

## History of the Department

*The following brief history of the department was included in our 2004 Academic Program Review Self-Study Document. This section draws heavily on "Geography at the University of Tennessee: 1794-2003." by Dr. Sidney Jumper, which appeared in The South's Role in the Making of American Geography. It was published by the Association of American Geographers as part of their Centennial Celebration.*

Geography has a long tradition at the University of Tennessee with courses in geography dating back to 1794, when Blount College was established. (Blount College eventually became the University of Tennessee.) Geography was listed as a course of study along with logic, natural and moral philosophy, astronomy, and rhetoric. Over the next 100 years, geography was sometimes part of the preparatory curriculum and sometimes part of the collegiate curriculum. In 1840 the first named Professor of Latin and Geography was appointed, the Reverend William J. Keith. Since 1907 geography courses have been part of the curriculum at UT. When the school was renamed The University of Tennessee in 1879, a school of Natural History and Geology was established. Geography courses were taught in that school and were required by students in Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Agriculture, and those seeking a Normal School Certificate.

In 1907, Dr. Charles Henry Gordon became the Head of Geology and Mineralogy. Dr. Gordon was a supporter of increased geography classes. By 1914, the Department was renamed Geology, Geography and Mineralogy and it became possible to major in geography. During these early times, geography courses primarily focused on physical geography. This changed in 1923 when William T. Chambers was appointed an instructor in geography and added courses in economic geography, historical geography, and political geography. Chambers left in 1924 and was replaced by Harold Clyde Amick who taught geography at UT until his retirement in 1967. Other faculty and instructors were added in the 1920s, including Dr. Julia Shipman, who was the first female with a Ph.D. to teach geography at Tennessee. Dr. Shipman received her Ph.D. from Clark University in 1928.

The University, like much of America, fell on hard times during the Great Depression. The number of faculty teaching geography was reduced to Amick and an instructor. There were two different instructors during this period; George C. Martin served from 1935-38 and Victor Hyde from 1939-1941. Despite the hard times leading up to World War II, Amick managed to direct several Master's theses. One of those, completed in 1941, was by William W. Burchfiel, Jr. During his time as a student, Burchfiel and Amick would discuss the inadequate state of facilities and low status of geography at UT. A common theme of those discussions was the desirability of the Department having its own building in the heart of campus.

In 1944, Dr. Loyal Durand left the University of Wisconsin to join the faculty at Tennessee. Durand was a well known geographer who had published in the field's leading journals. By 1946, Durand was promoted to the rank of professor. The boom in student enrollment after the Second World War led to more faculty being hired. Lillian

Worley Stimson was hired in 1947 and was joined by Robert G. Long in 1949. These additions led to geography being the tenth discipline at the University of Tennessee in which one could earn a Ph.D. The growing numbers of students heading to higher education, in part due to the GI Bill, led to even more faculty being hired to teach geography.

The Department of Geography, offering the B.A., M.S. and Ph.D. degrees, was established in 1967 with Robert G. Long as its head. During the late 1960s and 1970s, many of the present faculty members were hired (see Table 1 above). Edwin H. Hammond was hired as head with the goal of building a department that reflected “the most well-rounded Departments at that time.” During the first decade after the establishment of the Department, the graduate program grew rapidly. Forty-four Master’s degrees and thirty-seven Ph.D. degrees were granted, with many funded by the National Defense Education Act Fellowships. Tennessee’s ties to the NDEA Fellowship program were spearheaded by Lillian Worley Stimson.

In 1977 Hammond stepped down as department head and Sidney Jumper was named his replacement. He served in that position until 1995. It is fair to say that today’s Department was very much shaped by Jumper’s leadership. During his nearly two decades as head, the Department experienced growth, developed a strategic plan that limited the areas of focus to those discussed in the Scope and Emphasis section above, established a Board of Advisors, cultivated private donors, founded the Tennessee Geographic Alliance, and developed its sense of congeniality and cohesiveness.

The 1980s were a time of rising expectations for research, publications, and grant procurement. Faculty responded in all three of these areas. Foresta published well-received books on Amazonia and the US National Park System; Pulsipher was selected to develop the “Seeds of Change” exhibit at the Smithsonian; Ralston worked on international development projects for USAID and the World Bank; Bell worked on grants from the NCHRP and NSF, and Aiken was well on his way to establishing his reputation as one of the preeminent scholars on the American South. New faculty members, Harden and Horn, were busy establishing themselves as excellent teachers and productive researchers in geomorphology and biogeography, respectively.

During the 1980s it became clear that the University had entered a period of slow growth or even retrenchment. This had two major impacts on the thinking of the faculty: we realized that we would never have the resources to achieve excellence in all or most specialties in geography, and that we would need to look for funding sources outside the University. That is, the Department needed to focus its curriculum, particularly at the graduate level, on only a few areas, and we would need to develop relationships with funding agencies and donors.

After much discussion and often difficult debate, the Department decided to focus its graduate programs in only those areas where faculty were actively engaged in research. Faculty not actively engaged in research, and there were some at that time, would not be allowed to advise graduate students or teach in the graduate program.

While the short-term effects of adopting this policy included some bruised egos and hard feelings, the long-term effects have been quite beneficial. By focusing the graduate program on those areas listed in the Scope and Emphasis section of this report, we have established a strong research presence in a few select areas. The hiring practices and strategic plans of the Department since that time have reflected the decisions made in the 1980s. Graduate applications and enrollments have increased since that time, as has the quality of students admitted to the program. External support for graduate students has increased, too. Where we once admitted 8 to 10 new students per year, we have recently been accepting 15 to 20 new graduate students per year. Most of these have been funded either through teaching assistantships or research assistantships.

In 1986, Drs. Jumper and Schmutte founded the Tennessee Geographic Alliance. One of seven pilot alliances primarily funded by the National Geographic Society, the Alliance soon became one of the most successful programs in the nation. Indeed, the NGS has honored Dr. Jumper for his contributions to geographic education. The Alliance is housed in the Geography Department and works closely with our faculty and staff. It is hard to overestimate the amount of good will and support it has generated for the Department. During the 1990s, over \$3 million were expended on summer institutes, special programs, and assistance to K-12 teachers. Since Drs. Jumper and Schmutte have retired, Mr. Kurt Butefish has taken over as coordinator of the TGA. Approximately 5000 teachers are Alliance members and there are regional chapters in every part of the state. To date, 978 teachers have received special training that allows them to serve as Teacher Consultants for the Alliance. Gifts to the Alliance from Mr. and Mrs. J. Harrison Livingston, Thomas and Bruce Ralston, and the Williams Fund, along with matching funds from the National Geographic Society, have resulted in an endowment of approximately \$1,000,000. The Alliance continues to work with faculty in attracting grants including an Eisenhower Grant (Dr. Henri Grissino-Mayer and Kurt Butefish, Co-PIs), and two major grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (Dr. Charles Aiken and Kurt Butefish, Co-PIs). The Alliance has received some funding from the State and the University. Unfortunately, budget cuts have led the University of Tennessee to withdraw its funding after this year.

The budget difficulties that seem to crop up every year have led to more reliance on gifts from donors. During the 1980s and 90s, gifts became an important part of the life of the Department. The Robert G. Long Fund was established to reward each year's top graduate student. The Edwin H. Hammond Fund provides funds for bringing in speakers to the Department. The Stewart McCroskey Memorial Fund supports research efforts of students and faculty.

In 1995, William Burchfiel, Jr. passed away. He stipulated that his estate should be used to build a free-standing geography building, to be named after his father, on "The Hill" section of campus. Construction began in 1997, and in August of 2000, the \$4.5 million William Burchfiel Sr. Geography Building was opened. The new facility puts the faculty and graduate students under the same roof—the first time this has happened in the history of the Department. The building has brought increased visibility and attention to

the Department, and the faculty, staff and students have worked to capitalize on that opportunity.

In addition to the Burchfiel bequest, other gifts include the J. Harrison and Robbie C. Livingston Professorship Endowment. This \$250,000 gift supports faculty in population geography. The James T. and Catherine E. Ralston Family Fellowship (\$200,000) was established in 1999 to support GIScience at UT. In addition, separate gifts in excess of \$40,000 were made by Thomas Ralston and Janet Hunter to establish the Technology Enrichment Fund. The Cobble Fund for the Enrichment of Undergraduate Education was established in 1995 with a gift of \$25,000.

Dr. Kenneth Orvis was hired in 1994 on a split appointment with the Energy Environment and Resources Center. In 1995 he became a full-time member of the faculty. His addition to the Department coincided nicely with the opening of the Science and Engineering Research Facility, which opened in 1994. The Department has developed laboratories for paleoenvironmental research, and for tree-ring science. Drs. Horn and Orvis are co-directors of the paleoenvironmental research facilities, and Dr. Grissino-Mayer directs the tree-ring science lab. These facilities have allowed faculty and graduate students to conduct leading edge research and successfully compete for grants. They also have fostered interdisciplinary connections with departments such as Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and Earth and Planetary Sciences.

In 1995, Dr. Carol Harden was selected as department head when Dr. Jumper stepped down. Dr. Harden continued Dr. Jumper's practice of open management. During her tenure as head, the Burchfiel Geography Building was constructed. After 5 years as head, Dr. Harden decided to step down from the position and Dr. Ralston was appointed to replace her.

In 1998, Dr. Shih-Lung Shaw was hired to bolster the Department's programs in GIS and Transportation. Dr. Shaw has built close working relationships with other campus units, including Computational Ecology, the Transportation Center, and the Agricultural Institute. His arrival has allowed us to expand our GIS course offerings.

In 2000, the University of Tennessee established a research initiative program. The Department was successful in obtaining funds for multidisciplinary awards. Faculty and students are actively involved in the initiatives on Global Environmental Change, Water Quality in the Southeast, Computational Ecology, and the Tennessee Electronic Atlas. These initiatives have led to an increase in external funding. One of the reasons we can fund more students in our graduate program is the success of the initiatives. The efforts of the faculty and staff have led strong working relationships with departments in the colleges of Agriculture, Arts and Sciences, Business, and Engineering, as well as with university research centers. In 2003, Dr. Shih-Lung Shaw was promoted to the rank of Professor, in part because his book (co-authored with Harvey Miller of the University of Utah) on GIS for Transportation has received stellar reviews. Dr. Shaw joins a list of faculty members who have produced books in the past five years. That list includes Drs.

Charles Aiken, Tom Bell, Lydia Pulsiper, Bruce Ralston, and John Rehder. (Faculty accomplishments and awards are discussed in more detail in Section 3.)

Our presence in Dendrochronology was greatly enhanced by the addition of Dr. Henri Grissino-Mayer in 2000. Since his arrival in 2000, he has been awarded several grants and contracts, some with his colleagues Drs. Ken Orvis and Sally Horn. Dr. Grissino-Mayer also has established the Laboratory for Tree-Ring Science, near the Paleoenvironmental Laboratory of Drs. Horn and Orvis, in the Science and Engineering Research Facility. It is nearby the existing research labs on Biogeography and Paleoenvironmental research. Dr. Grissino-Mayer's innovative use of tree-ring information has caught the attention of the popular as well as the scientific press. In addition to the normal (and cross disciplinary) academic outlets, Dr. Grissino-Mayer's work has appeared in outlets such as The Journal of the Violin Society of America, numerous national newspapers, and the Discovery Channel. He has even been asked to serve as a consultant to the CBS program Crime Scene Investigations. Dr. Grissino-Mayer received the 2003 Junior Faculty Research and Creative Achievement Award from the College of Arts and Sciences.

In 2002, a new faculty line in population geography was added to the Department. In the fall of that year Dr. Anita Drever joined our faculty. Her research and teaching in population geography help fulfill the guidelines of the J. Harrison and Robbie C. Livingston Professor Endowment for the study of population issues. Dr. Drever fits nicely with our programs in urban geography and spatial analysis. She has a strong background in quantitative geography and is one of the most energetic and enthusiastic teachers in the department.

As budgets tighten, the University is looking to cut costs. We have experienced some cuts due to state budget woes. In particular, the Alliance will sustain a total cut in funding from the University starting in FY2005. In March, 2003, we were ordered to terminate our search for a faculty member in GIS and physical geography, and we still have not been able to go forward with that search. While these are sobering events, we remain cautiously optimistic that Geography's strong presence will present opportunities in this time of resource reallocation. Our operating budget has been increased. We have teamed with Earth and Planetary Sciences (formerly Geological Sciences) to purchase a Scanning Electron Microscope, an expensive piece of equipment. This will enhance our laboratory facilities and support the research of the physical geographers in the Department.

We somehow continue to build on strength and move forward even in times of budget retrenchment. To quote Dr. Harden as she reflected on her years as head, "...the remarkable thing is that we managed to flourish as a department through a long sequence of poor budget years. Our courses were good, enrollments strong, faculty members productive, and, amazingly, we built a building while the university was on an austerity program. We recognized early...that we would need to look beyond the state as a source of funding if we were to move forward in our own lifetimes.... We were lucky, but that luck sat on a foundation of hard work and bush-beating."

The history of the Department reflects the dedication to geography by people such as Harold Clyde Amick, Lillian Stimson, and Sidney Jumper. We are now in the enviable position of having a new building, a dedicated faculty and staff, and a sense of common goals. Our accomplishments, particularly those of the past two decades, have come in spite of low levels of funding. A small group of faculty and staff, helped enormously by the generosity of friends and alumni, have shown what dedicated professionals can accomplish when working toward common goals. We have not ducked hard issues. However, we have handled points of contention with care, and debates seldom, if ever, have become personal.