The Department of Geography and Urban Studies is greatly saddened by the death of our friend and colleague, Professor Robert Mason on November 15, 2017 after a brief illness. Rob was well known for his scholarly contributions to geography, particularly in the areas of land use management and environmental policy in the United States, Japan and China. He was a highly respected teacher, mentor, and friend to many in the department and in the larger academic community. Rob was passionate about the need to address pressing environmental issues through his research and training the next generation of environmental leaders. He believed strongly in international educational opportunities for students, for whom he cared deeply. He also was an experienced world traveler, enthusiastic hiker, and adventurous food aficionado.

Rob received his BA in Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Buffalo in 1977, his MA in Geography and Environmental Studies from the University of Toronto in 1979, and received his PhD in Geography from Rutgers University in 1986. He joined our faculty in 1986, following a short period as visiting lecturer at Ohio State University. Rob spent many years teaching at the Rome and Japan campuses and in 2004-05 was the Bryant Drake Guest Professor in the Department of Biosphere Sciences at Kobe College in Nishinomiya, Japan. During his tenure at Temple, Rob was an integral part of the Environmental Studies major, serving as its director for several years.

Rob leaves a lasting legacy through his many contributions to geography and environmental studies, as well as the students he taught and mentored through the years. He will be greatly missed by his colleagues, students, and friends in the department and around the world.

Greetings from the Chair

Dear Alumni,

I bring you greetings from the Department of Geography and Urban Studies. It is with great sadness that I must inform you of the recent death of our friend and colleague Professor Robert Mason after a brief illness. Rob joined the faculty in 1986 and many of you will remember him from classes and in his role as Director of Environmental Studies. It is a big loss for the department, but Rob leaves a lasting legacy in the Environmental Studies program and the many students whom he has taught and mentored.

This newsletter highlights some of the accomplishments of our faculty, students, and alumni in the realms of research, teaching, service, and careers. We are a vibrant community with many events such as GIS Day, lectures such as the Benjamin H. Kohl Social Justice Lecture, and career days for our undergraduates. It was great to see some of you at our alumni panels and GIS Day. We would welcome more involvement from our alumni in departmental events and would like to facilitate alumni networking. Please contact me if you have any suggestions or questions. I’d love to hear from you.

On behalf of the Department, I wish you a happy holiday season and best wishes for 2018!

Sincerely,
Melissa R. Gilbert
Professor and Chair
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GIS Day 2017

On November 15th, Temple University participated in GIS Day, part of the international celebration of Geographic Information Systems and how it can make a difference in our society. The event was cosponsored by the Department of Geography and Urban Studies, the Spatial Analytics Lab at Temple, and the Temple University Libraries. We were excited to host GIS Day once again after last year’s success.

GIS Day at Temple was an all-day event on campus. The day was filled with faculty, staff and students from across the university as well as alumni and professionals showcasing how they are using GIS to make a difference.

Lauri Dafner, a Solutions Engineer with Esri, started the day with a workshop on ArcGIS Online in our new GIS Studio. Following the workshop, we hosted panels of lightning talks from across Temple and industry, a keynote address by Dr. Marianna Pavlovskaya, a jobs panel and a poster session.

Dr. Marianna Pavlovskaya, Professor of Geography at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center, gave our keynote address, “GIS for social transformation.” Pavlovskaya does research on urban geography, feminist geography, and critical GIS (Geographic Information Science). In her talk, Pavlovskaya discussed the imbalance of purchasing power of credit unions across New York City.

Dr. Pavlovskaya was also the dissertation advisor of GUS faculty Bradley Gardener. Dr. Gardener helped us interview Dr. Pavlovskaya about her research areas and her work as a teacher, immigrant and mentor. Read the full interview here.

We showcased a wide range of GIS applications, as used by researchers and practitioners from Temple University and the Philadelphia region. Presenters included alumni and professionals representing organizations including Azavea, Cesium, and the Public Health Management Corporation, and faculty, staff and graduate students from across Temple, including Earth and Environmental Science, Tyler School of Art, Rehabilitation Sciences, and the Digital Scholarship Center. Some of the timely topics presented included gerrymandering in PA, global temperature rise’s projected effects on Arizona airports, FEMA’s flood risk products, and several projects on storm water management. We even had high school students present posters done in their intro GIS class. See the full schedule here.

GIS Day was a great success. We enjoyed seeing so many alumni and practitioners from Temple and the community come together. Much credit is due to GUS faculty Dr. Jeremy Mennis who planned and coordinated the event. We hope you can join us next year.

Pictured Above: Our jobs panel included alumni Greg Kingery, Julia Wolanski, Michelle Schmitt, and Bianca Santos and FixList’s Mjumbe Poe.

GIS Studio

On October 6th, we celebrated the grand opening of our GIS Studio, a workspace designed for our Professional Science Master’s in GIS students.

At the opening, Richard Deeg, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and Dr. Melissa Gilbert, Chair of the Department of Geography and Urban Studies said a few words. Dean Deeg has been a great supporter of the Professional Science Master’s in GIS since its creation in 2015. Dr. Gilbert spoke on behalf of the department, thanking the College of Liberal Arts Dean’s Office, Facilities and many others for their assistance in creating the beautiful space for our students.

The GIS Studio is located on the first floor of Gladfelter Hall. Formerly not in use as an academic space, the mezzanine level now includes the studio, the faculty office for the Assistant Director of the Professional Science Master’s in GIS, and a small conference room with videoconferencing technology. This space is for graduate students in the Professional Science Master’s in GIS, giving them a dedicated space to work on their coursework, collaborate with fellow students and employers, and learn in a hands-on setting.

We are excited to devote this space to students learning in this cutting-edge program.

Pictured above: Dr. Melissa Gilbert cuts the ribbon at the studio opening.
Advocating for climate change policy reform in the wake of recent natural disasters.

On Sept. 26, six faculty members from the Department of Geography and Urban Studies addressed recent natural disasters in a panel titled “Extreme Weather or Extreme Politics: Climate Change, Urban Planning and the 2017 Hurricane Season.”

The panel was organized after Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, Texas. After the hurricane made landfall, many reporters noted the lack of urban planning in the city and discussed the implications for recovery. Since a big weather event becomes a “disaster” when human lives are impacted, our faculty wanted to examine how Houston’s building over of wetlands and (lack of) planning contributed to the making of a natural disaster. Unfortunately, between the time the panel was organized and Sept. 26, both Hurricanes Irma and Maria made landfall across the Caribbean and southern United States, which broadened the discussion to include all three recent natural disasters.

Facilitated by Hamil Pearsall, the panel included Charles Kaylor, David Organ, Victor Gutierrez-Velez, Robert Mason, and Christina Rosan. The panelists discussed different dimensions of the multiple Category 5 hurricanes that have devastated many islands in the Caribbean and southern United States, which broadened the discussion to include all three recent natural disasters.

After a few discussion questions to start the conversation, the floor was opened up for questions from the student audience. Student questions were concerned with how researchers and scientists can make meaningful changes in how climate policies and adaptations happen, what we can do to assist in relief aid, and the responsibilities that government and fossil fuel companies have in the process. The first student question brought up one of the most important questions of the day: how do we take these ideas out of the classroom and apply them to real-life solutions?

The general consensus of the panelists was that policies must be instituted at all governmental levels to enact change and make progress for prevention, mitigation, and resiliency to climate change, with a healthy dose of “we need to address these issues head on” and “go vote!”

By Environmental Studies major Jillian Eller

Environmental GIS students present at the River City Festival

On October 14, the students in Professor Hamil Pearsall’s Environmental GIS class presented an exhibit on urban heat islands at the Fishtown River City Festival at Penn Treaty Park. The goal was to teach attendees about urban heat islands in a way that was easy to understand, memorable and relatable to individuals living in the Philadelphia area. The exhibit included three different hands-on components, including a station for measuring the temperature of common construction materials (e.g. bricks, roofing materials, wood); a matching game that challenged residents to match a neighborhood-scale photo to its corresponding location on a map of temperatures across the city; and a game, inspired by The Lorax by Dr. Seuss, to help Fishtown residents come up with ways of cooling their neighborhood.

See photos and a full description of the projects.
Undergrads at Middle States

Representing Temple University at the Middle States Division of the American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting

On October 20 - 21, five students representing the Department of Geography and Urban Studies at Temple University attended the Middle States Division of the Association of American Geographers annual meeting at SUNY Geneseo.

They presented five-minute talks on a range of topics:

- **Jillian Eller:** “Liquor Store Locations in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Their Relation to Violent Crime Based on Seasonality”
- **Joseph Gallagher:** “Cod-motity Fetish: British Fishers, Place and Brexit
- **Maric Kusinitz:** “Geographies of Sacred Space: A Meditative Exercise”
- **Ritapa Neogi:** “Colonialism and the Ecological Crisis of the Suez Canal
- **Chelsea Williams:** “Neoliberal Food Deserts”

In addition the opportunity to present their research at a conference, this was a chance for our students to network with fellow Geography undergraduates and meet faculty from the region, including the Chair of the American Association of Geographers Derek Alderman.

This was a student-driven effort, lead by the Geography and Urban Studies and Environmental Studies Undergraduate Student Association, with support from faculty and staff in the department.