

# Grad NEWS

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

September 2004

## School of Graduate Studies Seeks Student, Faculty Input

The School of Graduate Studies is in the process of revising the Graduate Bulletin for the printing of the 2005-2007 edition. The format of the bulletin will differ from previous versions in style, content and appearance. New chapters will address international student concerns and provide detailed, process-oriented information on completing a culminating project. Instead of course listings by department, it will also have consolidated course listings for improved interdisciplinary reference. The physical dimensions will also increase to an 8 1/2 X 11 inch format. The publication provides important information about graduate programs and graduate student services, serving as a guide for graduate study at SCSU. Therefore, we seek input from current and prospective students and faculty. Please tell us how this publication might improve your graduate experience, answer questions you might have about graduate study at SCSU, or address your more general ease of use concerns. Please address your questions and comments to [graduatestudies@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:graduatestudies@stcloudstate.edu).

## Thesis Procedure Revision

Students have historically sought direction from the graduate studies office for the scheduling of their preliminary and final thesis, field study or starred paper conferences as well as selecting committee members. Beginning this fall, graduate students will be responsible, under the direction of a graduate program advisor, for scheduling preliminary and final conferences. Networking with faculty is an integral part of the post-graduate experience and is the best way to ensure challenging and original research.

Completing a culminating project is a process that takes a minimum of two semesters. Before forming a committee, a student should be fully accepted into a graduate program, have a grade point average of 3.0, and ensure the program of study has been approved by the graduate dean.

Each graduate student, in conjunction with his/her advisor, should visit with graduate faculty based on each members' potential value in the area of research undertaken. The student's selected committee should be comprised of a minimum of three members: the program advisor or committee chair, one other faculty member from the major department and a graduate faculty member from a related department (outside reader).

Once the committee has been formed by a student, the School of Graduate Studies needs to be notified of the dates of the preliminary and final conference and the faculty serving as committee members. Submit this information through e-mail to Ann Anderson at [aeanderson@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:aeanderson@stcloudstate.edu).

The School of Graduate Studies Web site, [www.stcloudstate.edu/graduatestudies](http://www.stcloudstate.edu/graduatestudies), has detailed information regarding the procedures and requirements for field study, thesis or starred paper completion. Printed guides are available in the Husky Bookstore under the titles: "A Manual for the Preparation of Field Studies and Theses," "A Manual for the Preparation of Starred Paper(s)," or "A Manual for the Preparation of the Creative Work." The School of Graduate Studies is always a final resource for any other questions or concerns of students and faculty.

## Certificate Approval for Special Education Program

The Department of Special Education has recently gained approval from Minnesota State Colleges and Universities for new certificate programs in special education. The new certificates replace the current fifth-year special education program. These special education certificates are: learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral disorders, developmental disabilities and physical/health impairments. Each certificate will require 15 credits of course work for completion and licensure. The new certificates are intended to better match the needs of students. Students will find the programs address the state's need for special education teachers, the student's ability to apply course work to a full master's program and improved guidance during program transitions. For more information, contact Dr. John Hoover in the Department of Special Education at 320.308.2041 or [jhhoover@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:jhhoover@stcloudstate.edu). To apply to the certificate program, contact the School of Graduate Studies at 320.308.2113 or [graduatestudies@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:graduatestudies@stcloudstate.edu).

# Grad NEWS

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY  
*A tradition of excellence and opportunity*

## Geography Program Offers Practical Approach



Namrata Shrestha

Some people have trouble with maps, perhaps perpetually looking for the “you are here” phrase. That’s not the case in the third-floor corridors of Stewart Hall, where graduate students in the geography program are not only studying maps, they’re creating them.

“Graduate students (will) be very comfortable with maps – reading maps, creating maps and being able to interact with maps.

We teach all of our students that maps are a great tool, and this is really the language of our discipline,” graduate coordinator Dr. Mikhail Blinnikov says.

Maps have stories to tell, stories that help explain larger questions about people and places. “Geography is a very broad discipline,” Blinnikov explained. “The main integrative theme is spatial relations between people or cultures, landscapes or physical processes. So geography is like history: it is a unifying discipline.” He said students are typically interested in interdisciplinary ideas, both environmental and development-related.

Namrata Shrestha came to SCSU after studying environmental science as an undergraduate at Nepal University. “My major interest has always been the environment. I did my master’s (here) in geography studying the more technical aspects like GIS and remote sensing. I always wanted to apply those techniques in the environmental field.”

Shrestha’s thesis is a comparative study of the boreal forest fires in Canada, specifically in northwest Ontario. “The human-managed zones seemed to remain constant over time but in natural fire zones it fluctuated more,” she explained. “In the eighties there were large patches of burnt area but in the nineties it was very low.” Shrestha noted that there are ecological implications of constant fire patterns versus more sporadic fire patterns.

“We need better research on the ecological implications. Right now I’m doing more with structural change and, if I get the chance, I want to do the ecological part of it.”

Shrestha begins her doctoral studies at the

University of Toronto this fall. She is a traditional geography student, one who typically studies full-time seeking a master’s degree for later employment or to continue graduate study in a Ph.D. program. “(Another) typical group is professionals who are already employed,” said Blinnikov. “Many of these people are already using the techniques that we teach but they need to learn the latest tools. Traditionally, geographers would all interact with each other through maps – mapping relationships – but in recent times it has become increasingly more computerized.”

The Department of Geography offers three master’s degree tracks in geography: general geography, geography with an emphasis on GIS for students who would like to focus on geographical techniques, and the fairly new emphasis in travel and tourism. The department also offers a non-degree GIS graduate certificate with working professionals in mind. What unifies all geography students is that “They all have an interdisciplinary outlook and they are all interested in spatial relationships,” Blinnikov said.

SCSU’s geography program has a good reputation in the Midwest. “We are not necessarily the largest program but we are one of the programs with a solid reputation. To a great degree, the credit goes to the late Dr. Robert Bixby who was the creator of our Spatial Analysis Research Center. As a planner, he recognized the value of computer techniques and the future of geography,” said Blinnikov. As a result, students get hands-on experience with geographical techniques supported by theory in the classroom. “Within the state, we really represent the best possible mix of the two.”

According to Blinnikov, graduates from the geography program at SCSU, when compared with those from the University of Minnesota, have the best employment opportunities after graduation because of the practical approach SCSU’s program provides.

***“...we really represent the best possible mix (of geographical techniques and theory).”***



## MBA Degree is New Tool in Dentistry

Tom Boe has already been to graduate school, but in his 25 years as a dentist, he began to see the link between dental school and the business education he never received.

Boe decided to improve that link. For two years he traveled from his dental practices in Zimmerman and Anoka to attend the SCSU MBA program.

"If I've seen anything with dentists over the years or just medical practitioners in general, it's their lack of business knowledge."

Boe doubts there is a dental school in the U.S. that teaches business skills. "Yet most dentists will end up being small business owners."

Boe's motivation to complement his knowledge of dentistry led him to the MBA program in 2001. He admits he had another equally important reason for the undertaking. "The other reason is that I had two kids at St. Cloud State. I just kind of chased them up here."

A decade earlier, Boe's financial experience was not unlike the experience of many others eager to learn about the industry. "When I semi-retired in 1991, I started playing the stock market. I watched enough CNBC for a while that I thought, 'Maybe I should get an MBA.'" He finished the MBA program last fall. "The MBA experience was a wonderful time," he said. "I enjoyed every minute of it."

Indeed, for Boe, returning to school for another graduate degree was more fun than frustration. "When you're as old as I am and you go back to school you look at things a little differently than my kids did."

Boe loves school. "I know that's weird, especially to some of the younger people to hear that." He uses his son Corey's years of schooling at SCSU as an example. "It was kind of like pulling teeth. But in all fairness, I don't know that I enjoyed going to school when I was in my late teens and early twenties."

Corey's undergraduate experience contrasts to Tom's as an MBA student. "I think (the difference) is probably age and a little wisdom," Boe said.

With years of experience in his dental practice and the financial markets, Boe still thought some of the younger MBA students would have a clear advantage over someone who had been out of school for a long time. "I hadn't been to school for over 20 years. That first accounting class I took was probably the hardest class I had ever taken."

Dental school, and preparation for it, requires science courses like biology and chemistry rather than business courses that prepare students for an MBA. As a result, many of the business courses Boe initially enrolled in were prerequisite in nature. "This was entirely different for me. To even get my brain working in an academic area again was hard."

Boe was also surprised by the MBA course work. "Being in business for 25 years ... I went in thinking that finance and economics were going to be what I enjoyed the most." He found he enjoyed classes like marketing more than expected. Two years later Boe has what few other dentists have. He understands that most dental schools are busy teaching the fundamentals of dentistry, so learning business skills has to be an individual endeavor. "Dentistry is just not ready for business."

Still, at least for Boe, it was worth a try.

"When I finished (my MBA), I wrote to every dental school in the United States saying that I had some knowledge in business and perhaps it would be good to let me write a curriculum for a one-day seminar. I had two replies saying thank you but no thank you and no other replies."



Tom Boe

## DATES to remember

Tuesday, September 7  
Monday, September 13  
Tuesday, September 14  
Wednesday, September 15  
Friday, September 17  
Monday, September 20  
Monday, September 20  
Monday, September 20  
Friday, October 22

Classes begin  
Last day to drop fall courses without a "W" and with 100% refund  
Last day to add classes without departmental permission  
Late add override needed for fall registration  
Graduate students: Deadline for graduation application  
Last day to exchange courses, room AS 118, permission required  
Payment due for tuition and fees  
Financial aid checks: Direct deposit Sept. 20; checks mailed Sept. 21  
Last day to withdraw from fall courses with "W"

### Grad F.Y.I.

The average age of an SCSU graduate student between 1990 and 2003 was 30.28 years with an average undergraduate GPA of 3.29.



## Statistical Consulting Benefits Graduate Students, Faculty

Numbers. Statistics. Comparisons.

They reveal patterns, help explain relationships and bring depth to scholarly research and discussions. They also confuse, befuddle and sometimes perplex the scholars who need them most.

If you are looking for help drawing on the power of statistics to support your research, turn to the staff of the Statistical Consulting and Research Support office in SCSU's Learning Resources and Technology Services.

With increasing frequency, graduate students, new faculty, senior faculty and even undergraduate students are turning to statistics to help them explore areas of study and enhance understanding. They ask questions such as: How many? How often? How much?

Well-designed surveys offer scholars a valuable tool for answering such questions. Computers offer the number-crunching power you need to uncover and explore those statistics. But if your primary area is not statistics or computer programming, you may lack the tools, time or expertise to do an in-depth analysis of your data.

Staff members in Statistical Consulting and Research Support, a free service offered by Computing and Technology User Services in Miller Center 204, can help you design a survey to collect the information you need and do the computer work for you. You make the research decisions. They do the computer work.

They will help you format your survey and ask your questions effectively. They have data entry staff to enter the data for you.

The staff can also write programs to help you analyze the data and find answers to the research questions you're asking. Do you want to do your survey online? Statistical Consulting and Research Support has experience creating Web products and will help you draw upon the unique aspects of this growing information-gathering process.

Do you want to know more or take advantage of this service for YOUR next project? Call Statistical Consulting and Research Support at 320-308-4709, e-mail [CTUS@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:CTUS@stcloudstate.edu), or visit Miller Center 204 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays to set up an appointment. For more information, visit the Web site <http://lrts.stcloudstate.edu/about/ctus/statconsulting/>.



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St. Cloud State University values diversity of all kinds, including but not limited to race, religion and ethnicity (full statement at [bulletin.StCloudState.edu/ugb/generalinfo/nondiscrimination.html](http://bulletin.StCloudState.edu/ugb/generalinfo/nondiscrimination.html)).

TTY: 1-800-627-3529 SCSU is an affirmative action/equal opportunity educator and employer. This material can be made available in an alternative format. Contact the department/agency listed above. Member of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

Send items for **Grad NEWS** to:  
[aday@StCloudState.edu](mailto:aday@StCloudState.edu) or by campus mail to:

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