CHAPTER 18

“MAP THIS!”
A HISTORY OF THE GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT AT EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

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BACKGROUND. One interpretation of the history of all science positions geography as the queen of the sciences. The geographic tradition is traced back to the early Greeks and the very origin of western scholarship. Herodotus placed historic events within their geographic settings when he wrote *Historia* in the 5th century, B.C. Aristotle’s *Meteorologica* documented known variation in climate during the 4th century, B.C., along with its hypothesized impacts on human occupants. Eratosthenes very successfully estimated the earth’s circumference as early as the 3rd century, B.C. Strabo’s *Geographia* provided a wonderful description of the Greeks’ known world of the 1st century, B.C. Christopher Columbus accepted Ptolemy’s first century, A.D., view of the world as containing the location of 8,000 “known” places. The enduring contribution of these early Greek geographers was the development of a scholarly approach that emphasized the importance of describing the world from a spatial perspective and employing a holistic, integrative recognition of the independence of the world’s natural and cultural elements. This is geography.

Until very recently, the history of science since the time of the Greeks is a history of intellectual specialization and disciplinary fragmentation. This segregation of knowledge led to the creation of a contemporary university structure that also emphasizes compartmentalization of knowledge and the departmentalization of faculty and their students. The efficiencies associated with specialization have been a significant force in the industry of scholarship.

The history of geography at East Carolina University is as old as the University itself, from its first day of operation in 1909 as a teachers’ training school (ECTTS), to its transformations into a teaching college (ETTC, 1921), a liberal arts college (ECC, 1951), and then into a university (ECU, 1967). Geography at ECU also clearly mirrors the strong trend toward specialization and compartmentalization and a more recent call for integrative, interdisciplinary programs of research and instruction. Geographers feel right at home in such an intellectual environment. Throughout its history, geography at East Carolina has always been a persistent champion for holistic understanding and integrative science (Appendix 1).

THE AUSTIN YEARS. The very first faculty hired by President Wright on his very first day in office in 1909 was Herbert E. Austin, a classically trained geographer who had done his graduate work at the Clark University Graduate

Program in Geography in Worcester, Massachusetts. Austin emerged as the intellectual leader of the early campus, from his hiring in 1909 until his death in 1929, and, as a member of the queen of the sciences, he naturally directed the Science Department during those formative years. Austin was highly popular among that early group of students. He summarized the intellectual excitement of these students, soon to be schoolteachers, with an immediate identity from Tennyson, “Follow The Gleam.” The phrase and later the hymn were so symbolic to this new community of scholars that they were printed in the student handbook for several decades.

Austin placed his mark on the type of geography that students would be exposed to at ECTTS. Although there would be no major in geography for quite some time (not until 1943), all students at ECTTS took geography courses. It was Austin who composed the description of geography’s purpose in the first catalogue of 1909: “A study of the earth in its relation to life, its control over life, and the way that life responds to the various geographic factors. A study of the way that man adjusts himself to and utilizes the factors of his environment best to meet his needs.” Although later students of geography might cringe at this decidedly gendered and environmentally deterministic statement, students from 1909 until 1929 found Austin and his geography to be relevant and exciting. In fact with the clarity of hindsight, the Science (and later Geography) Department could be described as “dominant” on the campus (Bratton, p. 168).

President Wright had strongly resisted departmentalization of the new school but could no longer resist by 1921 when ECTTS became a four-year school offering a B.A. degree in teaching (ECTC). At that time, he officially created the Department of Geography along with 13 other departments. Director Austin is described as being Wright’s second in command by 1921. Thus the Department of Geography at ECTC was the very first in the state in 1921 and one of the first in the entire Southeast, preceded only by the department at the University of Tennessee. When Austin died in the fall of 1929, not only was the old administration building renamed the Austin Building, i.e., Old Austin, but he had left geography in a prominent position on the early campus.

THE 1930S AND 1940S. The geographer Parnell Picklesimer, having completed his B.S. and M.A. from Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee, joined Austin at ECTC in 1927, and with Austin’s death in late 1929 Picklesimer assumed the Directorship of Geography. Picklesimer became the department’s longest serving Director (or Chair), leading from 1930 until 1958. In the early 1930s, geography was embedded in all degree programs on campus and students took a minimum of two geography classes. Some high school teacher certifications required as much as 36 (quarter) credit hours of geography. The suite of courses at that time included Principles of Geography, World Regional, Mathematical Geography, Geography of Commerce, Geographic Influences on History, Geography of North Carolina, Conservation and Natural Resources, Geography of the Far East, Geology, and a sequence of teaching
methods courses for primary, grammar, and high school teaching certificates. Thus geography enjoyed centrality within the teacher education programs.

Faculty who joined Picklesimer early on included J. B. Cummings (M.A.), one of the Department’s longest serving faculty members (from 1930 to 1965) and also from Peabody College. These two men, Picklesimer and Cummings, provided continuity in the program throughout the 1930s. However, women, who taught most of the teaching methods classes, also played prominent roles. Each of these women taught for three or four years before moving on. They were Marie Peterson (M.S.) from the University of Chicago and Rachel McKey (M.A.) from Peabody College. Geography’s core group was expanded to three when W.A. Browne (the Department’s first faculty member to hold the Ph.D.) from Peabody College was hired in 1938. Dr. Browne resigned in 1948 and was replaced by George Martin, who had received his Ph.D. from Ohio State and remained at ECU through 1975.

By the beginning of the 1930s, geography’s purpose was slightly reformed as indicated in the College’s 1930 Catalogue: “Geography justifies its place in the curriculum based upon its practical utility and its cultural value. The instruction within this Department deals with the relations and adjustments of people to their natural environment.” Thus it is clear from even this early period that geographers were concerned both with knowledge and with the practical application of knowledge, i.e., relevance. Courses were added in response to this self-identified desire for relevance. These included The Geography of World Problems, The Economic Geography of Foreign Countries, Industrial Geography, Physiography, and Geography of the South.

The department witnessed rapid development during the early 1940s and it changed location in 1940. A new “Classroom Building” (renamed the Flanagan Building in 1949) had been completed and geography, along with several other departments, moved into this then state-of-the-art facility. A nonteaching major in geography (B.S.) was made available to students in 1943 and by 1948 that first geography degree program was split into a B.A. (nonteaching) degree as well as a BS geography degree explicitly for high school teachers, although the geography program would remain relatively small throughout the 1940s. That would change dramatically in the 1950s and 1960s. The first ECTC graduate with a degree in geography (B.A., nonteaching) was awarded to a woman, Mrs. Richard Newton in 1948. About 800 other geography graduates would follow Mrs. Newton over the next 53 years.

Although graduate-level work had been a part of the ECTC curriculum since 1930, it wasn’t until 1941 that the first Graduate Bulletin proudly announced that a graduate faculty numbering 35 could offer graduate courses in geography, among other disciplines. By 1943, a graduate student could earn a MEd with a “major” in geography requiring 24 credits of graduate geography work. Graduate level “Readings” and “Problems” courses were added to partially meet the need for graduate curriculum during the early 1940s. Undergraduate curriculum development during the 1940s reflected a societal need to understand the larger world.

Global economic depression and global military conflict reinforced such a need. Geographers responded with a suite of new regional courses focused on Africa, the “Orient,” Europe, Australia, Russia, and Latin America. Through time, these regional courses would be further subdivided to focus in greater detail on smaller spaces, by the early 1950s there were as many as 25 regional courses listed. Military and intelligence needs of the time led to the development of a course in meteorology and navigation (1943) and the Department’s first course in cartography (1946).

GEOGRAPHY DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1950s. The Department of Geography’s core faculty group expanded gradually throughout the 1950s, reflecting general growth of the College as well as effective leadership of the unit. Thus, the number of full-time geography faculty increased from three in 1950, to six in 1957, and to eight by 1960. Picklesimer continued to serve as Director until 1958, and he, along with J. B. Cummings and George Martin, hired several key figures in the unit’s history. Most notable of these were Robert Cramer (Ph.D., Chicago), who was hired in 1955 (Director and Chair from 1962 until 1975), and Harley Milstead (Ph.D., Clark), who was hired in 1957 (Director from 1958 until 1962).

The annual number of graduates with geography degrees remained modest throughout the 1950s, only six to eight per year, although the importance of geography within all of the College’s educational degrees remained strong throughout. Hundreds of students received the B.S. (teaching) in Social Studies with an emphasis in geography during the 1950s. These students are not included in geography’s total of majors.

One of the most notable graduates of this early group is Glenn Woodard (B.A., 1959). Glenn was an outstanding student from Oriental, North Carolina, who would later earn a master’s degree in planning at Georgia Tech and would then rise through the ranks of FEMA to become Director of Disaster Response and Recovery in the Southeast Region. Forty years after his graduation, Glenn would effectively head up federal relief and recovery efforts in the aftermath of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Floyd. Glenn remains active in University affairs to date.

Although the regional approach still dominated the undergraduate curriculum of the 1950s, a new systematic approach, which increasingly placed emphasis upon scientific description and explanation, was on the immediate horizon and led to the creation of courses in Weather and Climate, Urban Geography, Economic Geography, and Political Geography. Additionally, the first Map Reading/Interpretation course was added in 1958. Certainly this gradual shift was evident in the Catalogue of 1954: “Geography is concerned with the arrangement and distribution of things on the face of the earth. Some of these things are largely physical such as landforms and climate. Others of these things are largely cultural such as agriculture, manufacturing, and settlements. It is the association of these that gives character to a particular place and it is this association that is the core of geography.”
Prior to his appointment as director, Robert Cramer led the establishment of the Beta Iota Chapter of Gamma Theta Upsilon at ECC in 1955. The first student President of the local chapter of this national geographic honor society was Durward Potter, and that energetic first group of initiates won the best float award in the 1956 homecoming parade. Since its creation in 1955, the Beta Iota Chapter has initiated 333 members. Cramer also might be considered the “father” of distance education at ECU; he began offering a Principles of Geography course via closed circuit television in 1956. Another off-campus initiative was the department’s leadership role in the creation of the North Carolina Geographical Society in 1958 with the primary organizing effort coming, once again, from Robert Cramer. The close of the decade brought another new home for the Department of Geography when it moved from the Flanagan Building to the Graham Building at the conclusion of 1959. This geographic relocation also symbolized the start of a new era in the life of geography at ECC.

THE CRAMER YEARS. Perhaps Robert Cramer, who had become very active in addressing eastern North Carolina’s development issues and who perceived a need for planning, provided the most significant curricular change of this era. In 1960, Cramer established the first course in City and Regional Planning. His ultimate vision stemmed from social need within the region, and he firmly believed that a planned approach to economic and land-use development was necessary for the region to overcome its economic disadvantages. He also believed that one of the instructional missions of the Department of Geography should be the education of the first generation of planners in the region. In addition to the already highlighted developments championed by Cramer, he initiated and organized the first Geography Teacher Conference in North Carolina, funded by the National Defense Education Act as early as 1961.

Because of his vision and innovativeness, Cramer was named Director of the Department of Geography, replacing Milstead in 1962. The program immediately was energized with new hires between 1962 and 1964: Louis De Vorsey (London University), Morton Winsberg (University of Florida), Donald Petterson (University of London), Jean Lowry (Yale), Philip Shea (Michigan State), Richard Stephenson (University of Iowa), and Daniel Stillwell (Michigan State). These new faculty brought a variety of instructional expertise and with this strength came exciting new course offerings such as Aerial Photography, Advanced Cartography, Land Use and Development, Urban Site Design, Transportation Geography, Quantitative Analysis, and Recreational Land Use. The later course was created by Phil Shea and it quickly emerged as a long-lived favorite on the campus. Phil was a highly respected teacher who owns the record for the longest career in geography at ECU, 36 devoted years!

It is of interest that some very well-known geographers served at ECC in the early 1960s prior to establishing themselves as national research leaders at some of the finest programs within the Southeast. For instance, Louis De Vorsey served for two years before heading first to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and then to the University of Georgia where he carved out a distinguished career in historical geography. Morton Winsberg served for three years at ECC in the early 1960s before moving on to Florida State University and establishing himself as one of the premiere economic geographers in the discipline. Perhaps the heavy teaching loads of the era and the lack of research support were not a good match for these rapidly emergent scholars. Of course, all of that would change dramatically over the next few decades.

One of the rapidly growing numbers of students to take advantage of these opportunities represented by new faculty and new courses was Neal Lineback, who graduated with the B.A. in Geography in 1963. Neal completed his Ph.D. at the University of Tennessee in 1970. Since then, he has served as Chair of the Department of Geography first at the University of Alabama and later at Appalachian State University where he remains active. To this day, Neal writes a highly acclaimed syndicated weekly news column called “Geography in the News.” Other outstanding graduates of the program during the 1960s included: George Woodall (successful home builder and developer), Giles Hopkins (Senior Class President in 1963), and Maurice Allen (Most Valuable Player, Captain of the 1964 ECC Football Team, recipient of the Rawl Award as ECC’s outstanding Scholar-Athlete and the Lance Award for Leadership).

Although regional offerings still provided about one-half of the total course offerings, the newer courses were clearly devoted to an explicitly relevant, applied form of geography. Students found that these practical courses complemented the more traditional regional and systematic courses. In 1963, a minor in planning was developed by Richard Stephenson and colleagues and made available to students in 1964. The impacts of these developments on enrollments and numbers of majors were immediate. The number of graduates per year increased to about 25 by the later 1960s, and the number of majors reached as high as 130. Throughout the mid-to-late 1960s, total geography enrollments at ECC ranked in the top five nationally, only behind schools like UCLA, Ohio State, and Minnesota.

Geography majors of this era also were encouraged to engage in worthwhile professional activities outside the classroom. For example, Dr. Daniel Stillwell (Ph.D., Michigan State), hired in 1963, and his students in cartography classes constructed a 6-foot diameter globe, which was then presented to Joyner Library and proudly displayed in the main lobby. Stillwell also should be noted here for publishing this Department’s very first article in the Annals of the Association of American Geographers, the discipline’s flagship journal, in 1964. Nine different ECU faculty have published 11 articles in the Annals since that auspicious beginning.

With a new emphasis on real-world data analysis within the undergraduate and the graduate programs, Richard Stephenson (along with two math professors, J. B. Davis and Carroll Weber) lobbied for access to academic computing in 1963. Their
efforts were rewarded by then-President Leo Jenkins, who personally ordered the purchase of an IBM 1620 to be placed in the basement of the Old Austin Building. This single act represents the origin of academic computing at ECU and it is noteworthy that a geographer was at the heart of it.

There was excitement at the graduate level, as well, during the early 1960s. The Department had served the MEd since 1943 and the MA in Geography was made available to students in 1962. The first graduate of this new MA program was Timothy “Dale” Holland. Dale established himself in the region as a very effective public planner and subsequently has led a successful private consulting firm for many years.

Four faculty hires of the mid-to-later 1960s would have a profound impact on the history of the department. Ennis Chestang (Ph.D., Indiana) was hired in 1965, and he would serve as departmental chair for a full decade between 1975 and 1985. Palmyra Monteiro, better known to most as “Pia” Leahy, was hired in 1967. Pia would emerge over her 30-year career as arguably the most popular geography instructor in the history of the department. The rigor and enthusiasm of her cartography courses remain as vivid memories and the center of conversation whenever students from the 1970s and 1980s gather. By the conclusion of her career, Pia had won teaching and advising awards not only from ECU but also from the National Council for Geographic Education. The department’s emphasis on relevant social and natural science did not go unnoticed by President Jenkins. Robert Cramer and Richard Stephenson, along with their geography colleagues, decided that the Department’s emergent instructional emphasis on planning and regional development should be translated into an academic research and service center that could provide organized and effective outreach to eastern North Carolina. President Jenkins invited this “dynamic duo” to his office in 1965 and gave his blessing to plan such a center. Thus, The Regional Development Institute was born in 1964 with Robert Cramer as its interim director. That Institute, now housed in the Willis Building, is nearly 40 years old and maintains close ties with its origin in Geography. This innovative model of regionally relevant, interdisciplinary research and service would endure and, in later years, provide a legacy of opportunities for geographers to build similar programs at ECU.

William ‘Wes’ Hankins was hired in 1968 and immediately continued the development of the embryonic planning program. Wes created new planning courses, formalized internship opportunities for students, initiated a new student planning organization (SPAN, Student Planning Association and Network), and began to champion the establishment of a planning major, which would finally come on line in 1974. Wes also served ably as interim chair of the Department of Geography and Planning in 1985/86 after Ennis Chestang relinquished the chair’s position. To date, Wes remains an enthusiastic instructor and leader of the planning program at ECU, which would remain within the Department until its separation in 1994. Wes has won several awards and served as an officer in state and national professional planning organizations for his service to the discipline of planning. Finally, another long-serving faculty member, Janet Pettersson (Ph.D., Florida) was an outstanding geography teacher and a favorite among students from 1964 until her retirement in 1988. Janet was an exemplary introductory instructor and taught a very popular course on Africa. She received a number of grants in support of her instructional program.

One departmental change of the late 1960s that reflected ongoing academic specialization and the resulting need for departmentalization was the removal of the geology discipline from the Department, which occurred in 1967. Geology had grown within the Department of Geography and a separation was a natural outcome of its growing importance nationally and on the campus. The individual who had most notably led this development was Jean Lowry (Ph.D., Yale), who was hired by Cramer in 1959. By 1964, geology courses numbered 10 within the unit. The importance of geology’s presence was at least symbolically recognized when the department was renamed Geography and Geology in 1965. That label lasted only two years and geology became an independent unit in the fall of 1967 at which time geography’s label reverted to the Department of Geography. These two units, geography and geology, maintained important instructional service and research ties thereafter.

As a signal of the stature of the Department of Geography at ECC, the unit was selected in 1965 as a depository for all federally produced map products. This was an uncommon honor. Then in 1966, Greenville and the Department were selections to host the Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers in 1968. The Southeastern’s Program Chair, Sandy Bederman, reported the meeting to be one of the Division’s very best.

The 1960s would close with the hiring of a senior professor, Ralph Birchard (Ph.D., Iowa) in 1968. Ralph helped to provide needed leadership, along with Cramer, for a very youthful departmental faculty. The 1970s would open with Robert Cramer continuing as chair and the hiring of Edward Leahy (Ph.D., Florida) providing a total of 12 full-time faculty. Thus the unit remained as one of the largest geography departments within the southeast. Ed Leahy would marry Pia Monteiro shortly after his arrival in 1970 so there were then two Leahys on faculty. The early 1970s also represented watershed years in the history of geography at ECU as the total number of graduates grew rapidly. A peak was achieved in 1973 when the total number of geography graduates reached 75.

One of the students amid this multitude was Owen Furuseth, who graduated with his B.A. in 1971 and his M.A. in 1973. Owen completed his Ph.D. in 1978 at Oregon State and currently serves as Chair of the Department of Geography and Earth Science at UNC-Charlotte. In 1998, Owen received the Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers’ Research Honors’ Award. Other ECU geography graduates from the 1970s who have distinguished themselves in various fields and brought honor to this department include Mike Kelly (restaurateur and
member of ECU Board of Trustees), James McCluskey (Professor and Interdisciplinary Program Director, Austin Peay University), and John Morgan (Professor and Chair, Emory and Henry College).

The early 1970s witnessed other key historical events. The department moved onto the second floor of the recently completed Social Science Building (soon thereafter to be named the Brewster Building) in 1971. This provided a significant expansion in space to accommodate growing programs and was enthusiastically received by faculty and students. That very fall, Douglas Wilms joined the faculty from the University of Georgia where he had worked closely with Lou De Vorsey, the former ECC faculty member. Doug would distinguish himself in a number of ways at ECU. Doug also led the way for another Georgia Ph.D., Donald Stelia, to join the faculty in 1973. Don would emerge as a nationally recognized soils geographer within just a few years.

Robert Cramer had achieved a great deal for the department and since his arrival in 1954. To some extent, these successes led to his election as national President of Gamma Theta Upsilon, geography’s national honor society, in 1973. That same year, in recognition of geography’s previous interdisciplinary success, e.g., the creation of RDI and the initiation of academic computing, Richard Stephenson was appointed to direct ECU’s newly created Institute for Coastal Resources (today ICMR). Once again, geography had clearly illustrated its ability to bring diverse disciplines together in order to understand and influence real regional issues. Richard successfully established the structure of the ICMR and led it through its infancy. Its success today is at least partly attributable to Geography and its strong historic presence at ECU.

Curricular developments in the discipline during the early 1970s placed greater emphasis on theory and these trends were evidenced in new courses such as Industrial Location Theory, Planning Theory, and Regional Development Theory. The 1973 Catalog elaborated on this changing nature: “Geography is the study of space . . . The geographer’s method of inquiry concentrates on two questions, where and why . . . modern geography is concerned with describing and explaining spatial distributions.” Other new offerings reflected expansion within physical geography and included coastal geography and soils geography. A third course in cartography, Map Design and Map Compilation, led to renovation of several Brewster classrooms to accommodate the popularity of these skill-oriented classes. After a sustained effort of 10 years, the planning major was finally approved in 1974.

Robert Cramer’s vision had finally been realized, and he could now step aside and make room for the next generation of departmental leadership. The department that Robert Cramer had inherited did not resemble the one that he developed. It was much bigger, it was housed in a modern facility, and its mission was much larger than the education of future teachers. Cramer relinquished the chair’s position in the spring of 1975.

TRANSITION YEARS, 1975 THROUGH 1986. Ennis Chestang had 10 years of experience at ECU and he was ready for the challenge of departmental leadership. He assumed those duties in 1975 and he faced a decade of transition. ECU had just attained its university status in 1972. From this teaching-dominated environment, in which four or five classes was the norm for each geography professor, the teaching load gradually changed to two or three classes, to accommodate the establishment of meaningful geographic research agendas.

Two of the most significant events to occur during this transition period were the renaming of the unit to the Department of Geography and Planning in 1980 and the retirement of Robert Cramer in 1983. First, the planning program had become an important part of the department since its first appearance in the early 1960s, and the department’s renaming was a natural outcome of that growth. Second, Robert Cramer’s retirement in 1983 was a historic moment in the unit’s life. Robert’s commitment to the unit and to the university was a source of inspiration for many of the faculty and students. The Cramer family had established the Cramer Scholarship, dedicated to foreign educational experience for undergraduates or graduate students, in 1982. Nearly 20 students have benefited from that generosity since its creation. This legacy of Robert’s commitment pays continuing dividends.

Indications of increased scholarly productivity emerged throughout the 1970s and the early 1980s under Chestang’s leadership. For instance, the Department hosted an impressive research conference on rural land-use change in 1979. Professors John Fraser Hart (Minnesota) and Merle Prunty (Georgia), two of the premiere geographers in the country, keynoted this conference. Don Steilai and Dick Stephenson authored a book on North Carolina in 1975 and Steila followed that with a widely adopted text on soils geography in 1976. Ed Leahy, Don Steila, and Doug Wilms authored a popular introductory college text, Earth and Man, which was published in 1981 by Wiley & Sons. In addition to these texts, there also were a number of refereed journal articles from the faculty that just started to appear in the research literature. Simon Baker, Chestang, Wilms, Stephenson, Steila, and Leahy each produced at least one refereed article during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Another faculty member, Charles Ziehr (Ph.D., Indiana), was hired in 1978 and he also represented the new breed of faculty committed to effective instruction and scholarly activity outside the classroom. The first research grants were awarded to departmental faculty during 1979 and 1980 with funding from the NC Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Geological Survey. External funding in support of faculty research, instruction, and service would expand significantly throughout the late 1980s and 1990s. Additionally, Doug Wilms served as Associate Director of the RDI during the early 1980s reaffirming geography’s leadership role in applied, regional research at ECU. A series of faculty retreats during this period led to the current group of departmental specializations in coastal, rural, and technological aspects of geography.
A number of instructional developments also marked this transitional era. For instance in 1975, the department initiated a Field Course in Costa Rica for graduate students. Robert Cramer along with Don Stella started this program. This was a hugely popular annual program that soon involved a large number of students, faculty, and destinations. Important links with the National University of Costa Rica were established. Through time, the program was extended to Morocco and Italy. Next, a nonthesis Concentration in Planning was added to the M.A. in Geography in 1977. This was intended to attract working professionals back to campus for postgraduate work. A substantial number of students took advantage of this opportunity. Simon Baker (Ph.D., Clark), who had been hired from the Sea-Grant program in 1978, provided the Department’s very first course in remote sensing in 1980 as well as an advanced course in production cartography.

Another contemporary techniques course, Computer Cartography, was initiated in 1984. Internship courses for planning and geography majors were formalized in 1981. These courses provided academic credits for students involved in work settings, which have often led directly to employment opportunities. One of the individuals who played a key role in these developments was Muluwa Wubneh, who joined the Department in 1979 and currently serves as the Chair of the Planning Department, which was separated from geography in 1994.

Finally, a significant part of the transition of this period involved the reduced departmental involvement in programs of teacher education, at least in a formal way on campus. The B.S. for high school geography teachers and the MEd with a geography emphasis both were eliminated in 1983. Thus the department had moved far from its origin as a service program for teacher education in 1909, and, by 1983, the instructional programs in the unit had strong missions in the liberal arts, professional training, and graduate education. The growing strength of the graduate mission during this transitional era is indicated by the ascent of one of its graduates. In 1981, Jonathan Phillips’ paper was selected as the outstanding M.A. research paper at the annual meeting of the Southeast Division of the Association of American Geographers. Jonathan would go on to earn a Ph.D. at Rutgers. He returned to the geography faculty at ECU in 1987 and became the Department’s most decorated researcher. He left ECU in 1997 to serve as Chair of Geography at Texas A&M and now occupies a research chair at the University of Kentucky. The strength of the department’s professionally oriented planning program is indicated by the memorable presence of a cohort of nearly 20 future Malay urban and regional planners who graduated from ECU in 1986. Approximately 50 Malay planners would graduate from ECU during the late 1980s.

**THE ZONN YEARS.** Leo Zonn (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee) came to ECU as Chair of the Department in 1986. Leo arrived from Arizona State University where he had compiled an outstanding record of teaching and research. Additionally, Leo’s enthusiasm for geography was infectious. In fact, some faculty affectionately refer to this era as the “Zonnic Years.”

If the Chestang era provided a gradual transition toward a more research-oriented environment within the department, there can be no doubt that the Zonn years, from 1986 to his departure in 1997 when he accepted a chair’s position with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, represented revolutionary fervor. Leo, to this day, is regarded as one of the most effective intellectual leaders ever to occupy a chair’s position at ECU. His is an enduring legacy. Leo added to geography’s important role as a developer of interdisciplinary studies. He led the design and implementation of the MA in International Studies, serving as its founding director. His example inspired other geographers of this period to play key roles in the creation of additional interdisciplinary instructional initiatives, specifically North Carolina Studies and Coastal Studies.

The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a remarkable growth of scholarly activity within the department under Zonn’s leadership. Scholarly activity outside the classroom was fully encouraged and institutionally supported with reassignment from classroom teaching, usually one or two classes per semester depending upon the intensity of effort needed to complete the research or service projects. As was the case throughout the history of the department, change could be unsettling. However, existing faculty coped well with these new expectations and embraced the new direction.

Many of the ECU geography faculty who were present when Zonn arrived engaged in exciting projects and remained active outside the classroom. For example, Richard Stephenson received one of the department’s largest grants from the U.S. Geological Survey in 1997 to create a computerized inventory of place-names in the Southeast. Doug Wilms helped to create the North Carolina Geographical Alliance in 1987—the longest running externally funded project in the department, with funding to date of $1.7 million from the National Geographic Society and a variety of public and private sources. The Alliance is dedicated to the transfer of contemporary geographic knowledge from universities to grade school teachers. The Alliance’s series of teacher institutes, teacher resources, workshops, and newsletters represent one of the greatest contributions of this department to the people of North Carolina and to the discipline of geography. Additionally, Simon Baker engaged in a series of important land-use studies that formed an early basis for coastal policy at both state and federal levels.

A significant part of Zonn’s effectiveness involved the hiring of outstanding faculty during the late 1980s and early 1990s, necessitated by faculty retirement. Talented new faculty members came with Ph.D.s in hand and a clear devotion to effective teaching and meaningful research. They included Jonathan Phillips (Rutgers), Johnathan Bascom (University of Iowa), Audrey Clarke (Kent State), Paul Gares (Rutgers), Mike Slattery (Oxford), and Yong Wang (University of California, Santa Barbara). The Zonn-led department between 1987 and 1994 hired
all of these individuals, each of whom brought outstanding instructional and research performance.

Jonathan Phillips is the lone ECU faculty member to win the prestigious, "New Scholars Award," from the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools in 1989 and the Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers' Research Honors Award in 1995. Johnathan Bascom compiled an enviable record of instructional and scholarly excellence during his 10-year stay at ECU, winning not only the prestigious Alumni Association Teaching Excellence Award in 1994 but also authoring a widely acclaimed book on issues associated with East African refugees. Mike Slattery and Paul Gares teamed with Phillips to provide one of the strongest programs in geomorphology within American geography. This trio collectively came to be known as the "Tobacco Road Research Team" and their record of funded research and refereed articles would be the envy of any premiere Ph.D. program in the country.

With the departures of Phillips and Slattery in 1997, Gares remained to provide effective leadership and continued research productivity for a new Tobacco Road Team that would include Scott Lecce (Wisconsin) and Patrick Pease (Texas A&M). Dr. Yong Wang came to ECU in 1994 from Santa Barbara, the premiere Geographic Information Science program in the country. Wang immediately and single-handedly completed the Department's Spatial Analysis Laboratory to accommodate contemporary computing approaches in geography. Thus he finished the work that earlier had been started by Ziehr, Wade, and Gares. The design for technological facilities and curriculum had been established in the "Walsh Report," a study commissioned by the department and conducted by Steve Walsh of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Despite the concentration of effort needed to nurture this advanced form of information technology, Yong Wang established an outstanding record of research in the field of remote sensing through his generation of external funding and frequent refereed articles.

Other outstanding graduates of this period include James Lowry (Professor and Chair at East Central University of Oklahoma), Thomas Pond (author of a very popular text on U.S. soils geography), Scott Wade (instructor and computer laboratory manager at ECU), David Hunt (a department head in a leading GIS consulting agency), and Andy Moncla (president of a successful location analysis consulting agency). In 1994 the planning program and its faculty (Wes Hankins, Mulatu Wubneh, and Richard Stephenson) separated from the Department of Geography. These three had contributed mightily to Geography and its students over the years—but, encouraged a renewed focus on liberal arts education and graduate education. A number of truly outstanding geography students were served by the Department during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Randi Horner, who received her B.A. degree in 1989, was selected in 1988 by the membership of the Southeast Division of the Association of American Geographers as the Merle Prunty Outstanding Undergraduate. Subsequently, she won the Gamma Theta Upsilon national award as Outstanding Geography Undergraduate in 1989. Randi went to the University of North Carolina to commence graduate work. She suffered an untimely death in 1996, and remains the most highly acclaimed undergraduate in the ECU department’s history. Melissa Tollinger, who completed her M.A. in 1994, won the Outstanding Masters Research Award at the annual Southeastern Division meeting in 1994. Her work represents one of the earliest efforts to document peoples’ perceptions of new coastal hazards associated with global warming and possible sea-level rise. Thus, the department’s concern with the relationship between people and environment continues to flourish.

In order to accommodate the desire of many undergraduates for a problem-solving focus and to take full advantage of geography's new information technologies, a B.S. in Applied Geography was approved for start-up in 1991. To reemphasize the academic nature of the M.A. degree, the nonthesis option was removed in 1996. A new graduate core course emphasized the history of the discipline and its methodologies. New courses in geographic data, remote sensing, computer cartography, and geographic information systems revealed the rapid growth in geographic information science, and students found ready employment when armed with new concepts and skills provided by this curricular development. Within physical geography, new courses emphasized natural hazards, fluvial geomorphology, and terrain analysis. Human geographers provided new courses in landscape imagery, cultural geography, and gender issues.

Before Zonn’s departure in 1997, another round of retirements and resignations provided opportunity to hire Deborah Dixon (University of Kentucky), Holly Hapke (Syracuse University), Jeffrey Colby (University of Colorado), and Karen Mulcahy (CUNY). The first two hires would provide strength in human geography, especially social theoretic approaches and contemporary views on regional development. The later two provided much needed assistance in geographic information science. Of the four faculty just listed, Deborah Dixon would return home to the United Kingdom in 1999 to a Ph.D.-granting program in Wales.

Deborah was and remains a highly productive faculty member who compiled an outstanding record of publication during her brief stay at ECU. In addition, she served ably as Graduate Coordinator for the department and was a popular teacher at all levels. Her energy and enthusiasm were every bit a match to that of Leo Zonn. The losses of outstanding faculty like Phillips (1997), Zonn (1997), Slattery (1998), Dixon (1999), and Bascom (2000) posed a tremendous challenge of continuity and leadership in the ensuing years. But, with every loss came new opportunity, which was embraced by the department.

A SHORT INTERIM. When Leo Zonn left for Chapel Hill in 1997, the void in leadership left uncertainty, even insecurity for geography faculty and students. In many ways, the loss was devastating. Michael Palmer, who is an ECU historian and a very productive scholar, was appointed interim chair by Arts and Sciences Dean W.
Keats Sparrow. Immediately, there was relief from the natural trepidation that accompanied the loss of Leo and so many talented people. Michael did a superb job to quell any fear and to place key individuals in leadership positions within the department. At that very point in time, of the 12 full-time faculty within the department, there was no geographer with the title of full professor and there were only two geographers with tenure, Paul Gares and Jonathan Bascom. Not only was there uncertainty about the future of the unit but also a sense of uncertainty natural to a youthful group of faculty. Through the steady leadership of Mike Palmer and the cooperation of the entire roster of faculty members, the direction of the unit was reestablished and the quality of experience for faculty and students was maintained.

Although departmental development would have to be placed on hold during this two-year period from 1997 to 1999, several talented faculty members were hired to replace those recently departed. Scott Leccie (Wisconsin), Patrick Pease (Texas A&M), and E. Jeffrey Popke (Kentucky) all would be added in 1998. Leccie is a fluvial geomorphologist, Pease is an aeolian geomorphologist, and Popke is a human geographer with a strong background in critical geographic theory. As was the case over the previous decade, these three represented talented new faculty with strong potentials for instructional and research excellence.

In spite of the upheaval of the 1990s, the scholarly productivity of the faculty did not suffer. For instance, the unit ranked third during the 1990s, behind only the University of Georgia and Chapel Hill, in the number of refereed articles appearing in the *Southeastern Geographer* and ranked far ahead of other flagship programs such as those at South Carolina, Kentucky, Florida, and Florida State. The amount of external funding in support of departmental research, instructional, and service programs reached nearly $2 million in the 1990s. At the same time, the instructional program showed some signs of erosion with worrisome declines in enrollments, majors, and graduate students.

**CURRENT EVENTS.** After a national search conducted in 1998–1999, Ronald L. Mitchelson was appointed chair of the Department upon the recommendation of Dean Keats Sparrow. He assumed the duties in July of 1999. Mitchelson earned his Ph.D. from Ohio State with specialties in economic geography and transportation. He spent the first 13 years of his career at the University of Georgia and then spent 7 years as a chair at Morehead State University in Kentucky where he compiled a balanced and strong record of teaching, research, and service.

Ron Mitchelson inherited an ECU department that was full of energy and potential for development. Organization and development were needed on a number of fronts including recruitment of majors and graduate students, organization of the geographic information science curriculum and facilities, creation of an appropriate research facility for physical geographers, and the creation of a rural development concentration. These developmental needs were highlighted at the very first faculty meeting of the 1999–2000 academic year, and faculty members were eager to get started.

Tragically, within the next month, Hurricane Floyd would devastate the region and the local community. The department van was lost to Floyd's floodwaters while in the line of duty. Then Deborah Dixon, a key faculty leader, would announce her resignation, and eight months later, Johnathan Bascom would announce that he was headed to Calvin College. Despite these significant interruptions, a host of activities led to dramatic improvements within the Department from 1999 to date.

In the area of geographic information science, the department initiated a campus-wide GIS users’ group in 1999, formalized an undergraduate certificate program in Geographic Information Science in 2000, and completely updated the spatial analysis laboratory for student and faculty use. Subsequently, Mitchelson headed up a campus committee that proposed the creation of an interdisciplinary GI Science Center with research, instructional, and outreach capacities. Funding for this Center was approved during the summer of 2000, and it became housed in the Brewster building under the directorship of Dr. Yong Wang. As has been the case throughout its long history at ECU, geography has championed the need for interdisciplinary approaches in research, teaching, and service.

In physical geography, a fully functional research laboratory devoted to faculty and student analyses of sediments and soils was completed in June, 2000. This wonderful facility has permitted the integration of undergraduates in funded research. In human geography, a rural development initiative was fully implemented with external funding, new undergraduate and graduate courses in agricultural and tourism development, and an exciting research project dealing with kenaf, a promising replacement crop for tobacco.

Former disturbing trends in enrollments, number of majors, and number of graduate students were reversed. Effective recruitment strategies permitted prospective students to witness the high quality of ECU programs in geography and the resulting employment opportunities. Strategies included the development of a new departmental web page focused on opportunities for students, a recruiting program for introductory courses, and the creation of a social/service club for geography majors and minors called GeoClub. Students and faculty enjoy movie nights, bowling nights, camping trips, picnics, softball games against planning, and soccer matches against geology. A weekly gathering on Friday evenings at a downtown restaurant fosters a deeper sense of academic community. Jeff Popke spearheaded the creation of Geography’s Honors Program and it was fully implemented by the fall semester of 2000.

With increased program popularity, the list of outstanding students to graduate from the Department continued to expand and this the late 1990s and the new millennium with the likes of undergraduates such as Miwa Anderson, Christina Quattrone, Justine Allpress, Lena Ellis, Tracy Cash, Prentice Jackson, Daniel
Keefe, Stephen White, Evan Gutshall, and Jeffrey Prince. The talent of the students was at least partially revealed by their victory in the North Carolina Quiz Bowl of 1996, the Department's first championship team. Team captain Rich Elkins and his teammates Chris Cabral, Eva McKeel, Mike Russell, and Mario Scherfauder would not be denied the victory. Coach Scott Wade had assembled a powerhouse team that swept away competition from Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Greensboro, Wilmington, and Appalachian State.

The graduate program has also served outstanding students. Recent M.A. students, Karen Cappiella, Emily Selby, Brian Andrews, Mark Lampe, Mark Lange, and Aaron Russell, have entered Ph.D. programs, or have secured impressive employment records in the field. At the graduate level, the M.A. with a Concentration in Planning and the M.A. nonthesis option were reestablished with full recognition of individual student aspiration and need.

Two recent hires, replacing Dixon and Bascom, are exciting additions to a solid geography program. Derek Alderman (University of Georgia) and Rebecca Torres (University of California, Davis) had immediate impact on the strength and vitality of the program in human geography. Alderman is the 2000 recipient of the Nystrom Award for excellence in dissertation research. This highest honor for new scholars is bestowed by the Association of American Geographers. Derek’s instructional and research emphases on the political and cultural geography of the South are already popular with students. Rebecca Torres and Holly Hapke have brought immediate identity and visibility to the unit’s emphasis on rural development. Once again, the Department has provided effective leadership in establishing multidisciplinary approaches to regional issues. Early directors, Austin and Cramer, certainly would be proud.

Any statement which highlights this history of the Department of Geography at ECU must celebrate the past and describe an ascendant department that is well positioned to continue the long history of significant contributions and excellence in all dimensions of professional activity. The mission statement adopted by faculty members of the unit in May 2000 states that, “Geography is concerned with geographic patterns, processes, and systems operating at a variety of scales ranging from the local to the global. Geographers develop awareness of the geographical context, and interactions between social and natural phenomena. Instructional and research activities within the department are devoted to this understanding and to the skills that are needed to further it.”

Geography at ECU has steadfastly remained faithful over its 92 years of history to the original charge of our Greek origins—reasoning that is both spatial and integrative in its nature. These two attributes form the basis of instructional and research programs within the unit, and the historical record reveals a set of scholarly activities devoted to that charge. The Department of Geography looks forward to pursuing geographic inquiry and to serving students, our region, and the larger discipline.

APPENDIX 1

TABLES OF INFORMATION: HISTORY OF GEOGRAPHY AT EASTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Emeriti(a) Faculty (as of 2/28/2001)

Simon Baker
Ralph Birchard
Ennis Chestang
Robert Cramer
Palmyra "Pia" Leahy
Edward Leahy

George Martin
Janet Petterson
Philip Shea
Richard Stephenson
Douglas Wilms

Departmental Names

Science Department 1909–1921
Department of Geography 1921–1925
Department of Social Science 1925–1929
Department of Geography 1930–1965
Department of Geography and Geology 1965–1967
Department of Geography 1967–1980
Department of Geography and Planning 1980–1994
Department of Geography 1994–present
Departmental Building Location
"Administration Building" and later Old Austin 1909–1939
"Classroom Building" and later Planagan 1939–1960
Graham 1960–1971
Brewster 1971–present

Department Directors and Chairs

Herbert Austin 1909–1929
P.W. Picklesimer 1930–1958
Harley Milstead 1958–1962
Robert Cramer 1962–1975
Ennis Chestang 1975–1985
Wes Hankins (interim) 1985–1986
Leo Zonn 1986–1997
Mike Palmer (interim) 1997–1999
Ron Mitchelson 1999–present
Degrees Offered Within the Department

- BA in Geography: 1943–present
- BS in Geography/Teaching: 1948–1984
- MA in Geography: 1962–present
- BS in Applied Geography: 1991–present
- MEd in Geography: 1943–1984
- MA in Geography with Planning Concentration: 1977–present

Full-Time Faculty in Geography

- Herbert Austin, 09–29
- Parnell Picklesimer, 27–58
- James B. Cummings, 30–65
- W.A. Browne, 38–48
- Robert Cramer, 55–83
- Marie Peterson, 29–33
- Ralph Birchard, 68–80
- Arthur Goyette, 69–71
- Leonard Gustafson, 68–70
- Wes Hankins, 68–94
- Palmyra ‘Pia’ Leahy, 67–96
- Janet Pettersen, 64–88
- Philip Shea, 62–98
- Daniel Stillwell, 63–71
- Louis Woods, 68–73
- George Martin, 48–75
- Mohamed Siddiqi, 68–69
- Ennis Chestang, 65–96
- Jean Lowry, 59–67
- Ronald Larson, 66–69
- Mack Gillenwater, 67–69
- Clyde Dunigan, 65–69
- Charles Q. Brown, 66–67
- Dennis Nullet, 90–92
- Don Steila, 73–82
- Charles Ziehr, 78–90
- F.S. Moore, 57–58
- Obi Achunine, 77–78
- Ken Laurie, 82–83
- Jack Blok, 73–78
- James Stembridge, 76–77
- Alicia Petersen, 75–76
- Charles Weber, 97–98
- Earl Neel, 63–64
- U.L. Masing, 68–69
- R. Michael Dinkel, 71–72
- William Lockman, 70–71
- Makota Hara, 65–66
- Andrew Perejda, 63–66
- John Christensen, 64–65
- Rachel McKay, 36–37
- Leon Stephan, 37–38
- Franz Nowotny, 64–65
- Richard Stephenson, 63–68, 72–94
- Harley Milstead, 57–64
- Woodford Garrigus, 59–60
- Morton Winsberg, 59–62
- Donald Pettersen, 58–65
- Louis DeVorey, 62–64
- Simon Baker, 78–94
- Leo Zonn, 86–97
- Johnathan Bascom, 89–90
- Paul Gares, 92–present
- Jonathan Phillips, 87–97
- Scott Wade, 90–present
- Melissa Tollinger, 95–present
- Doug Wils, 71–97
- Fred Day, 83–88
- Audrey Clarke, 91–93
- Mulatu Wubneh, 79–94
- Derek Alderman, 00–present
- Jeffrey Colby, 96–present
- Holly Hapke, 96–present
- Karen Mulcahy, 97–present
- Mike Slattery, 94–97
- Yong Wang, 94–present
- Vernon Smith, 72–74
- William Buckler, 83–89
- S.C. Rothwell, 58–59
- Gerald Holder, 89–90
- Ronald Swager, 73–78
- Charles Gritzner, 62–63, 71–72
- David Pepper, 80–81
- James Wilson, 92–96
- Mary Cameron, 97–98
- William B. Conner, 66–69
- Edward Leahy, 70–88
- Roger Hendrick, 71–72
- Janet Bigbee, 72–73

Number of Full-Time Geography Faculty

- 1909–1927: 1
- 1927–1929: 2
- 1929–1954: 3
- 1954–1956: 4
- 1956–1959: 6
- 1959–1967: 8
- 1967–1973: 12
- 1994–2001: 12

Total Number of Geography Graduates

- Pre–1940: 0
- 1940–1949: 6
- 1950–1959: 77
- 1990–1999: 165
- 2000–2001: 33