected to present their research in the form of a poster presentation to a panel of ASU faculty judges.

Chris Lucero won the graduate competition for his research titled "Drivers of extreme flood dynamics in southern Appalachian headwaters: insights from Hurricane Helene." Lucero's work involved extensive field work which aids in exploring the geographic variables that led to catastrophic flooding in Western North Carolina.

Quinn Keefer, undergrad and accelerated master's student, walked away with the undergraduate award for his poster titled "Post-disaster emergency department utilization among older adults following Hurricane Helene: a multilevel analysis in western North Carolina."



Quinn Keefer (right) and Chris Lucero (right), receiving their research award.

10 additional students from Geography and Planning presented their research across 9 research projects. Those students include Eryn Stowe, Olivia Caldwell, Owen Watkins, Isabella Schiavone, Eden Vigus, Aleisha Whipple, Analee Monreal, Caleb Blackburn, Bella Vanden Boom, and Bozeman Koonce. Faculty and staff mentors included Dr. Maggie Sugg, Dr. Derek Martin, Dr. Kathleen Schroeder, Alex O'Neill, and Sophie Ryan.

Departmental Scholarship Awardees

During our departmental graduation ceremony, students were recognized and awarded the following departmental scholarships:

Faye and Moses Crutchfield Geography Scholarship
Eden Vigus

Geography Scholarship for International Study
Eli Hazelwood

Jennifer DeHart Scholarship in Geography
Luke Phelps

Julian Yoder Scholarship in Geography
Megan Clarke

Neal Lineback "Geography in the News" Scholarship
Mary Grace McMillan

Robert E. Reiman Endowment for Geography & Planning Scholarship
Owen Watkins

James E. Young First Generation Scholarship
Logan Worcester

The department also recognized Lilly Baer, Bozeman Koonce, Analee Monreal (the 3 seen below), Abby Kratsch, and Charles Knowles who all received the **Vacendak Graduate Fellowship** for the 2025-26 year.



The awardee of the **Vacendak Graduate Fellowship** for the 2026-27 school year is Aleisha Whipple.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

TIMOTHY JOHNSON, 1979

Former Director, N.C. Center for Geographic Information & Analysis

Tim has contributed over 40 years to the geographic information system (GIS) profession. His career started in the private sector before he joined the NC Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (CGIA) in 1988, completing 36 years of service before retiring at the end of 2024.

Tim led CGIA as its Director for over two decades and became the state's first Geographic Information Officer in 2022. North Carolina has long been considered a national leader in GIS. He and his team supported the Geographic Information Coordinating Council, established in statute by the legislature in 2001 to guide development of geospatial strategy, standards, policies, and best practices. The team collaborates with local governments, state government agencies, and others on major statewide initiatives. Tim and his team, with outstanding support from the broader community, produced the biannual NC GIS Conference. It is one of the largest events of its kind in the country, attracting practitioners from North Carolina and beyond.

- Governor Roy Cooper awarded him The Order of the Long Leaf Pine, the state's highest civilian honor, upon his retirement, recognizing his exemplary public service to the citizens of North Carolina over a 36-year career.
- Today, Tim remains very active in his profession through a combination of volunteer and consulting roles. Among those roles are:
- Board Chair of the National Geospatial Collaborative (NGC), a 501(c)(3) focused on boldly seeking ways to improve the national geospatial ecosystem through public and private sector collaboration
- Member of the Georgia Geospatial Advisory Council using his knowledge of geospatial policy and statewide implementation strategies to advise and support Georgia's statewide efforts
- Committee chair/member of the National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) that focuses on state-level GIS collaboration where he served as the North Carolina state representative for many years
- Member of the Advisory Board of the Strategic AI Certificate Program with the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, sharing his geospatial subject matter expertise
- Geospatial Consultant for Sanborn Geospatial supporting its strategic planning and other projects



to view the interactive alumni map, visit:
geo.appstate.edu/alumni

alumni
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WALKABLE SCOTLAND

A REPORT FROM THE FIELD | *Dr. Elizabeth Shay*

Thirteen App State undergraduate students joined Professor Elizabeth Shay and Professor Kara Dempsey on a two-week exploration of Scotland on foot and train (and a few buses). Our travels ranged from intensely urban to the most rural—Edinburgh and Glasgow, the small cities of Perth and Inverness, the recreation gateway of Fort William, and several small settlements.

We were warmly welcomed by faculty, staff, and some students at four universities:

- University of Dundee's Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, where we got a sneak peek at impressive exhibitions by advanced planning and architecture students, with the extra treat of viewing the designs of textile students (above photo).
- Heriot-Watt University, a technology/engineering school set in a park-like former estate west of Edinburgh, where we toured campus and talked urban design and planning. Heriot Watt has specialized programs on robotics, sports, and more.
- University of Highlands and Islands – Perth, where we learned about this unique decentralized multi-campus university network. The Centre for Mountain Studies has compelling and timely work underway on land reform and ownership models, upland and mountain culture and heritage, wildlife and woodland management, sustainable rural and island communities, peat management, energy, recreation, and much more.
- University of Highlands and Islands – North West and Hebrides (Fort William). We heard from scholars at the Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research about work on regenerative and sustainable travel, slow tourism, digital technologies deployed in tourism and recreation, and community development and engagement, among other projects.

Recurring themes of wildlife/woodland management, land regimes, and rural development came to life when we visited community land trusts at Strathfillan and the remote Knoydart Peninsula.

Beyond academic visits, we toured Parliament on the day Scotland reelected their First Minister Swinney; climbed Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh and Kinnoull Hill in Perth; learned about local treasures such as the Macintosh Oak Room at Dundee's V&A (Victoria & Albert) design museum; walked the battlefield at Culloden Moor—site of the Jacobite rising's decisive loss; and explored the village of Plockton on the Kyle rail line. We met with planners and housing experts from Perth & Kinross Council and heard about familiar priorities—housing, health, community.

We hope these connections contribute to growing links of App State faculty and students with international partners, including Scottish colleagues with shared and complementary interests.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

DR. MAGGIE SUGG

National Rural Health Association Article of the Year (2026)

Dr. Sugg's article, "Mapping maternity care deserts: Driving distance and health outcomes in North Carolina," which was published in the Spring 2025 in the Journal of Rural health was chosen as the article of the year. Criteria included relevance of the topic, innovation in the methodology, applicability of the results, and overall reach of the article. Sarah Ulrich, a former graduate student of Dr. Sugg, was also an author on this article. Results found that "rural and low-income areas in North Carolina had fewer health care providers. Increased travel times and distances to clinical care were associated with higher cesarean delivery rates, increased severe maternal morbidity, preterm birth, and higher rates of gestational diabetes. These associations remained significant even after adjusting for age, race, and insurance status."



Awarded National Institutes of Health (NIH) Grant

From Appalachian State's College of Arts and Sciences Communications Director, Lauren Gibbs:

"Dr. Maggie Sugg is studying the challenges rural healthcare systems and their communities face during recovery from floods like those caused by Hurricane Helene. The project, titled "Supporting Flood Recovery in Rural, Mountainous Areas through Health Systems Knowledge Exchange and Fine-Scale Healthcare Utilization Data Analysis," is supported by a five-year grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) totaling over \$750,000.

For this two-phase project, Dr. Sugg is collaborating with Jennifer Schroeder Tyson, research assistant professor in App State's Department of Public Health, and researchers from Virginia Tech. Together, they aim to better understand the long-term health impacts of catastrophic flooding and strengthen future disaster preparedness."

[Click here to read the full article.](#)



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

DR. ELIZABETH SHAY, AICP

2026 UNC Board of Governors Excellence in Teaching Award Winner

Dr. Shay has been honored with the award that is given annually to one outstanding faculty member from each of the UNC System's 17 institutions.

[Click here to read a Q&A with Dr. Shay.](#) A highlight from the interview when asked what she enjoys most about teaching:

"The best part: students, who keep us honest and challenge us. And the applied and service orientation of my profession, so that we train students for a profession that requires knowledge and skill – but one that connects deeply with the community. In general education courses, we

introduce the discipline to lots of students across campus. Our upper undergraduate and graduate courses all have applied community-facing components, which lets us train our students with the skills young planners need to have while providing a useful service. There is regular back-and-forth between practitioners and academics, which keeps us busy trying out new things. And there's a strong regional network of our graduates, whom we call on to mentor our current students or come join a class as a guest speaker."

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

DECLAN KING, *Community & Regional Planning Major*

GIS Lab Supervisor, Josh Platt, sat down to talk with Declan King, our department's CAS Corp representative, to discuss his time as a member on the Town of Boone Planning Commission, his role in joint university research, and his internship experience in Lowell, Massachusetts.



JP: Hey Declan! I'll keep this super casual and hopefully not go into interviewer mode. First question, could you discuss a memorable classroom experience?

DK: Oh, there's not just one though! Last year in Planning Techniques, we had a basically semester long project on imagining different things in East Boone and sort of expanding a lot on parts from the Boone Next plan. We ended up getting to present to some of the planners at the Town of Boone. I think even more than giving the presentation, being able to work in the classroom for a whole semester on a particular project. You have so many people with so many different talents who are planners and non-planners alike and to see all those ideas come together from different angles. You really see a very rich idea generation phase for a project. That stands out as a really memorable thing that's happened in this department.

JP: Yeah. I think the department, for sure, is doing a good job of having these types of semester long projects.

DK: Yeah, those are really fun.

JP: So, your internship in Massachusetts. Could you just describe it and expand on you're proudest accomplishment with the internship?

DK: Yeah, so the internship was in Lowell, Massachusetts which is very up and coming suburb, or however you want to put it, of Boston. It's a very decently sized town with about 125,000 people in it. So, I think the things that were very notable about this for me is that planning isn't the same nationally, but it looks a lot different in Massachusetts. The planning department was significantly larger, per capita for the size of the city and in terms of the amount of people they had doing different things. So that was really fun to work with and be around. There were a lot of planners that had really specific things that they worked on and would have large wealths of knowledge on the subject. I worked on 3 main things. I worked on some research, a kind of visioning, if you will, for a new curbside plan. It was interesting to learn about the ways we design the downtown curb sides, like street parking, and the choices we make about what's on the curb in downtown. Oftentimes, in a lot of places, it can be very antiquated. In Lowell, they were very related to sort of an industrial pastime. There's a lot of industrial loading going on. There were so many loading zones so we were finding ways to move those areas towards the modern needs of the city. We worked on the idea of these areas called 'flex zones' where you can have zones for people who are picking up for DoorDash or ride sharing apps. Stuff like that that's super relevant now that doesn't really have a place. So that was really interesting in sort of seeing the behaviors that caused people to illegally park because of that. Like how much of that is just kind of compelled by the design of those spaces. Another thing I worked on, a lot of data visualization for the long range planning. That was definitely my favorite team to work with. I was just working with a lot of Census data and learning how they wanted to represent that type of data. Basically we were working on a tracker for the goals and the plan. I worked with the real estate team as well. They didn't really have an inventory what all the city owned properties were. We had basically a list of addresses that were city owned, or most of them, but nobody like knew what they actually were. There's so much more city owned property there. They have had sort of an industrial recession there so the town had to buy a lot of stuff up. I think the biggest takeaway; it was very eye-opening to compare (to planning in a town like Boone) and see the differences in planning regionally in the country. My proudest achievement was the index of city owned properties, because I feel like that's probably really going to go somewhere and benefit Lowell. The city will be able to advertise properties for development proactively, which is good.

JP: Well, I know you mentioned that planning is obviously different everywhere. But, given your experience in Massachusetts, how has that influenced your presence on the Boone planning commission?

DK: That's a great question. I mean, I think it's probably just given more background on the unique advantages and disadvantages places have and what we can do as the town of Boone. There are a lot of misperceptions about that.

continued...

I know that's been a big thing in Boone. I've had several conversations with the mayor about this. There's always frustration because people, you know, don't understand what the town actually has the ability to do. There are a lot of things people will talk about, things like a rent freeze or the town should do 'insert concern here'. There are a lot of people that want these very large social projects or sweeping legal actions by the town that oftentimes have other practical concerns. The state of North Carolina plays a big part in that. More often than not, Boone is limited because the town is not legally allowed to do certain things. The state legislature can be very restrictive. So, I think being able to see the other side of things has a) put more emphasis on the idea that it is more important for us to do what we can do as the town of Boone, and it definitely puts into perspective the need for potential change at the state level, particularly around legal policy, welfare policy, etc. Being able to be in Massachusetts and see the level of social investment there, I look at that and think "that would be incredible". There would be pretty life-changing things that could happen here if there should be that that combination of investment.

JP: How long have you been on the planning commission?

DK: I started in September of 2025 and I'll at least serve out the next year. I applied on a whim one night. It seems like I'm downplaying the importance of it, but I remember Dr. Quattro mentioned Boone has all these boards and commissions we should apply for. This was during my very first planning class. It just came back into my head at the beginning of junior year and I thought, this is something worth it. I applied but thought there's no way this will happen actually happen. I got a call from the planning director! He said they don't have a student seat, but we have a regular seat that we can put before city council and see if they want to put you in. They did. So that's cool! I'm super happy about how that all came together very quickly. There are always open seats on boards and commissions. People would be shocked at, not how easy it is, but just being interested and devoted to doing it is enough qualification to fill the position. I'm like the only capital 'P' planner on the planning commission. So, it's something I'd encourage other planning people to like get involved with. Most people in planning find their way of planning through a very roundabout path. If you're young and very much into planning already, if there is an opening, just go for it.

JP: Yeah, that's good advice. Just go for it. I know you are involved in a couple of research projects. Could you talk a little bit about the research project you're on with Dr. Elizabeth Shay? If you have an IRB, I know you can't say too much!

DK: Yeah, so I'm on a grant funded research project by North Carolina Department of Transportation which is a joint project between Dr. Shay and Dr. Tab Combs at UNC Chapel Hill and their planning department over there. It was originally just going to be about pathways to and from vehicle ownership in the state, but after the hurricane (Helene), it became focused in Western North Carolina. I've been involved in the focus group stage of this, which is still going on and will continue to go on throughout the next semester. I've been involved in creating the focus group guide and hopefully I'll be involved in doing some focus groups next semester. And, you know, coding and sort of synthesizing our data into useful conclusions. A lot of our primary data was really interesting and kind of not what you would have expected, I think. Specifically the Western North Carolina focus. So that's been a lot of fun, but also a very, very useful experience (doing research).

JP: I'll do some fun rapid fire questions. Favorite record of all time?

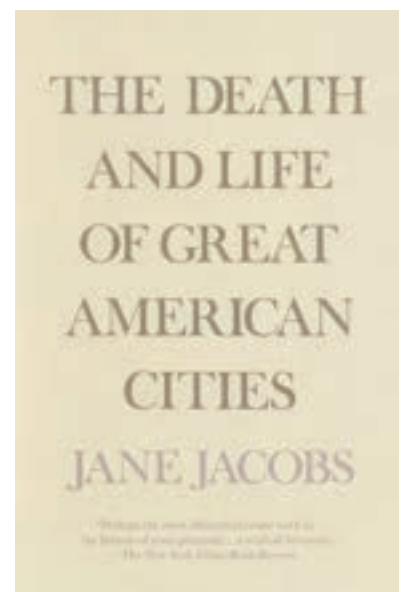
DK: For the last 5 years it was Twin Fancy by Car Seat Headrest. Now it is a more popular choice, which is Songs in the Key of Life by Stevie Wonder.

JP: Favorite movie of all time?

DK: Slightly less well informed take, but Spider-Man Across the Spider-Verse. It's the most like maximal movie ever! I can't recommend those the series of animated ones enough.

JP: Favorite book of all time?

DK: The Death and Life of Great American Cities by Jane Jacobs. The foundational piece for a reason. Talk about someone who has some of the greatest of all time observational skills and being able to piece up the world as she looked at it. I think everyone interested in planning should aspire to develop that skill.



COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAM AWARDED ACCREDITATION!

The Community and Regional Planning Program is proud to announce the successful accreditation of our undergraduate Bachelor of Science degree! We now join just 16 other undergraduate programs nationwide to offer vetted curricula that supports practical preparation for career-readiness. Championed by Program Director Dr. Elizabeth Shay, AICP and Dr. Chris Quattro, AICP, this effort will smooth the path to professional certification for current students and recent alumni. We must thank everyone who contributed to this extensive, comprehensive process and look forward to sharing more details in the future!

During the Planning Accreditation Board's visit during November, they commented on the passion and engagement of our current students, the strength of our ties with alumni and community partners, and our collegiality and interdisciplinary connections between Geography/Spatial Analysis and Planning. The Community and Regional Planning program was also featured in their summer newsletter as having Noteworthy Practices!



Dr. Elizabeth Shay, AICP (right) and Dr. Chris Quattro, AICP (left) visited Detroit in April for the National Planning Conference and to meet with the PAB Accreditation Board.



WELCOME NEW PLANNING HIRE, DR. GARRET ZASTOUPIL

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Garret Zastoupil to our department! His work bridges academic research and practical community engagement to explore how rural and resource-dependent communities can design and plan for resilient, sustainable futures.

Prior to joining App State, Dr. Zastoupil served as an Assistant Professor of Sustainable Rural Economic Development at Northland College—the first college in the United States to integrate environmental studies into its liberal arts curriculum. He obtained his Ph.D. in Human Ecology: Civil Society and Community Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He also worked as a Regional Community Development Educator with UW-Madison's Division of Extension, where

he partnered directly with local governments and community coalitions on strategic planning, public engagement, and leadership development.

Dr. Zastoupil will provide needed additional capacity to cover established planning courses, and complement our curriculum with new areas of expertise and practice.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR FACULTY & STAFF:

geo.appstate.edu/faculty-staff

TO VIEW CURRENT RESEARCH FROM THE DEPARTMENT:

geo.appstate.edu/research



Prior to the College of Arts and Sciences Spring 2026 Commencement, the department hosted a reception to celebrate our undergraduate and graduate students in a more personal setting with friends, family, and faculty. Dr. Derek Martin, graduate program director at the time, recognized each graduating master's student by highlighting their contributions to the department through research and teaching assistantships. Each student's faculty mentor spoke a few words about the student and followed by the celebratory hooding to declare them a master in their discipline. Dr. Maggie Sugg, the department's Award Committee Chair, also announced scholarship recipients for the 2026/27 school year (see page 4 for recipient list). While it is always difficult to see them leave, we are greatly proud of their accomplishments and excited for their future endeavors. Congratulations class of 2026!



Post celebration hunt for food.



Graduate students Sierra Lawing, Bella Vanden Boom, and Claire Grenis.



Graduate student Analee Monreal and her mentor Dr. Kathleen Schroeder



Dr. Rob Brown recognizing Olivia Caldwell for receiving a scholarship.



Graduate students Chris Lucero, Andres Lobo, Edgar Castillo-Ramos

INTRODUCING GEOGRAPHY & PLANNING'S NEW INTERIM CHAIR,

Dr. Derek Martin



It has been some time since our last departmental newsletter, making this an especially fitting opportunity to introduce myself as the Interim Chair of the Department of Geography and Planning. While I did not expect to assume this role quite so soon, I am honored to serve in this role and to reconnect with our alumni, donors, and friends.

While my colleagues in the Department of Geography and Planning know me well, many of you reading this may not, so please allow me to share a bit about myself. I joined the Department as an Assistant Professor in 2014 directly following the completion of my Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I also earned an M.S. in Geospatial Science from Missouri State University, and a B.S. in Biology concentrating in Aquatic Ecology from Lake Superior State University. As a broadly trained physical geographer, I spent time in private industry, nonprofit organizations, and federal agencies before ultimately finding my home in academia. My research has focused on river system geomorphology, hydrology, watershed processes, and most recently coastal processes. I have taught physical geography and quantitative methods courses across the undergraduate and graduate curriculum, led (and continue to lead) study abroad courses to South America and the Caribbean, and served as the department's Graduate Program Director for the last seven years.

Like many academics, my journey to where I am today was a winding one, but after joining ASU in 2014, it didn't take long for me to realize that my winding journey had reached its destination. The Department of Geography and Planning has been my home ever since.

As I begin this new role, I am encouraged by the strength and momentum of our department. Our continued success is a testament to the accomplishments of our outstanding students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends, and I look forward to supporting that momentum in the coming year.

Before I finish, I would like to take a moment to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to our outgoing Interim Chair, Dr. Bill Anderson. He guided us through a busy year and oversaw many important departmental functions and decisions including faculty searches, promotion cases, and the major milestone of national accreditation for our Planning Program. His leadership was critical to maintaining the success and momentum of our department during this time of administrative transitions and our department is deeply grateful for his service. Thank you, Dr. Anderson, for your leadership!

Whether you are a recent graduate, a longtime alum, a donor, or a friend of the department, thank you for remaining part of our community. Your support and engagement strengthen the Department of Geography and Planning in countless ways. I look forward to the year ahead, to working together with all of you, and to sharing the many accomplishments of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni in future newsletters.

With gratitude and excitement,

Derek

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO STAY UP TO DATE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!

