



EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY



Department of Geology & Geography  
2024-2025 Newsletter

# Greetings from the Chair

Greetings Alumni! I hope this newsletter finds you all well. The past year has been an exciting one for the Department of Geology and Geography. Our faculty and staff remain committed to providing high impact learning experiences for our students through field work, internships, and collaborative research projects. I want to highlight just a few of the outstanding accomplishments that our faculty, staff, and students have had this past year.

The department continues the long-standing tradition of faculty/student research collaboration. Six undergraduate students conducted independent research projects this past year and two students presented their findings at a national conference. Our faculty have also been recognized for their commitment to undergraduate research. Dr. Jim Riley was awarded a Redden Grant and the Zeller Award to help provide future research opportunities. Dr. Katie Lewandowski was recognized by the University as the winner of the EIU distinguished research mentor award.



Students in the department benefited this past year from receiving hands on training in their field. Four students completed internships. Cameron Clark worked for the City of Charleston Tourism office, Lydia Howard and Harper Gerfen worked at Eagle Mine in the UP of Michigan, and Jasper Tyner worked with the Antofagasta mining group in Chile. In addition to internships, our broadcast meteorology students continue to produce live news broadcasts at WEIU. The program was also recently recognized by the National Weather Service for 15 years of service in collecting weather data.

The departmental clubs continue to provide opportunities for students to learn outside the classroom. This past year, the clubs took students on field trips to Kentucky, Ohio, and Southern Illinois. Next summer, GTU is planning a summer learning experience that will have students travel Route 66. They will learn about the history and geography of the road as it approaches its 100-year anniversary.

We would like to invite you to come back to Charleston and visit the department. Homecoming is the weekend of October 4-6 this year. I hope that you can make it back to campus for a visit. Fall is a great time to visit Charleston and EIU. If you can't make it for homecoming, please stop by the department the next time you are back in Charleston. It is always great to catch up with our former students and hear about your experiences after EIU. The Department of Geology and Geography has

a great history and very promising future. I want to thank all of you for your support of the department. Donations from our alumni allow us to continue to support student research and field opportunities. The experiences enhance their education and prepare them to be professional in the field of Geology and Geography. Please stay in touch with us and let us know if there is anything we can do for you.

Hope to see you soon!  
Jim

## Greetings from the Dean



The Department of Geology and Geography, under the leadership of Dr. Jim Davis, continues to be an excellent space for our students to learn, engage in research, and to prepare for advanced degree work or to enter the workplace, for example in meteorology or GIS-related work. I continue to congratulate the department's faculty on their research and scholarly success and their dedication to teaching EIU's students!

Barbara Bonnekessen  
Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

# Spotlight On: Josh Smith



I believe it was in the fall of 2010 that I first taught GEL 4490 Invertebrate Paleontology at EIU. That is when I first met Josh Smith. He was perhaps a junior at the time. Even though his passion was not paleontology, he was eager to learn and put great effort and had great success in the class. He clearly enjoyed the field trip- the first field trip I ever led- to see the incredible Devonian Jeffersonville Limestone with world-renown horn corals and stromatoporoids at the Falls of the Ohio, along with some fossil collecting stops to collect Ordovician and

Mississippian fossils.

He is now Dr. Josh Smith. He graduated from EIU in 2012, after having done independent research with Dr. Craig Chesner on Toba. His geology journey continued at the University of Nevada, Reno, where he earned his M.S. in 2014 doing research in the field of economic geology looking at epithermal Au-Ag deposits in NV. In the summer of 2014, he took advantage of the opportunity to be a teaching assistant at Sacramento State University's field camp. After graduating from UNR, he worked as a Geologist at Elko Mining Group in Winnemucca, NV. In the fall of 2015, Josh went back to school, starting his Ph.D. at Indiana University, working on a project focused on economic geology and isotope geochemistry of various Ni-Cu deposits (i.e., Stillwater Complex, MT and the Midcontinent Rift system). His first publication in a multiple-authored paper came out in 2017 in the journal *Geochemica et Cosmochemica Acta*, while still a graduate student. At present, Josh has 4 published articles with more in the pipeline. While at IU, he was awarded the Best Ph.D. student presentation at the IU Crossroads Conference in 2018. In 2019, he was named Outstanding Associate



Instructor at IU within the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences. Josh graduated with his Ph.D. in the spring of 2019.



Upon completion of his Ph.D. Josh moved back to NV working as a Project Geologist with Premier Gold Mines/i-80 Gold Corp. Within two years he was a Lead Project Geologist with i-80 Gold Corp. While Josh loves the geology out west, he and his wife, Courtney, wanted to move back closer to family. They have twin boys and being around family is important

to them. In 2021, he was hired by UIUC as a Research Specialist within the Department of Earth Science & Environmental Change, where he manages the Isotope Geochemistry Lab. Last spring, we brought Josh back to campus in February to tell us what he's been doing and to have him speak with the majors about his journey. It was lovely for all of us geologists to catch up with him. And he did an amazing job speaking with our majors. Recently, he has a new affiliation with the ISGS Critical Minerals Center which he is pleased about. In addition, he has also become part of the graduate faculty at U of I. So, he will be taking on some occasional M.S. students interested in economic geology.

We couldn't be prouder of Dr. Smith! And it is lovely having him so close by.

# Department Alumni

**Kara Sachs (Kooken) (2010)** I am currently working as a Project Geologist at Professional Service Industries in Hillside IL. I perform Phase I ESAs, soil and groundwater sampling, and work with the IEPA on LUST and SRP projects for my clients. I am also a licensed asbestos building inspector as well as industrial hygiene inspector. Since I graduated, I got married to my college sweetheart Phil and had three kids, Marshall 6, Dawson 4 and Alice 18 months. My boys are just like me with wanting to play in dirt and identify rocks which usually means ask mommy to identify.

**Chris Walls (2011)** After completing my degree, I continued my career in retail before switching to manufacturing as a maintenance technician for the Hershey company. I was also given an opportunity to attain my master's degree with most expenses paid. After four years of studying and working full-time, I completed my Master of Theological Studies degree from Phillips Theological Seminary last May.

**Zarek Nolen (2016)** I recently took a job as a placement worker with DCFS in Decatur, IL. This means I help parents develop a plan for them to be able to have their children return home to them if they're removed from the home due to abuse or neglect. At the same time, I make sure that these children have adequate housing and are being properly provided for by their foster parents.

I can't say that this career path has much to do with geography, but I've never forgotten my time in the department and still love the subject. I continue to collect maps and love talking about them to anyone who will listen!

**Colonel William B. Moody (1952)** I'm writing for my husband... who was the Geography person....he assisted Dr. Ruby Harris with her off campus courses when he was a student at Eastern in the 1949/52 era. He graduated in 1952.

...Colonel Moody is doing well...still going out to lunch, especially for oysters, keeps tabs on our 2 kids...4 grands and 5 great grands...all are fine citizens and duly employed. He retired from the Travelers Ins. Co and the Army Reserve in 1985 after many years of service...We spent many retired years volunteering. We live full-time in Connecticut now having spent 25 winters in Florida. We are celebrating 73 married years together...and can do a lot of reminiscing!

**Luke Jansen (2020)** I am doing well. I am still working for Civil Design Inc at our office in Effingham, IL. I am currently working towards earning my GISP and plan on taking the exam in December. Outside of work, I bought a house north of Effingham. I am also spending time with family, friends, being outdoors, and working on some woodworking projects.



**Shane Shumaker (2017)** In my last year at EIU, I took an internship with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA). After graduation, I was offered a full-time job as a Geodetic Surveyor. This job takes me all over the globe, as one of our primary functions is to perform safety of navigation surveys for every D.o.D. airfield on the planet. Pictured (left) is me surveying on Ascension Island. Where not only was I there for work, but I got to experience a major bucket list event! Hike a volcano! Dream job acquired! And all thanks to my education at EIU.

**Robert Zillman (1975)** 1975 graduate under Dr. Amos, Dr. Ford and Dr. Wallace my friends and mentors. From them I learned the basics, but more importantly where and how to find the answers. I'm an Illinois Land Surveyor with fifty-two years of service, an Illinois Geologist, an Illinois Coal miner, Mine Manager and Mine Examiner, sinking shafts and correlating the surface surveys with the underground surveys in Central Illinois, until the Green Police shut down our most abundant and economical energy source. Presently smoking a fine cigar enjoying life and surveying or not whatever I please. Black Knights of the Embarras forever! Bobby.

**Patrick Wildman (2010)** Currently in my 8th year as a school counselor serving grades 5-12 and 13th year overall as an educator where I also taught high school geography, sociology, psychology. I live in Springfield, IL.

**Tim Duda (1999)** I'm working for the Iowa DNR now and just visited the UP Michigan and visited some of Dr Chesner's old stomping grounds from Minerology class. I brought back some nice finds including some large Specular Hematite rocks.

**Gino Persico (2018)** I am continuing my consulting career just celebrating my third year with WSP (formerly Golder). Since my start with the company, I have been apart of our Mining sector where I have been traveling and conducting field work all through New Mexico, as well as mine sites in Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, British Columbia, and come October the opportunity to travel to Alaska! I have been learning so much about the ins-and-outs of the mining world while balancing the work we do for our mining clients. My focused area of work with our Albuquerque, NM team has been vadose zone groundwater monitoring and sampling at tailings and mine facilities as well as test plot installations. The primary goal for this type of work is providing valuable surface and subsurface data to clients so that they can better manage and eventually reclaim mine sites back to the most

“natural state”. Besides all the field work and supporting senior level colleagues, I am exploring more desk-related work that entails creating and drafting mine closure plans.

Lastly, what started as a hobby, I am now a certified drone pilot and hoping to build a business within our office to conduct drone surveys, not only for our legacy mine site projects, but also supporting our road and bridge engineers. While field work to different regions and states grants me the ability to explore new places, I am still enjoying living in the desert climate of New Mexico where I continue to do outdoor activities of biking, hiking, camping, and photography in my spare time.

I hope the rest of my EIU family is doing well and doing great things!!

**Lauren Sesko (2020)** After graduating from EIU in 2020 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography, I accepted a job in my local government for the position of EMA (Emergency Management Agency) Director and GIS/IT Administrator. Starting my career amid COVID, most of my duties focused on Emergency Management, where I coordinated with the federal government to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from natural and man-made disasters. I submitted many documents to the State of Illinois and delivered personal protective equipment to schools and first responders. I worked with the Health Department and National Guard to administer a mass vaccination clinic for my county. I completed classes with FEMA, became certified in Emergency Management, and wrote an Emergency Operations Plan for my county. I was also in charge of our local dive team and became secretary/treasurer of the dive team board. I was in charge of multiple budgets, including GIS/IT. I helped other departments with GIS duties and planned on moving all GIS duties in-house instead of contracting work to other vendors. A year into my job, I was also appointed as Interim Planning and Zoning Enforcement Officer, where I enforced zoning and nuisance ordinances for incorporated and unincorporated areas in my county, as well as conducted multiple committees. I also helped write a Wind Energy Conversion System ordinance for my county.

Unfortunately, my career in government was cut short when I decided to move on to the private sector after it was brought to light that my political affiliation was contrary to a few select officials' agenda to "paint the Courthouse red." Fortunately, a local telecommunications company recognized my hard work and dedication, offering me a job as a GIS technician. I now work as a GIS Team Lead for Metro Communications Company in Sullivan, where I have been allowed to advance and achieve success in a position I love. I use ESRI ArcMap to design towns for FTTH (fiber to the home) and fiber optic routes for cellular towers and businesses. I also produce maps for permits and construction crews to use on the field. I am thankful to work for a growing, inclusive company that values all their employees and is passionate about science and innovation. During this time, I bought a house and am living happily with two cats, Ella and Felix.



# Recent Graduates

## Fall 2023

Sarah Focht (GEG)

## Spring 2024

Jacob Bucy (GEG)

Ben Coleman (GEG)

Ryan Lay (GEG)

Charlie Stewart (GEG)

## Summer 2024

Cameron Clark (GEG)

Harper Gerfen (GEL)

Lex Watts (GEL)

Michael Otwirk (GEG &  
GEL)

# Student Award Winners, Spring 2024

## Geography Awards

- Vincent P. & Pamela R. Gutowski Award for Excellence in Geography – **Ryan Lay**
- Errett & Mazie Warner Geography Presidential Award – **Lyssa Nave**
- Grace Markwell Meier Scholarship in Geography – **Carson Davenport**
- Robert Buzzard Memorial Scholarship in Geography – **Miller Dunlop**
- Ruby M. Harris Award – **Jacob Bucy**
- Belayet Khan Geography Award – **Sam Huckstep**
- Dalias Price Award – **Ryan Lay and Colin Houser**
- Walter H. & Dorthea V. McDonald Scholarship – **Nik James**
- Richard Wise-Lester Stoner Undergraduate Scholarship in Geography – **Charlie Stewart**
- Annie Weller Memorial Scholarship in Geography – **Evie Rudibaugh**
- Troyt York Memorial Scholarship in Geography – **Ben Whitney**
- Geography Alumni Award – **Joshua Lee**
- PSM Alumni Award – **Cameron Clark**

## Geology Awards

- Errett & Mazie Warner Geology Presidential Award – **Lex Watts, Harper Gerfen, Colin Houser, and Nathan Foster**
- Dewey H. Amos Scholarship – **Lydia Howard**
- Bob & Mary Jorstad Scholarship – **Jasper Tyner**
- Jon & Diana Giffin Geologist Scholarship – **Sean Price**
- John Popp Field Geology Scholarship – **Harper Gerfen and Lex Watts**
- Geology Alumni Award – **Antonio Lopez**
- SGA Tar Award – **Lex Watts**

# Department Activities

The faculty and students of the department have had many highlights this past year. Below are just a few of the amazing things that our department had the opportunity to be a part of.

Students in the department continue to get hands on training through collaborating on research projects with faculty, field trips, internships, and high impact experiences on campus.

## Field Experiences



Geography Major Sarah Focht explaining her Tree Phenology Research to Dr. Riley's Introduction to the Natural Environment Course



Geography major Ryan Lay completing a survey along the Embarrass River

## Internships

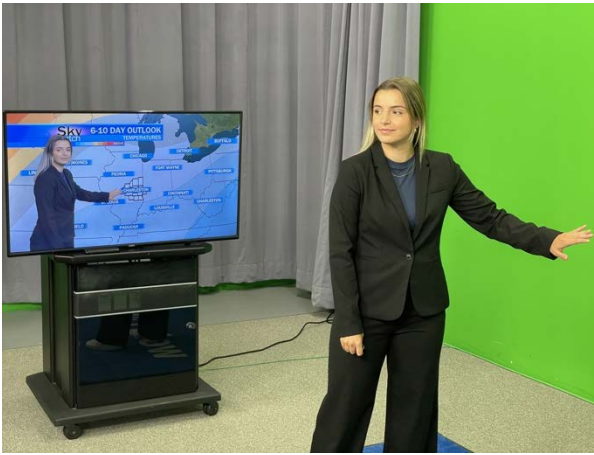


Geology Major Jasper Tyner completed an internship with the Antofagasta mining group in Chile.



Geology majors Harper Gerfen and Lydia Howard working at an internship at the Eagle Mine in Michigan.

## High-Impact Learning Experiences



Geography major Emily Davis gains experience as weather forecaster at WEIU.

## Field Trips

Students from both programs travelled throughout the region on field trips led by our faculty.



Geoscience Club Students visit the Falls of the Ohio.



Dr. Viertel led a group of students from the department to Southern Illinois.

## EIU Celebrates 15+ Years with NWS and Over 60 Observers



*EIU Observers, (left to right) Emily Davis, Ryan Lay, and Will Redden, take a moment to appreciate the 15-Year Service Award from NWS Lincoln.*

On October 22, 2023, the EIU-NWS Cooperative Weather Observation station celebrated 15 years of service. The student observers were honored by NWS Lincoln for their service of collecting important weather data for the area.

The first observation for Charleston was recorded on January 1, 1880. Considered an historical station, the station was observed by many since the initial observation. One served for 45 years.

Dalias Price (1913-2009), professor emeritus and chair in the Department of Geography-Geology, was one of those observers that recorded data, never missing a day. His observation service awarded him the prestigious Thomas Jefferson and Dick Hagemeyer awards from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration in August 2005. Price began his observations for Charleston on April 23, 1960.

The station was transferred to the Department of Geology & Geography on October 22, 2008, when Price, aged 95, was unable to continue his observations. NWS Lincoln worked with EIU to install the station on campus and the first observation was recorded at 6 P.M. by Darren Leeds (?11), former SkyWatch Forecaster, now at WCCU-TV in Champaign, Illinois.

Since the station's return to campus, over 60 of my student observers have continued Price's tradition, observing the data in torrential rain, unrelenting snow, bitter cold temperatures, and on holidays. The daily routine provides students with a connection between the classroom and the functions of the atmosphere.

Dalias Price is our inspiration to provide accurate climate data and continue his legacy into the future.

Our student observers (2008-2024): Neil Arthur, Matt Bluhm, Jay Bushen, Leah Bolander (Carter), Brittney Ciciora (Sager), Phillip Collins, Rase Collins, Michael Cornebise, Sam Cornebise\*, Cameron Craig, Emily Davis, Heaven Davis (Richey), Jim Davis, John DeMatteo, Joseph Dames, Jessica Dixon, Stephen Elmore, Jeff Fell,

Michael Gismondi, Jesse Guinn, Mina Hanalla, Brady Harp, Brian Hartman, Madison Henn, Lahn Henn, McClain Homann, Cameron Hopman, Karl Horn, Colin Houser, Kyler Houser, Sam Huckstep, Will Hurley, Derrick Jackson, Kevin Jeanes, Lauren Jerkovitz, Emily Jestis, Zach Johnson, Johnathan Jones, Rob Kennedy, Jillian Kooistra, Everett Lau, Ryan Lay, Darren Leeds, Caitlin Nordgren (Napoleoni), Lyssa Nave, Jacob Neill\*, Jordan Neill\*, Phil Norton, Michael Otwirk, Nick Patrick, Erik Piper, John Pogue, Jakob Reed, Will Redden, Chris Slater, Lacey Spence (Clifton), Noah Spence, John Stimac, Melissa Watson, and Ben Whitney.

\*Denotes students that observed while in middle or high school.



Cameron Craig was recognized as the EIU Panther Gameday Professor by the football team for his dedication to the success of his students in Weather and Climate.

# Student Organizations

## Gamma Theta Upsilon (GTU)/Geography Club

Gamma Theta Upsilon and Geography Club are having a great year. Our most recent outing drew 18 for dinner and a Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> bonfire afterwards. Last year Ryan Lay and Colin Houser were presidents for the club, alternating semesters. We took a Fall trip to Garden of the Gods and Cave-in-Rock which was great fun and attended by 8. This year we are looking forward to a club-sponsored Route 66 trip in the summer to experience a different side of America.

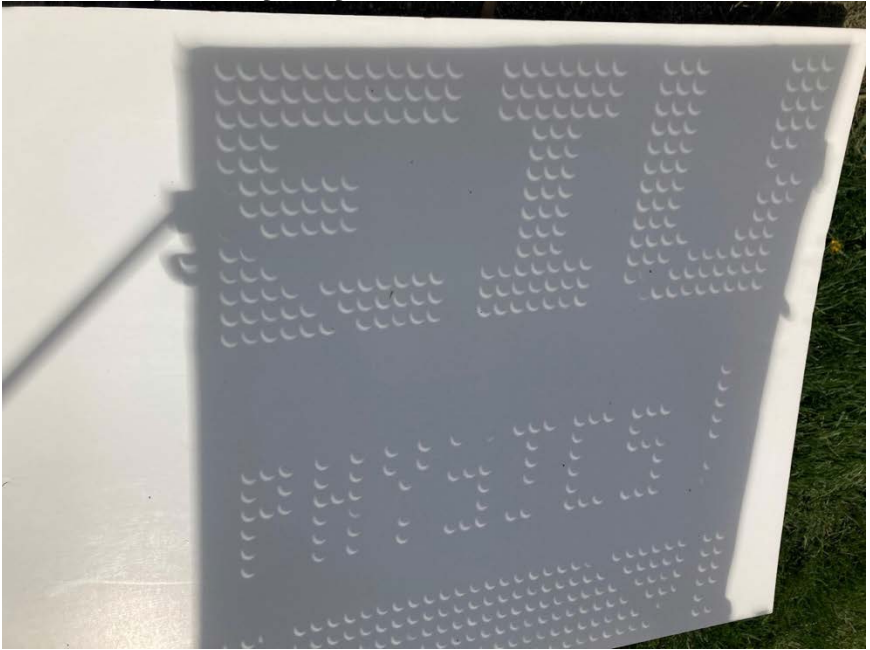


*GTU campfire.*



## Geology Club & Sigma Gamma Epsilon (SGE)

The club and chapter members continue to promote excellent extracurricular events which enhance the quality degree program available to Geology majors here at EIU. We had another pumpkin carving contest to bolster inter-personal relationships as well as provide a mental break from academic endeavors. The Adopt-A-Highway stretch from Mediacom to Sarah Bush Hospital has never looked cleaner and is easily maintained now that we are doing this for our tenth year. Gamma Chi was granted the Quality Chapter AND Chapter Service Awards again this year. Our chapter has won both of these honors more than any other chapter in the nation – we are absolutely #1! Our expertise was on loan to the Physics Dept. in the spring, as many members heartily volunteered to help bring the solar eclipse event to EIU's campus as well as to the satellite viewing events at Robinson, IL and the Lincoln Log Cabin. One of our contributions was creating a large-scale pinhole camera, which produced this iconic image of multiple eclipses:



# The Faculty

## Diane Burns

Greetings alumni! I hope all of you are enjoying a wonderful 2024. Since my return to faculty, I have worked with the Physics Dept to host multiple solar eclipse viewing events across the area for this past April's show, traveled with students to GSA to present our research in Pittsburgh, PA and joined the faculty serving the Danville Correctional Center in offering bachelor's degrees. The latter is a fairly new initiative meant to help reduce recidivism. If the students that I had in my Oceanography class were any indication of who these people can become, it is worth all of the effort. May all of your endeavors be fruitful; until next year!

## Craig Chesner (emeritus)

Continued work on the Keweenaw retreat (assisted by highly skilled Geology colleagues and alumni), Charleston home projects (with the help of versatile friends and geologists), and Toba research (in collaboration with talented Geology alumni and students), sums up the highlights of my past year. Finally, **TOBA CALDERA: *The Eye of Sumatra, Evolution of the Toba Caldera Complex*** is now listed as a new title on *SpringerBriefs in Earth System Sciences*! Please keep me posted on the highlights of your lives and careers as well.

## Mike Cornebise

Greetings from Charleston! Well, another year has come and gone and suddenly I'm beginning my 25<sup>th</sup> year at EIU and my 9<sup>th</sup> year as Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS)! I'm pleased to be offering a section of Population Geography (GEO 3750) this semester. There's always something new and exciting to discuss in the realm of demography. Please plan to join us on October 5<sup>th</sup> at Tent City for EIU Homecoming: the theme this year is "Saddle Up, Panthers"! We'll feature cowboy-inspired food and entertainment at the CLAS tent, so stop by and say hello. My family is doing well. Sam is finishing up his undergraduate career at EIU as a senior Finance major. Sofia is in her sophomore year at EIU and has decided to major in Marketing. Roxanne continues to enjoy retirement and spends a lot of time in the garden. Hope you are well, and have a wonderful year!

## Cameron Craig

Salutations! All is well and in great spirits for another year to serve my community, university, department, and students! I continue to teach Weather & Climate, Spaceship Earth, Broadcast Meteorology, and "Our Goozle-Goggle: Exploring Unknown Landscapes." As always, I work closely with my broadcast meteorology students at WEIU's EMMY award winning news program, "NewsWatch." We have

a strong team of Broadcast Meteorology students who keep viewers informed of their daily weather, and possible severe weather across the region: Ben Whitney and Emily Davis, lead the SkyWatch team with, local lawyer, Mr Scott Ealy.

Culturally, I continue my role as Associate Conductor in the Eastern Symphony Orchestra under the leadership of Maestro David Commanday who is also the music director of the Heartland Festival Orchestra in Peoria, Illinois. Eastern continues to provide an important foundation of culture and music to the community and region.

We appreciate all that you and the other alumni and donors do for our department! Thank you for always being there to make our students feel special! Your support is greatly appreciated!

## Jake Crandall

Greetings alumni and friends, fall semester is off to an interesting start! I am teaching an environmental geology course for the first time, and the experience has been rewarding so far. The students are making that class special, and I am fortunate to have a great group in each of my classes.

I unfortunately just broke my ankle, which put an end to my field season before it even began. I am sure my colleagues will get on just fine without me in Hawaii and the Canary Islands, and I will do my best to support them from the lab back home. My research groups have been quite active, presenting at the Lunar and Planetary Science Conference, Geological Society of America meetings, and even in conferences in Italy, India, and Russia! We have also just submitted a new manuscript, fingers crossed for a smooth review process and speedy acceptance. An EIU student, Jasper Tyner, is the newest member of the research group, and he will be working with me on a project that aims to determine if the Hawaiian Islands can serve as an appropriate terrestrial analog for future and ongoing Venus exploration. I am also serving as a NASA panel chief for 2024-2025, which is sure to keep me busy!

Be well,  
-JRC

## Jim Davis

The 2024-25 academic year is my 22<sup>nd</sup> year in the Geology/Geography department at Eastern. I am now in my second year as the chair of the department. As chair, I don't get to teach as many courses, but I have been able to teach Cultural Geography, Sports Geography and Geography of Tourism this past year. In addition to my duties in the department, I continue to serve as the NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative for EIU. This is my 14<sup>th</sup> year in that role, and I continue to enjoy working with the student-athletes on campus.



My family continues to do well. My wife Tammy is in her 22<sup>nd</sup> year of teaching in the Casey-Westfield school district. She currently teaches 1<sup>st</sup> grade at Monroe Elementary School. My oldest daughter Amanda graduated from SIU-Carbondale with a degree in Dietetics and Nutrition. She spent much of the past year living in Croatia, but she has recently moved back to the United States and currently lives in Florida. My youngest daughter Emily is a sophomore geography major at EIU with a minor in broadcast meteorology. She has started doing live weather broadcast in WEIU a couple nights a week.

This past year, my wife and I had the opportunity to travel Route 66. It was great adventure and truly amazing to visit the small

towns along America's Main Street. I even had the chance to stand on the corner in Winslow, AZ. Next year, I plan to co-lead a trip with Dr. Viertel as we take some of our majors down the mother road.

I hope this newsletter finds you all doing well. If you are back in Charleston, please stop by and say hello!

## Jay Gatrell (EIU President)

After an amazing first year as president, Jay continues his work on the geography of beer with Mark and Nancy (both from Kennesaw State) and their most recent work was presented at the international Beeronomics Conference at the University of Milan in June. This project is being expanded and a manuscript is in development with Dr. Franziska Sohns (Anglia Ruskin University, UK).

Mark W. Patterson, Jay D. Gatrell, and Nancy Hoalst-Pullen. 2024. *The Covid Hangover: Brewery Vulnerability and Survival in the Great Lakes Region*. VIII Beeronomics, University of Milan-Biocca.

## Bob Jorstad (emeritus)

In the spring of 2023, my wife and I moved to the central coast of California. Our new home has a view of mountains from the dining room and the lanai. Our grandchildren live less than a mile from us. It has taken more than a year to get fully established with medical care and the like.

We are situated, in Nipomo, on the Pacific Plate about half way between Los Angeles and San Francisco. We are located only a few miles from the ocean so it is never too hot or too cold. We certainly do not miss snow shoveling and the summer heat and humidity.

I started playing electric bass with our church Praise Team. It had been a long time since I played my guitars seriously so it was almost like starting over.

The farms grow almost anything in this area. The main crops are strawberries and grapes. Needless to say, some world-class wines are made here.

As always, I remain a dedicated Minnesota Vikings fan. Since we are so far from the Midwest not many games are televised here.

## Belayet Khan (emeritus)

More than eight years into retirement, I am happy to reflect on my delightful experience as a faculty member in the Department of Geology and Geography at Eastern Illinois University. Over the course of 38 years, I had the wondrous opportunity to interact with my colleagues and students who made for a truly special career. My involvements on various committees allowed me to strive for a positive impact on campus, and this meant a lot to me as someone deeply invested in EIU. Collaboration was key to our success on many fronts over the course of more than three decades.

Certainly, the highlight of my time at Eastern was the privilege of teaching our incredible undergraduate students. I sincerely looked forward to teaching every one of my classes. Each semester, I was thrilled to teach students who greeted me with genuine curiosity and enthusiasm for the learning materials.

I found myself thriving off their engagement, and this made me feel a strong sense of purpose in my role as a teacher. For years, I looked forward to weekends for a reason different than most as I taught off-campus classes. Teaching has always been a passion of mine, but it was over the years at Eastern that it became my calling. I am so honored now to be able to consider it my life's work. Beyond the classroom, I am eternally grateful to God for the blessed life I have had in Charleston with my wife and three children. It is amazing to think that Charleston is our beloved home.

By the grace of the God, our three children are doing well and they remain busy with their academic and professional responsibilities. Our older daughter serves as a Financial Advisor for an Investment Company in Indiana. The younger daughter is an Emergency Medicine Doctor and an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. She graduated from the University of Chicago and Rush Medical College in Chicago. Our son, after graduating from

Northwestern University, Rush Medical College, and the University of Illinois Medical School, Chicago is now pursuing his third year Fellowship Program on oncology and hematology at Cleveland Clinic, Ohio. I must say, the Charleston schools provided excellent education for our children, and we found a strong sense of community that we know is unique to our charming small town. As we each pursue our respective endeavors, my wife devotes her efforts to caring for our family, and we would certainly be lost without her support.

With our lifelong love for traveling, my wife and I have made some trips since my retirement. In recent years, we have traveled to Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, India, Bangladesh, Sweden, Finland, Spain, Czech Republic, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. Although we are always seeking new adventures, we love coming home to Charleston, and our children know that home is the best place for all of us to converge whenever possible. The gratifications of my career at EIU will forever stay with me. Early in my career I have hoped for an academic position where I would feel a sense of belonging and Eastern has been that place for me. I must say, I had no premonition of the tremendous passion and fulfillment I would find at Eastern. I humbly want to state that by God's grace, my vision has come to fruition, and I remain optimistic that the future will continue to provide treasured adventures.

## Barry Kronenfeld

Well, it's fall again so another academic year is starting. Last year I took on the introductory World Regional Geography course and it's a blast – in what other discipline do people make it a lifelong hobby to travel to the very places you are learning about in class? As a cartographer teaching regional geography courses, I'm also intrigued by how technology has and has not changed the way people learn geography. Google Earth is amazing with the world at your fingertips at 21 different zoom levels, but still there is something about a large format National Geographic atlas! I do think there is a lot more cartography that can be done with the digital format though – shout out to the students in my F23 Internet Mapping course who experimented with these technologies and created a wonderful interactive 3d Campus Tree Map (now live on the [GISci Center website](#)):



For my own research, I've been working with the USGS on a project to help them assess the legibility of the data produced by their automated map generalization procedures. The project brought me to Honolulu, Denver and Columbus for meetings that served as combined work/vacation. The diverse island of Oahu has beautiful volcanic landforms, but I was also impressed by Columbus – a growing city with intentional urban planning and a great food culture. Definitely worth a visit if you have the chance!

## Christopher Laingen

August 2024 marked the start of my sixteenth academic year at EIU. The previous year was enjoyable, both professionally and personally. Professionally, I continue to enjoy the courses I teach, and I remain active in research and publishing – most notably with a group of historians who are reviving interest in studies related to the Midwest. I couldn't imagine a better job to have... one where I simply have to be interested in the world around me, and then talk to people and write about it.

Personally, things could not better, either. My wife (Mary) continues her work on campus as the EIU Pre-Health academic advisor; and our two kids—Kenny a 7<sup>th</sup> grader and Edy a 5<sup>th</sup> grader—keep us busy with sports and other extracurricular activities, and the planning of summer adventures. This past year we were very fortunate to be able to go on a couple of memorable trips. Our first (big) trip was done over EIU's spring break—a trip to Ireland to see a niece who was living there as a part of her graduate work at Notre Dame. As with our trip to Australia, it was a great adventure and opportunity for our kids to experience a different culture. Kenny poured his first Guinness and was promised a bartending job if he ever decided to move to Dublin. We were also able to experience the 2024 total eclipse;

Mother Nature was kind and kept the clouds away, we took the kids out of school and watched the event from a rural church parking lot.



*Clockwise from top-right: viewing the 2024 eclipse near Burl Ives' (EIU Alum) grave in southeastern Illinois; at a pub on the small, rural island of Inisbeer (Aran Islands); at the Cliffs of Moher; at a pub in Dublin.*

Our final adventure of the year was my wife and I's annual hiking trip in July... this year we ventured into—armed with bear spray—Wyoming's Wind River Range. Our seven-day/six-night trip included incredible views of some of America's most beautiful mountains, and while we did not encounter any bears, I was awoken early one morning, around 2:00 am, to a porcupine chewing on my hiking pack's hip-belt about a foot from my sleeping face. It was not, in the least, scared of any of us trying to shoosh it away, but it finally waddled off. Of any animal to wake up face-to-face with in the middle of the night in the wilderness, a porcupine isn't a bad option.



*Nearing Tayo Lake in Wyoming's Wind River Range (Popo Agie Wilderness). Wind River Peak is the tallest peak on the right-side of the image. The continental divide runs along the ridge in the distance in the center of the image.*



## Katie Lewandowski

I guess it is that time of year again, when I write up what I did over the last year. I don't have a whole lot to report this year. I continue teaching both geology classes and methods for pre-service teachers.

Last fall, I was honored to be awarded the 2023 College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Undergraduate Research Mentor Award. Working with John Marron, Lydia Howard, and Colin Houser during the 2022-2023 school year to advance one research project was a great experience for me. Currently, I am working with Max Bruggman, who is a new transfer student this year, on a project looking at Devonian rocks up in Champaign County where he has been collecting fossils.

Mark and I went to Peru for our big trip this year. It was amazing! We flew over the Nazca Lines, spent time in the Amazon seeing capybaras, bats, monkeys, and lots of birds, visited Machu Picchu, saw the Andes, ate alpaca and other Peruvian culinary treats. We really enjoyed it.

Cheers,  
Katie Lewandowski

## James Riley

You got to (keep on rollin')  
Oh, yeah (keep on rollin')  
Oh, roll with the changes



*Union Pacific Big Boy No. 4014 is the world's largest fully-operational steam locomotive and recently stopped in Illinois on its Heartland of America tour. It is over 130 feet long and weighs 1.2 million pounds! The Big Boy locomotives were built in the early 1940s to keep freight rolling at high speed over the steep Wasatch Grade between Utah and Wyoming - an interesting confluence between economic and physical geography.*

# Betty Smith (emerita)

Hello colleagues, friends and students.

I am enjoying retirement in Cottonwood, California (about 2 hours north of Sacramento) and staying busy looking after my 30 Heritage Jacob Sheep; Heidi, a large white Anatolian Sheep Dog who protects the livestock from predators; and Lucky, a mixed Swiss mountain/Border Collie dog that keeps me company and loafs on the large, covered veranda. November, after a little rain, brings the planting of oats in the twelve-acre field between my house and the road, and May is time for cutting and baling the hay. I have an arrangement with a neighbor who takes care of the hay business. This is a Mediterranean climate, hot dry summers and rain only from November to May. The sheep I raise for breeding stock and meat. This year I will have 18 meat lambs to sell when they are 6 months old in October.

The travel highlight of the year was my month-long trip to Europe. I flew to Milan, Italy and first visited Otzi, the Iceman, in Bolzano. He is the natural mummy of a man who lived between 3350 and 3105 BC. He was discovered in 1991 in the Alps at the Italy-Austria border and is the oldest mummy found in Europe. He was found because glaciers are melting, and some hikers came across his bones covered with remains of his leather leggings (made from goatskin). He is in a special temperature and humidity- controlled chamber (poor guy) on the second floor of a museum (no photos allowed), created to celebrate and explain the culture of these very early peoples. With the continuing melting of glaciers, no doubt more high-altitude human remains will be found, not only in Europe but other high-altitude locations around the world. This would be an interesting topic for a master's project, e.g., using GIS to identify the likely locations of additional human remains at high altitudes where glaciers are melting!



I joined a 5-day Canadian wine tour of the hilly Piedmont region of northern Italy that was lots of fun and very geographic. This area is home to Borello, a deep red wine, and delicious sparkling wines. The Italian and Swiss trains are fast and clean. From the Piedmont I took the train to Switzerland, visited friends and then headed to Lucerne, Switzerland where I joined a Cal Berkeley Alumni group (ages 57 to 85!) for an active two-week exploration of the Alpine countries of Switzerland, Austria, and a touch of Germany to see Hitler's Eagle's Nest where he and Eva died at the end of World War II. The Cal Berkeley trip was named "Alpine Splendor," and it was splendid indeed! My favorite part was seeing the Alpine peak of the Matterhorn and the amazing surrounding geology. I will include some photos of the trip.

On a professional level, I presented a paper called "Perspectives of the Inverted America Map as Drawn by Uruguayan Torres-Garcia" at the conference of the Midwest Association for Latin American Studies (MALAS) held in Birmingham, Alabama. I also attended the American Association of Geographers (AAG) meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, mostly to enjoy meeting up with old friends and colleagues. My sister joined me and together we saw some lovely tropical landscapes and attended a polo match. It was my first. It was located near a small town and near the ocean, very rural, about an hour outside of Honolulu. The horses and riders were beautiful, and they have a special program to encourage young women to get involved in polo! Who would have known? The Hawaiian Polo Club was established in 1963.

I was elected Vice President of MALAS. Our annual meeting will be in Chicago Nov 8-9. See details at <https://www.malasnet.org/>

I am thankful to friends and neighbors who help look after my animals when I am away. I could not travel without their help. Hoping for peace at home and abroad. All the best,

Kind regards, Betty

## Dave Viertel

2023-24 has been a great year. I continue to teach remote sensing and land use planning courses as well as world regional and cultural geography courses for general education. It's been a busy year in research with two articles in print and one in revision. They run the gamut from public participation GIS to community murals. I've also continued my leadership on the International Education Committee, switching from Chair to Vice-Chair for the final year of my term.

Things are going great for my family as well. My daughter Ella is fourteen and thinks she is already shopping for cars (ugh!). Tennis and band at the high school keep us busy. My wife continues to advise several hundred students over in the Education department—nice to be able to work close to one another. I am looking forward to seeing students, parents, and former students at homecoming, parents weekend, and beyond!

# Support the Students, support the Department – all are welcomed and appreciated!

We have great students, solid programs and meaningful impact on people's careers. You have experienced it, and your support helps to keep it going. Support comes in many guises – passing along job opportunities and internships, visiting the department to give colloquia, equipment and specimen donations and, of course, monetary contributions. These funds are used to afford educational and research materials for student investigations, fund travel to present their projects at conferences now that this is permitted again, provide scholarships for deserving individuals and more. They have many more opportunities due solely to your generous support.

If you are interested in a monetary contribution to our department, please visit <https://www.eiu.edu/giving.php>. Once you accessed that page, you will see the first part where you enter the amount you will be given and a drop-down menu to the right of that to direct your gift to Geology and Geography. It is on the second page of the menu under the “College of Liberal Arts and Sciences,” about one third of the way down on that second page. Unfortunately, the Foundation has reworked the website and made it a little more difficult to navigate, but we Geoscientists will not be dissuaded! If you are directing the money to a specific scholarship/fund, please make note of it at the bottom where the instructions ask if the donation is in memory of someone. As always, checks made payable and sent to the Geology and Geography Department will be processed exactly as you direct.

Existing scholarships and funds:

- General Gift Account – unrestricted use towards student support, recruiting, etc.
- Geography Alumni Award – sophomore or junior in Geography
- Geology Alumni Award – sophomore or junior in Geology
- Dewey H. Amos Scholarship – outstanding junior in Geology or Earth Science
- Robert G. Buzzard Scholarship in Geography – junior or senior in Geography
- Jon and Diana Giffin Geologist Scholarship – at least sophomore Geology major with plans to continue in geology
- Vincent P. and Pamela R. Gutowski Scholarship – any student majoring in Geography

- Ruby M. Harris Award – senior in Geology, Geography or Earth Science
- Robert and Mary Jorstad Scholarship – junior or senior Geology student or junior or senior in Phys
- Belayet Khan Geography Scholarship – junior or senior Geography student
- Walter H. and Dorothea V. McDonald Scholarship – junior in Geography or Earth Science
- Grace Markwell Meier Award – outstanding member of Gamma Theta Upsilon (GTU)
- John Popp Field Geology Scholarship – seniors in Geology attending field camp
- Dalias and Lillian Price Memorial Endowment – supports student observers in obtaining daily climate data for the National Weather Service
- Errett and Mazie Warner Presidential Award – juniors or seniors in Geology, Geography or Earth Science
- Annie L. Weller Scholarship – junior or senior in Geography
- John George Wozencraft, Jr. Memorial Award – either Mathematics (even years) or Geogrpahy (odd years)
- Troyt York Memorial Scholarship – junior or senior in Geography
- Wise and Stoner Undergraduate Scholarship in Geography – junior or senior in Geography
- Others – establish your own scholarship or memorial fund!

We would especially like to encourage alumni to check for the possibility of matching funds from their employer, as any donation is then multiplied. For example, some large petroleum companies offer a 3:1 match. Gifts-in-kind of equipment or specimens are appreciated but please contact the department beforehand to ensure optimal use as well as conformance to University regulations. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to email or call me – thank you so very much!

Dr. Jim Davis, Chair  
 Email: [jadavis2@ciu.edu](mailto:jadavis2@ciu.edu)  
 Phone: (217) 581-2626

# Feeling social? Come see what is going on in social media!

We have Facebook pages and groups – pages are public, but the groups need to have you invited to join. Besides “shout outs” and various GEO-related postings, we also use the groups as a clearinghouse for all job opportunities and internships that come to our attention. If you are looking for a position, you should definitely join! If you know of opportunities, you can either join the group and pass along the information or just send along in an email and we’ll get it posted. To join or to send job opportunities, please email Jim Davis at [jadavis2@ciu.edu](mailto:jadavis2@ciu.edu).

Coming soon – Instagram and YouTube!!

More information on the department, faculty, and student opportunities can be found on our website:

[iu.edu/geoscience](http://iu.edu/geoscience)



*AY24-25 GEO Faculty, Left to Right: Diane Burns, Jake Crandall, Mike Cornebise, Cameron Craig, Jim Riley, Katie Lewandowski, Chris Laingen, Jim Davis, Dave Viertel, and Barry Kronenfeld.*