



## President's Column

by Burrell E. Montz



In the last Newsletter, I included a (not so easy to read) map of all of our chapters. I have been thinking about our chapters in various contexts ever since. For example, I recently decided to check out how many of the

teams in the NCAA tournament have GTU chapters at their universities, recognizing of course that not all of our chapters are in Division 1 institutions. Still, it turns out that 36 of the 64 schools (56%) in the tournament have GTU chapters. Maybe I should have considered this before I entered a pool especially because, of the Final Four, 75% have GTU chapters. There is always next year!

The Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers takes place later this month in Chicago. As you will see in the column by 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President Michael Longan, ten GTU members are receiving travel scholarships from the AAG to give presentations at this conference. You might want to attend their sessions and support your fellow GTU members. GTU will, as usual, have a booth in the exhibit area. Please stop by, say hello, and let us know what is happening in your chapter.

As we approach the end of another academic year, I want to thank all GTU chapters for all they have done for and in the name of Gamma Theta Upsilon. I would also like to welcome our new inductees. Congratulations! I look forward to hearing from you, whether it is about activities of your chapter, applications for scholarships, or general information or questions.

## Visiting Geographical Scientist Program

Now is the time to start thinking about applying for the Visiting Geographical Scientist Program (VGSP) for next year. VGSP sponsors

visits by prominent geographers to colleges and universities across the country. Its purpose is to stimulate interest in geography, especially in small departments that do not have the resources to bring in well-known speakers. Participating institutions select and make arrangements with the visiting geographer. Applications and program details can be found at <http://www.aag.org/vgsp>. A list of preapproved speakers is also available at <http://www.aag.org/cs/vgsp/speakers>. The VGSP covers travel costs and provides a small honorarium; host institutions provide meals and housing. Questions may be directed to Dr. Niem Huynh ([nhuynh@aag.org](mailto:nhuynh@aag.org)).

## AAG/GTU Travel Awards

by Michael Longan, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President

The second annual AAG/GTU travel awards to support student travel to the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers elicited a record number of applications. The applications highlighted the importance of the meeting for students who intend to present their research for the first time, meet and connect with scholars whose work they admire, or simply attend their first meeting to find out what it is all about. There were so many good applications that the awards committee had a tough time selecting the 10 winners of the \$200 travel award. Nevertheless the following students submitted applications that stood out in some way and are the winners of the 2015 AAG/GTU travel award.

- Robert Briwa, Kansas State University
- Claire Finn, Macalester College
- Adam Flanery, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg
- Alisa Hass, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh
- Kevin Hauser, State University of New York at Geneseo
- Manna Begum Khan, University of North Dakota
- Diego Leal, University of Richmond
- Damon Nelton, St. Cloud State University
- Tammy Parece, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University



• Shelby Young, Texas A&M University  
 Finally, we thank the generous donors who contributed to the AAG-GTU Student Travel Fund and who make the award possible. If you would like to donate to the fund for next year you may visit the [contribute page](#) on AAG website and select AAG-GTU Travel Fund.



**Historian's Column**  
 by Dawn M. Drake

While I have been known to share my own memories in this column, I try not to use it for my own purposes. I am going to make an exception in this column.

On February 19, 2015 the geography discipline and the world in general lost Dr. Ruth Shirey – far too soon and far too tragically. Ruth was different things to different people. To many, she was the long-time Executive Director of the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), advocating for the importance of geography in the K-16 classroom. To others, she was a committed member of the Society of Woman Geographers, overseeing the distribution of Pruitt Fellowships to deserving women studying geography in graduate programs. From this position, Ruth was a staunch advocate for increasing the presence of women and minorities in academia. To the foreign students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), she was a haven on holidays, helping them feel less homesick while so far from home. To me, she was a mentor, a friend, and my very first GTU advisor.

Ruth actually knew me before I knew her. When I was in high school, I competed in National History Day, completing a project on the history of ice harvesting in Monroe County, Pennsylvania. The theme that year was history in geography and I applied the five themes of geography to the ice harvesting industry. When the judging sheets were returned, I was told that I had not adhered to the theme. My high school teacher was enraged and she enlisted Ruth, as the Executive Director of

NCGE and an influential member of the Pennsylvania Geographic Alliance to go on a campaign to educate high school teachers in Pennsylvania about what geography really is. At this point, I did not know who my benefactor was or how influential she would become to my life.

After arriving at IUP and becoming a social science secondary education major with a concentration in geography, I got to know Ruth better. As a sophomore, I was awarded the Department of Geography and Regional Planning's Gamma Theta Upsilon scholarship, which encouraged me to join the Gamma Omega Alpha chapter of GTU. At the time, Ruth shared advising duties with Dr. John Benhart. Each of these individuals would become immensely influential in my academic career and my life.

It is only now as I write this column and mourn her loss that I realize just how important Ruth was to who I am now. During my senior year of college, I was not only serving as an officer for IUP's chapter of GTU, but I was invited to run for student representative on the GTU Executive Committee. While I would receive some assistance to travel to the AAG meeting in Los Angeles from GTU, there was no way I could have afforded the entire trip on my own. Ruth came to my rescue, giving me a job working at the NCGE booth. In exchange for my time, she paid for my conference registration and hotel room. Just like that, I was attending my first AAG meeting – something not many undergraduates at a school the size of IUP have the opportunity to do.

There is no way I can enumerate all the ways that Ruth influenced my life or supported me along the path to where I am today. All I can really say is that she was a constant support and mentor, even before I knew her and all the way to her very last day when she sent me an email to catch up, since we had last seen each other in May. And I am not the only person Ruth influenced. She was a tireless advocate for so many people. She was one of the longest serving advisors of a GTU chapter.





She believed in her students and would do anything for them. I cannot imagine where I would be without her. She was my friend and my mentor, but I am just one of many who will miss her dearly. I only hope I can do her memory justice with the rest of my career.

Dr. Ruth Shirey will be honored at a memorial service on Saturday May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1pm at Zion Lutheran Church in Indiana, Pennsylvania.

### Forthcoming Articles in the *Geographical Bulletin* (May 2015, Vol. 56, Number 1)

*The Right to the City in the Informal Sector: Claiming Rights or Gaining Access in Kampala, Uganda?*

By Matthew F. Pietrus

*Compassionately Hidden: The Church Telling Local Homeless to "Come to Our House"*

By Robert Oliver, Matthew Robinson and C. Theodore Koebel

*Influence of Academic Variables on Geospatial Skills of Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study*

By Kanika Verma

### Apply for a GTU Scholarship by June 1

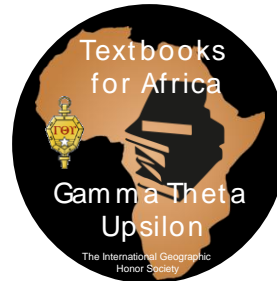
Now is the time to start thinking about applying for one of the five GTU scholarships, each of which carries an award of \$1000. Continuing graduate students are eligible to apply for the Buzzard Graduate Scholarship while undergraduate students are eligible to apply for the Buzzard, Maxfield, Richason, and Rechlin Undergraduate Scholarships. The Buzzard Undergraduate Scholarship is for a senior for use toward graduate school expenses; the other three undergraduate scholarships are for juniors or seniors with either career or graduate school aspirations. Though the deadline of June 1, 2015 is a couple of months away, anyone wanting to apply will want to be sure to ask for letters of

recommendation and begin drafting their essay well in advance. More information including specific criteria for eligibility and application instructions is available at

<http://www.gammathetaupsilon.org/scholarships.html>.

### Textbooks for Africa

By Burrell Montz



The end of the year is a perfect time to collect books for our *Textbooks for Africa* initiative. I encourage additional chapters to sign on. I want to thank those chapters that have already

committed to this:

Nu: Emory and Henry College

Chi: Oklahoma State University

Beta Iota: East Carolina University

Iota Theta: University of Tennessee

Kappa Upsilon: Texas State University

Lambda Chi: Cal State San Bernardino

If your chapter would like to participate, please contact Thomas Wikle ([t.wikle@okstate.edu](mailto:t.wikle@okstate.edu)).

Additional information can be found at:

<http://www.gammathetaupsilon.org/textbooks-for-africa.html>.

### Stoles Available at GTU Office



There are several dozen stoles (some blue, some gold) that are still available from the GTU office.

These are ones we had not sold by the time we joined with Herff-Jones

to handle our merchandise sales. They are \$20 each. Please contact James Lowry, Executive

Secretary, at [jlowry@uno.edu](mailto:jlowry@uno.edu) to order them. All other orders will go through Herff-Jones

([https://www.hjgreek.com/index.cfm?event=Products.showCategories&Organization\\_ID=635](https://www.hjgreek.com/index.cfm?event=Products.showCategories&Organization_ID=635)).