Greetings From The Chair
By Shawna Dark, Department Chair

There is so much news to report from the Department of Geography! Last year Dr. Darrick Danta, Chair of our department, became Associate Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. During his tenure, he invigorated our department and made many important changes. We will miss his presence in our department, but know we are lucky to have an associate dean that is a Geographer. I have big shoes to fill! I will continue the tradition of advocacy for our department and Geography in general.

In addition to a change of leadership, we have added three new faculty members to our department: Dr. Regan Maas, Dr. Soheil Boroushaki, and Dr. Mario Giraldo. We feel fortunate to have added such wonderful talent to our program.

We have also made significant changes to our undergraduate program through the creation of an option in Geographical Information Science (GIS) and a minor in GIS. These two new programs will help to accommodate the ever-growing demand for education in geospatial technology. We are proud of the fact that, despite the tough economic times, many of our students continue to find gainful employment.

I’ll throw on another hat for the moment. I also serve as the Director of our Center for Geographical Studies. As part of our mission, we serve as a leader and catalyst for the advancement of GIS technology for academic institutions, private industry, and the public sector. Through the state of California and local agencies, we have acquired several interesting projects which have employed 34 students in the past year alone. The Center provides opportunities for students to develop job skills and has increased their competitiveness in the work force.

Last, but not least, I would be remiss if I did not mention the current budget crisis and the impact of statewide cuts. The extent of future funding from the state to the CSUs continues to be uncertain. Thus far, our department has reduced or eliminated funding for field trips, research equipment, and faculty travel to conferences, while increasing class sizes. Our college has prepared for the worst-case scenario, but any contributions will greatly enhance our program and provide wonderful opportunities for our ever-talented students. Please see “Opportunities To Help The Department” on the last page.
MEET OUR NEW FACULTY

The Department of Geography is delighted to welcome three new faculty members who have joined us over the past two years – Regan Maas (Fall 2011), Soheil Boroushaki (Fall 2011), and Mario Giraldo (Fall 2012). Our conversations with them revealed that the road to becoming a geographer is not always a direct one.

Soheil Boroushaki

Specializations: GIS, Multicriteria Decision Analysis, Location Theory & Analysis, Spatial Support Systems

Soheil was born in the “distant past” in Tehran, Iran. He grew up as a “normal, middle-class kid watching ‘Batman’ and cartoons.” All of this changed with the Iranian Revolution, a “dark, painful and grim” time. Following this was the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) and 8 years of uncertainty that profoundly altered his family’s life. The last time Soheil visited Iran was in 2002.

At college in Iran, Soheil studied civil engineering and worked for a small building company. After receiving his Master’s degree in urban and regional planning, he took a job in an architectural office, earning good money and gaining experience. However, one day he decided that this was just not enough and he was not living the life he wanted. Desiring a second Master’s degree, in 2001 he went to Guelph University, Ontario, Canada, to study rural planning and development. While doing a literature review for a class, he stumbled across an “amazing” paper (which involved multi-criteria decision making and GIS) that prompted him to contact the authors at the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada. He later worked with one of these professors, Dr. Jacek Malczewski, for his doctoral degree and finished his PhD in 2010. Immediately thereafter, he applied for the position at CSU Northridge, where, on his very first interview out of graduate school, he landed a job!

Soheil enjoys working in urban settings and loves to apply his technical skills to planning issues. He has recently been working on a new, interactive CSUN campus map. Soheil is still adjusting to Los Angeles. He likes the weather, but misses the life of downtown Toronto, where shopping and cultural experiences are only a walk or a subway ride away. He is fortunate in being able to spend the summer months there. His wife, Soshi, a high school teacher in the Toronto area, has recently been admitted to Harvard University where she will study Technology, Innovation and Education. Asked about his goals, Soheil replied that his ultimate dream would be to create an NGO for accommodating people after earthquakes in Iran.
Mario Giraldo

Specializations: Biogeography, Physical Geography, Techniques, and Hydrology

Mario was born and raised in Colombia, South America, growing up in a middle-sized city, Manizales (“not that interesting”), in the center of a coffee-growing region on the slopes of the volcano, El Ruiz. The city is at ~2,000 m elevation, with a climate Mario describes as “Spring year round,” but with a rainy season that lasts from January 1 to December 31! His hometown is in the center of the coffee-growing region, with a high diversity of coffee flavors. Indeed, Mario’s first job, which sparked his interest in biodiversity, was working for a coffee research center, studying biodiversity.

Mario’s undergraduate degree from Caldas University in Colombia was in agricultural engineering. He discovered geography when he applied to graduate school in the United States, where he initially wanted to study biodiversity. But given his broad interests and his technical skills, the University of Georgia faculty suggested that he was really a geographer! The climate of Colombia, with its abundant rainfall and runoff, sparked a keen interest in water issues, particularly those linked with land use changes. For his Master’s degree in GIS-remote sensing, Mario incorporated GIS and spatial analysis to study 30 years of land use change in the Caribbean humid tropics of Costa Rica. For his doctoral studies in geography, he worked in an agricultural area of southern Georgia. Here, Mario was exposed to a new cultural universe, including the concept of a “dry” county (not a reference to water supplies!). During this period, he had the opportunity to go to conferences and see more of the United States.

Upon graduation, Mario worked at Kennesaw State University, Georgia, for five years, coordinating their GIS program and teaching remote sensing and climatology. He also worked for the university’s study abroad program in Spain. To the Department of Geography at Northridge, Mario brings a strong physical geography background plus expertise in a suite of technical tools, such as GIS and remote sensing.

Mario is still learning about Los Angeles, which he finds huge. He walks or bikes to the university, enjoys the beach, and plans to learn deep-sea diving. Having lived in southern Colombia, southern Georgia, and now southern California, he claims to have a “southern” accent. Stop by and see what you think!
Regan Maas

Specializations: GIS, Medical Geography, Spatial Demography, Urban Geography

Regan was born in Liscomb, Iowa (pop. 302), or as she puts it, “a dying rural town in the middle of corn.” Her parents frequently took her out of the corn on vacations, however, and Regan has now been to all 48 contiguous states. Her travels made her a little different from the three other children who lived in Liscomb, and may have started her on the path to becoming a geographer.

The path was not straight, however. Regan attended the University of Iowa, seeking to follow in the footsteps of her mother (a nursing academic) by majoring in biology as a pre-med student. However, late in university life, she had second thoughts about her career aim based on the ultra-competitiveness of medical school and her mother’s warnings about what doctors can be like. (No offense, doctors!) Regan changed direction by taking a GIS job in a company in Ames, Iowa. With no formal training, Regan quickly learned GIS on the job and she was soon promoted to project manager.

Regan decided to pursue an MA in geography after her experiences in corporate GIS. Accepted by Minnesota and CSUN, the weather – and the fact that her boyfriend (and now husband) was in Los Angeles – tipped the balance in CSUN’s favor. After getting her MA at CSUN, Regan went on to earn a PhD from UCLA, working with geographers Michael Shin, David Rigby, and Bill Clark, and faculty at the School of Public Health to design GIS-based research on minority health disparities.

At CSUN, Regan continues her collaboration with Bill Clark in health-related research. Regan is also at work designing 3D GIS-based models of the “activity spaces” of Hispanics in Los Angeles. She seeks to determine how the compactness or diffuseness of these spaces, and the social networks contained within them, impact health. While ongoing, her work has already produced interesting findings. For example, she has found that lower-income Hispanics who live in urban areas tend to have larger activity spaces than more affluent Hispanics who live in suburbs. She has also found that Hispanics generally have larger activity spaces than African Americans.

After work, Regan’s favorite thing to do is take care of her almost-three-year-old daughter. (Actually, she calls this her “hobby, job and fun” all rolled into one.) Recalling the limited opportunities for adventure she had in Liscomb, she takes her daughter to museums, the Santa Monica Pier, parks and other enriching destinations. At the same time, she wants her family to be “normal” – which, she explains with a laugh, means “Midwestern.” (No offense, LA natives!)
OUT AND ABOUT
In this section, we highlight some of the geographical journeys of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni

Faculty And Staff Activities

Steve Graves published his article, “Cannabis City: Medical Marijuana Landscapes in Los Angeles,” in the California Geographer (2011). He built a typology of medical marijuana dispensaries based on the manner in which the “pot shops” market themselves to the public - 1) Corporate Clinic, 2) Compassionate Clinic, 3) Bunker (disguised or hidden) Dispensaries, and 4) Stoner Fantasy Shops. Steve will remain president of the California Geographical Society (CGS) for one more year. Jim Allen and Eugene Turner published “Patterns of Population Change in California 2000-2010” in the California Geographer (2011). Jim Allen also won a lifetime achievement award from the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers (APCG), and continued to help fund the CGS. Bill Bowen continued to support the CGS as well, funding student research and buying banquet meals for any student presenting research at the CGS conference...even those not from CSUN. Ron Davidson and his wife Yoko had a new baby boy, Taiga, which means “big river” in Japanese and “forest” in Russian. His parents wonder if he will turn out to be indooorsy. Ed Jackiewicz saw the release of the 2nd edition of the book Placing Latin America: Contemporary Themes in Geography (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers), which he co-edited with Fernando J. Bosco. Helen Cox visited the rural township of Kamina in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in January where she worked with local churches, schools and universities to establish an educational resource center which would provide the community with tools, books, computers with internet access, and a training center. Julie Laity co-authored “Formation of surface features on ventifacts: modeling the role of sand grains rebounding within cavities” in the journal Geomorphology (2011). In October, she co-led a group of national and international scientists employed on the Mars Science Laboratory (MSL)/Curiosity rover mission into the Mojave Desert to help with their work in interpreting Martian imagery. Amalie Orme continues to maintain a rigorous program of teaching students field techniques and exposing them to real-world problems in the Owens Valley area and adjacent White-Inyo Mountains.

Focus on Faculty Activities: Dr. Yifei Sun

During the summer of 2012, Dr. Yifei Sun went to China, where he visited a number of universities - East China Normal, Jilin, Tsinghua, Zhejiang, and Nanjing, among others - while conducting field work on his project on Chinese returnees and business innovation. He gave presentations to the Department of Construction, Hainan Province, on building high-tech industries and to Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, on building innovative global cities. Dr. Sun is in the process of setting up a Center for US-China Business and Policy, which will undertake joint university projects. The center will encourage research work by US-Chinese teams, publications, faculty exchanges, faculty visits, student exchanges, and will provide training and professional services to students, faculty, and the community.

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Dr. Sun was also invited by *Slate* and the *New America Foundation* to speak in Washington, DC (Oct. 12, 2012). He gave a presentation on building innovative global cities at the 2012 *Beijing Forum* (Nov. 2-4, 2012). Meanwhile, he has helped organize a session on Regional Innovation Systems for the 2012 *Pujiang Innovation Forum*, which will include several distinguished guests - Dr. Philip Cooke (Professor, Cardiff University), the Deputy Mayor of Turin, Italy, and the Mayor of Sunnyvalle, CA, - who will join in discussing their experiences in high-tech industry development. He is also organizing a session on “Chinese Ways of Innovation” for the *ISMOT Conference* (Nov. 8-9, 2012) hosted by Zhejiang University, Hangzhou.

Additionally, Dr. Sun is seeking to organize a mini-conference on *Industrial Innovation in China* in Los Angeles (April 9-10, 2013), focusing on China’s unique innovative practices in the telecom, cell phone, high-speed rail, semiconductor, machinery, solar energy, and wind energy industries. Yifei’s goals are to deepen our understanding of the status and nature of industrial innovation in China.

**ALUMNI NEWS:**

**Charles Huffstetler** (class of 1970) sent us the following news:

“I graduated from San Fernando Valley State College in January 1970 with a degree in Geography. Upon graduation, I served two years on active duty with the U.S. Navy as a navigator on board a destroyer tender. During my tour of duty I found the knowledge of geography I acquired at State invaluable on many occasions – navigating when steaming at sea, understanding weather situations and forecasting, and appreciating the topography and cultures of the various countries we visited. ”

Afterwards, “I spent 30 years with the Federal Reserve System (and then) started a second, brief 5-year career with Wachovia Securities/Wells Fargo Advisors in anti-money laundering operations. I retired in 2010.

I live in the Richmond, Virginia area. The commonwealth of Virginia is full of diversity, from its coastal shores, to the rolling hills of the piedmont, to its beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, including a national park in our backyard. Although my working career did not involve geography, I have relied upon my geography knowledge to more completely appreciate and understand the various physical and cultural aspects of the people and countries I have visited during my many international travels.”

**Student News**

Geography graduate student, **Maziyar Boustani**, won a CSU pre-doctoral scholarship for the 2012-13 year (only 72 are awarded throughout the entire CSU). He had an internship at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory this summer and has been kept on to work through the year. **Omar Mere**, another graduate student, won the outstanding research project award from the California Geographical Society for his paper “California’s Virtual Water”. This continues a multi-year winning streak by CSUN students at the CGS. Graduate student **Crystal English** raked in awards before starting a PhD program in Geography jointly administered by the University of California, Santa Barbara, and San Diego State University. Her award highlights include Scholar, CSU Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral Program (2011-2012); 1st Place, Student Poster Competition, Applied Geography Conference (2011); and Scholar, CSU Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence (2010-2011).

After graduating from the department in 2010, **Areeya Tivasuradez** received a scholarship to study in Chyengdu, China for two years. She led a mapping and metric project with the Chengdu Urban Rivers Association, a local NGO, to study and evaluate the effectiveness of its eco-installations in minimizing household and agriculture-related pollution. She thanks Dr. Yifei Sun and the CSUN China Institute for giving her this unforgettable experience.
2011 Geography Department Awards

We would like to congratulate the following award winners:

**Undergraduate Student Award:** Natasha Zalvidar  
**Graduate Student Award:** Mark McPherson  
**Michael Tamburro Scholarship:** Lindsey Dunn  
**Robert and Karen Newcomb Fellowships:** Avo Nersessian, Tracy Doucette (Eryn Morrigan)  
**Shoshana Sokol Memorial Award:** Christine Elowitt (who has returned for graduate school)

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**Geography Council News**  
*By Marianne “MJ” Jara, Geography Council President*

The CSUN Geography Council aims to stimulate and encourage an active interest in the field of geography and promote social interactions and cooperation among students. The council promotes skills and interests that can further enhance the academic experience through faculty and peer involvement. It also serves as a way to have fun and build relationships.

The Council is currently comprised of President Marianne Jara, Vice President Joshua Rojas, Secretary Austin Frey and Treasurer Alex McLeod. Council meetings are held bimonthly and members discuss geography-related topics, upcoming events, internship and employment opportunities, and other topics of interest. Events range from fundraisers to volunteer-based community involvement. In previous semesters, the Council organized a bowling night at the Matador Bowl, roller skating, and an end-of-the-year camping trip to the Sierras. We wish to continue this tradition by inviting all who are interested to come out and socialize with fellow geography enthusiasts!

If you are interested in joining the Council, please add yourself to the Facebook group [here](#) or send us an email directly at csungeog@gmail.com. We look forward to meeting you!

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Los Angeles Geographical Society Free Public Lecture Series.** Please see the [LAGS website](#) for a full listing of the Fall 2012-Spring 2013 talks.

**Association of American Geographers:** The [Annual Meeting](#) of the AAG will be held April 9-13, right here in Los Angeles.

**California Geographical Society:** Steve Graves, who is in his second year as president, extends an invitation to all geography alumni to attend the CGS spring conference, which will meet April 26th-28th in San Luis Obispo. Former and current CSUN faculty and students will be in attendance. CSUN has built a reputation for winning many of the prizes in the research competitions.

Some of the field trips already tentatively planned include trips to Hearst Castle, Topaz Solar Farm, the Carrizo Plain-San Andreas Fault Zone, Santa Margarita Ranch, local winescapes, the coast, a Santa Maria BBQ, and downtown Los Angeles. For more information, please visit the [CGS website](#).
Opportunities To Help The Department

The Department of Geography offers scholarships, field studies/special courses, and many lab courses. Please consider making a contribution to the Department so that we can continue to augment our program offerings and student opportunities. Your donation is tax deductible, and can be directed toward the Department’s General Fund, or any of the following:

- Center for Geographical Studies (Department general fund);
- Robert Howard Field Studies Fund (geography field trips);
- Geography Student Scholarship ($200 to graduate and undergraduate geography students);
- Michael E. Tamburro Geography Scholarship (university fees for four semesters for transfer students from junior colleges);
- Shoshana Sokol Memorial Award ($200 to returning undergraduate geography students who are age 35+ or to graduate geography students who are American citizens);
- Robert and Karen Newcomb Fellowship ($200 to geography graduate students);
- Geography Council Award (to support the Geography Council).

Designate your gift in the drop down box to the Center for Geographical Studies (the Department General Fund). If you would like to support a specific Scholarship, type the name of the Scholarship in the “Special Instructions” box.

Send checks payable to “CSUN Foundation” and designate the Geography Department and the particular scholarship (if any) on the memo line to:

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