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# FROM LINDLEY

Alumni Newsletter of the Department of Geography, University of Kansas

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## View from the Chair's Office



### Changes in Geography: you might not recognize us on your next visit!

Last year I started my column talking about changes (of leadership), but little did I know how much change was on the horizon. KU as a whole is reinventing itself, a process that comes with great hopes and trepidation; but also a necessary one in a fast changing world of higher education. Just to give you some idea. We have revised the undergraduate curriculum to introduce the new KU-core (no more Western Civ!! – a true sign of societal collapse in some eyes) and we are talking about flipped class rooms, hybrid courses, and new fully enrolled online course offerings. We also face new competition, or perhaps companionship, from new majors such as Global International Studies which seem to be affecting major enrollments, making us rethink the structure of our majors, and our course offerings.

Perhaps the most significant change is the introduction of Shared Service Centers (SSCs) to create more efficiencies (and save money) in financial and grant services at a central location in Strong Hall. For most Departments this means sending one or more staff members to the SSC. We are very sad to see Ramia Whitecotton, who joined us in January, leaving for the SSC. Ramia fit in wonderfully with the Bevs in our office environment, bringing in a ray of sunshine to the office manager position. Together they did a great job revising our web site (check it out at [www.geog.ku.edu](http://www.geog.ku.edu)) while keeping all the cogs going smoothly as always! However, we are not the only department to face these changes. Geology has lost two of their three staff members; meaning that half the office staff in Lindley Hall is moving out December 16. In order to make sure all services in Lindley

are covered, the remaining office staff of Geology (Yolanda Balderas and Cari Alfors (Perkins)), Geography (Bev Koerner and Bev Morey) and Chris Worley from Environmental Studies are being asked to work together to share duties in serving all three units. This means significant reassignments of tasks, and our office will no longer just serve Geography. Student services will move to the present Geology offices, while faculty services for both departments, Geography graduate student services, and Environmental Studies support (probably temporarily) remain in our office suit. This coming summer Environmental Studies will also move their directors office to Lindley (Chris Brown, the current director, will temporarily work out of his Geography office). One great advantage from the reorganization is that we will have a full time undergraduate advisor to advise all majors covered in the three units.

In addition to these University wide changes, there are some very positive changes within the Department. We are very excited to report that a new Masters of Science in Geography degree with options in Physical Geography and Geographic Information Science has been approved by the board of Regents to begin January 2014; several students are already asking to switch to this new program. Our proposed new Ph.D. in Atmospheric Sciences is also making good progress through the system, and should be voted on by the Board of Regents in the next few months; kudos to Donna Tucker for shepherding this through the system! This new degree should help the stature of our Atmospheric Sciences program nationally. In addition, we have a series of other proposals in the works to create undergraduate and graduate GIS certificate programs, and a GIS option for the newly formed Professional Master Degree offerings at the KU Edwards campus. I am grateful to Xingong Li for taking the lead on these proposals.