



# CSUF | Geography & the Environment

## COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

# Equinox

Fall 2023 | Department of Geography & the Environment | CSUF

## Note from the Chair

I hope this newsletter finds you well. One of my priorities as the new chair of the Department of Geography & the Environment is to strengthen the sense of community within our department and the relationships with our wonderful alumni. That is why I have decided to reboot "Equinox", the department's biannual newsletter. The idea is to generally share a department update each semester.

For this first fall issue, I want to highlight all the amazing work our students and faculty have been accomplishing, celebrate our recent graduates, and showcase all the awards our students have been receiving. While putting this issue together, I realized that the traditional ties that bind us all as geographers: an interest in the human environment and a deep appreciation for the outdoors, are still very much alive.



Don't forget to mark your calendars for our student-led "All Points of the Compass" conference on March 22nd, 2024.

Best Regards,

Trevis Matheus

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# Faculty Spotlight: Dydia DeLyser

Professor Dydia DeLyser's favorite place is the ghost town of Bodie, some 380 miles north of Fullerton in the desert high mountains of California's Eastern Sierra region. These days, it's a place where her research and personal life come together in exciting ways. She worked (and lived!) there for ten summers while she was an undergraduate in Geography at UCLA, and a graduate student in Geography at Syracuse University. While working there she wrote her PhD dissertation about how tourists and staff interpret the abandoned mining town. For the last decade she has served on the Board of Trustees of the Bodie Foundation, the non-profit that raises money to stabilize Bodie's buildings—the same work DeLyser did as a young staff member there.

“People ask me what it means to be a ‘feminist geographer.’ To me it means that I work to open doors for women and minoritized people, and then *bold those doors open...*”



Dr. DeLyser (left) giving a tour to CSUF Mountain Field Geography students at Bodie State Historic Park, Summer 2023.

“After finishing my PhD in 1997 I really wanted to be able to give something back to Bodie. That started with me working as a volunteer, doing the same work I used to do for pay for free. I still do that—I never miss a chance to have a hammer or a toilet brush in my hands” DeLyser says of the maintenance work she does in Bodie. “But recently it’s also become so much more: I’ve been able to combine my academic expertise with my hands-on work experience to give public presentations about how Bodie’s approach to historic preservation, known as ‘arrested decay’ because it aims to keep buildings standing while letting them still look like they’re falling down, has been globally influential. It’s so rewarding to be able to put my two kinds of expertise together and share that with the public” DeLyser said.

# Faculty Spotlight: Dydia DeLyser (continued)

A native Angeleno with research interests in Los Angeles, California, and the American West, DeLyser is a feminist cultural-historical geographer who joined the CSUF Geography faculty in 2014. “People ask me what it means to be a ‘feminist geographer.’ To me it means that I work to open doors for women and minoritized people, and then *hold those doors open* so more can come through. It also means that my research is community embedded and seeks not only to create new scholarly knowledge and understanding, but also create value for the communities I work with.”

As another example, DeLyser points to her current research on how neon signs transformed the American landscape. As part of that work she serves as Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Museum of Neon Art (in Glendale, CA). When the Museum was mandated closed during the pandemic DeLyser reached out to friends in the neon community and collaboratively produced a book, *Neon: A Light History* ([www.historyofneon.org](http://www.historyofneon.org)) to benefit the Museum and share her research knowledge with the public. “That was a wonderful experience. I wrote together with my husband Paul Greenstein, who has been making and restoring neon signs in Los Angeles since the 1970s. We collaborated from the outset with our designer-publishers Randall Ann Homan and Al Barna at Giant Orange Press to shape the text around images—to craft the text with photographs and design layouts in mind. It was such a joy collaborating with three people with very different kinds of expertise to merge scholarly and practical knowledge in order to reach a popular audience.”

Making contributions to community through scholarship is not always easy, DeLyser points out. “It has taken years to find ways my scholarly expertise can contribute to community. But I keep trying. I wrote my Master’s Thesis in 1996 about how the nineteenth-century novel *Ramona* changed the way we understand southern California’s past, and then published that as a book in 2005. As part of my research, I built a collection of historic tourist souvenirs related to the novel and its scenes and characters because I realized they could demonstrate how widespread this tourist phenomenon once was. Now those same souvenirs, and that scholarship have been used in exhibits at Old Town San Diego State Historic Park and the Huntington Library, and will be part of an upcoming exhibit at the Autry Museum of the American West. “It’s so rewarding to see research that’s been important to me be picked up and used in new ways by different communities.”

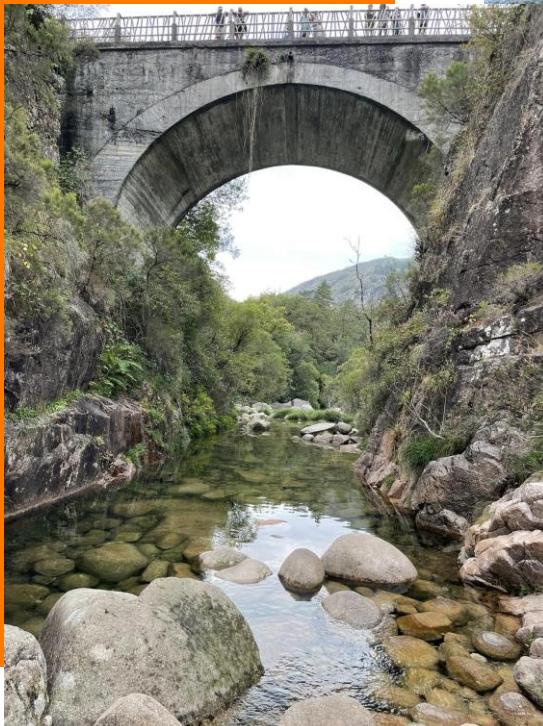
DeLyser also believes in giving back to her communities in ways not directly research related. She serves as an elected representative of the Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Council of the City of Los Angeles, and as the Secretary of the American Association of Geographers. “I spent the first fifteen years of my academic career mostly building my reputation as a scholar, and then purposely shifted my focus when I realized that what really makes me happy is using my skills and expertise as an academic to help others.”



## Faculty & Staff Updates

### Kim Bette:

Traveled to Portugal in September 2023. The photographs to the right are from a road trip to the São Miguel waterfall off the Rio Homem in the National Park Peneda-Gerês in northern Portugal, near the Spanish border.



### Mark Drayse:

He and his wife Rebecca enjoyed a three-week journey through the Highlands of Scotland in August 2023. Getting away from it all, they toured the countryside and hiked in Glen Affric, Assynt, the Isle of Skye, the Isle of Raasay, and Argyll (left).





# Vanessa Engstrom:

Hiked the Grand Canyon Rim to Rim (left).



# Olivia Hinton:

Traveled to Seattle this summer; spent time camping on the south rim of the Grand Canyon (right).





## Trevis Matheus:

Welcomed a New Geographer to the family in May, Annie Sue Matheus.

Led 14 students through the Sierras for GEOG 483 "Mountain Field Geography" (left).

## Zia Salim:

Spent the month of June teaching the "Politics, Culture, and History in Washington, D.C." course to 23 undergraduates from 4 CSU campuses as part of the Cal State DC Scholars Program (right). As part of the class, he guided students in small group excursions and experiences: students visited the National Mall (seeing the monuments and memorials at night is a highlight!), went on walking field trips in a wide variety of neighborhoods, attended baseball and soccer games, and went on hikes in Rock Creek Park, a 1754-acre oasis in the middle of the city.





## Peggy Smith:

Taught in Alaska onboard Royal Caribbean and Celebrity (left).

Researching two new fun areas: 1) Nashville - America's Music, 2) San Diego Maritime Museum - doing fun research for a book on Lady Pirates (historical fiction).

Has been riding e-bikes on the Central Coast.

## Bob Voeks:

Traveled to Oaxaca, Mexico, with colleague Dr. Jennifer Helzer, looking at local maize rituals for book in progress—**Dining with God: Sacred Foods for Traditional Societies**. Also, visited the famous “Tule Tree”, (attachment) a cypress reportedly with the largest circumference in the world, so well known that Alexander Von Humboldt visited it in the early 1800s (right).

Welcomed first grandchild, Isla, on June 7<sup>th</sup> in Bend, OR.

Traveled to Scotland and Wales in June with Jen Helzer.

Published two articles with Brazilian colleagues and students.





## Student Spotlight: Delaney Cabral

For Delaney Cabral, deciding to major in Geography has been one of her most rewarding decisions. She was initially torn between many scientific majors, “but I recalled the appreciation I had for a Human Geography course I took my freshman year of high school, and it inspired me to reconsider what I knew about the field”. With the assistance of Professor Vu and Dr. Salim, Delaney entered Cal State Fullerton and declared her major in Geography & the Environment, with a focus on Environmental Analysis, and a minor in History. Asked about the impact of geography on her chosen career path Delaney states, “Geography has taught me the importance of human-environment interactions.” She feels that it is a disservice to the environment to disregard anthropogenic factors, considering that they are undeniably intertwined with our ongoing climate crises. Courses such as “National Parks” taught by Dr. Peggy Smith and “Tropical Rainforests” with Professor Leaa Short have inspired her to pursue ambitions within conservation and preservation.

Caption: Delaney Cabral in Powder Canyon, La Habra Heights, during a shakedown hike.

Geography at CSUF has also helped Delaney meet new people and provided new opportunities. In her first semester, she became the Inter-Club Council Representative for the Geography Club. Currently, she is the President of the Geography Club at CSUF. “With the help of our club officers, I hope we can encourage students to get outdoors, expose themselves to new cultures, and learn that Geography isn’t just about historic maps.” She is also an intern with the Fullerton Arboretum where she is responsible for mapping tree canopies, and she works as a GIS Research Assistant at the Center for Demographic Research. In these positions, Delaney notes that she has found a profound respect for GIS work and the sheer amount of effort and detail that goes into it.

“When time permits I enjoy hiking, paddle boarding, camping, and backpacking. Some of my upcoming trips include a solo backpacking trip to the Channel Islands and summiting Mt. Whitney. This summer I got certified in First Aid/AED and Wilderness First Aid, though I hope I never have to put my training to use. I am excited to begin a career in the outdoors once I graduate in May!”

Delaney was recently featured in the campus news for her work with the Arboretum - you can read more about her work in the article here: <https://news.fullerton.edu/spotlight/geography-student-and-arboretum-intern-uses-satellites-to-map-tree-canopies/>

# Alumni Spotlight: Andrew Wallace



Caption: Andrew Wallace at the Sabrina Basin Trailhead, located along the John Muir Trail.

Andrew Wallace graduated from CSUF in 2021, double majoring in Geography & Anthropology. He also earned a GIS certificate. After completing his undergraduate studies in 2021, Andrew joined the Geography M.A. program, graduating in the spring of 2023.

His graduate thesis aimed at understanding the barriers that restrict GIS tools' effectiveness in managing stormwater infrastructure assets. His work utilized a qualitative approach, incorporating semi-structured interviews and questionnaires focusing on municipal GIS organizations in Orange County, CA.

Andrew's thesis findings identified the prevalence of organizational obstacles amongst Orange County GIS organizations.

Through this research, he provided recommendations and strategies to mitigate these barriers and develop more robust GIS programs for managing stormwater infrastructure. "I wanted to research the applied, municipal setting to provide a practical benefit to these municipal organizations and attempt to bridge the gap between GIS researchers and GIS practitioners". Andrew was selected as the department's outstanding graduate student in May 2023.

Since graduating, Andrew has been busy pursuing his passion for the outdoors, embarking on backpacking journeys and fishing excursions in the John Muir Wilderness. He currently works as a GIS Specialist for Orange County Parks. Andrew's job responsibilities include maintaining GIS datasets, creating maps and web mapping applications to support emergency preparedness, natural resource management, as well as trail and landscape maintenance. Andrew has continued his passion for GIS research, conducting drone flights to generate orthomosaics and DEM/DTMs of OC Parks land.

# Awards and Donors

## *Compass Cartography Competition*

### *First Place*

Andrew Wallace

### *Honorable Mentions*

Steven Pedroza

Aaron Chu

Richie Melgoza

## *Outstanding Graduate Student*

Andrew Wallace

## *Outstanding Undergraduate Student*

Richie Melgoza

Heather Roberts

## *Outstanding Service Awards*

Delaney Cabral

Steven Pedroza

Aaron Chu

Santia Rodriguez

Kaitlyn Matyuch

Jacqueline Bui

## Donors:

*James & Marian  
Norton*

*Kiyo & Dr. Robert  
Young*

*Stephen L. Slakey  
Valerie & William  
Anders*

*Nancy & Ronald  
Stewart*

*Derek A. Kantar  
Allen T. Chen*

If you are interested in contributing to any of these awards in the future, or would like to contribute a new award or scholarship fund, please contact Melissa Martinez (melissamartinez@fullerton.edu, phone # (657) 278-4847) or Trevis Matheus (tmatheus@fullerton.edu, phone # (657) 278-3685).

Geography B.A.s and Minors

Jessica Allison

William Babiano

Evan Briggs

Jacqueline Bui

Aaron Chu

Kevin Chuong

Michelle Dominguez

Chloe Epstein

Catharine Glaab

Van Hoang

Ranya Jaber

Alice Li

Elyse Lyon

Melanie Nielson

Gabi Paredes

Steven Pedroza

Megan Peukert

Raelene Reyes

Heather Roberts

Santia Rodriguez

Matthew Rosson

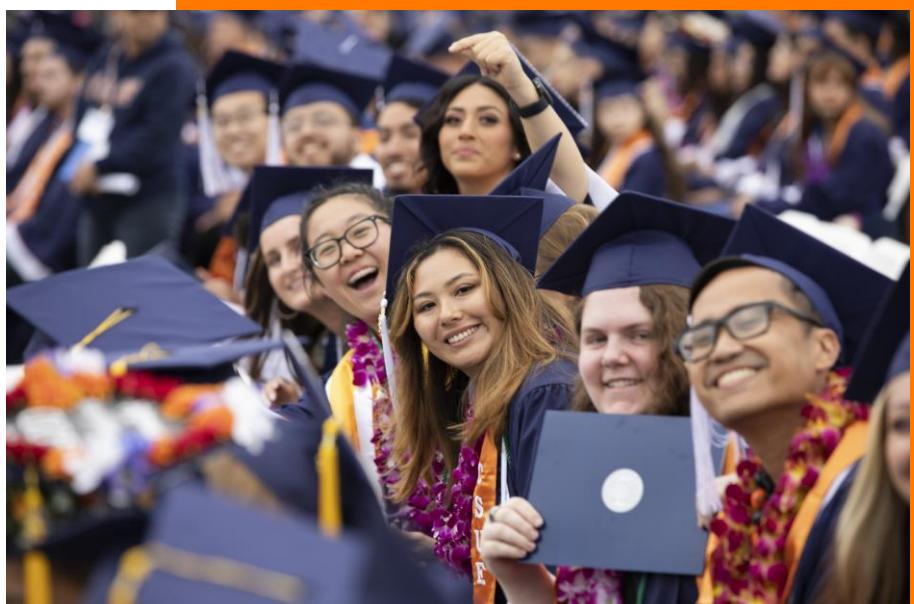
Alfonso Santamaria

Ismael Tellez

## Recent Graduates

### Geography M.A.

Andrew Wallace



Caption: CSUF Geography & the Environment graduates at Commencement, May 2023.

# Congratulations to all our geography students!

# Follow us on social media!

Instagram:



[www.instagram.com/csuf\\_geography.environment/](https://www.instagram.com/csuf_geography.environment/)

LinkedIn:



[www.linkedin.com/in/dept-of-geography-and-the-environment-csu-fullerton-a35992259](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dept-of-geography-and-the-environment-csu-fullerton-a35992259)

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<https://geography.fullerton.edu/>

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