In To Africa
by Miriam Porter

Ghana is an amazing country. It is rich in culture and customs with many delightful people. But when you live in Ghana, having the lights turn on when you flip the switch isn’t always guaranteed. Also, one bucket of water can go a long way.

Those are some of the lessons I learned when I spent nearly a year living in this tropical country on the west-Africa coast. I learned quickly how to stretch a bucket of water. First you use the bucket for drinking, then for a bath, and finally, to flush the toilet, in that order. Such is life in a developing country.

From July 2008 to June 2009, I participated in an exchange with Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, Ghana. A KNUST professor visited and taught at Minnesota State Mankato for the same period. My youngest son, Andrew Bailey, accompanied me to Ghana and stayed for the first six months, attending a Ghanaian elementary school. He returned home after the holidays to finish his school year in Minnesota.

The infrastructure wasn’t the only challenge of living in Ghana and teaching at KNUST. The language presented some challenges as well. The country’s official language is English, but Ghanaians speak mainly their local languages. In the Asante Region where I lived, they speak Twi. There are many other dialects in Ghana. And even if they understand English, I learned, they don’t understand American accents. I

Continued on page 4
Letter from the Chair
Dr. Tony Filipovitch

As most of you know, Minnesota, like most states, has a serious budget shortfall (and those who don’t know aren’t living in Minnesota). Minnesota State Mankato’s share of the budget cuts during this round of cuts could be as much as $10M out of a roughly $80M operating budget. This has translated into a loss of 80 faculty positions at Minnesota State Mankato. 13.5 positions were taken from our College (Social and Behavioral Sciences), and URSI’s share of that was 1 position (well, the last half of a position that they had already nibbled at in an earlier round of cuts). We also lost several GA positions that we had been funding with University operating funds, although the good news is that we still have the Barrett and the Kelly fellowships, funded from gifts from you, our alumni and friends.

Of the main departments, only Geography was spared any cuts; so, all things considered, URSI came out fairly well. Although we are a smaller program within the college, this was recognition for the significant work we do in the community and the support and recognition we enjoy from our alumni and friends, as well as the collaborations that our faculty have developed with other programs and departments. We are not out of the woods yet—the State is projecting shortfalls for the coming biennium as well, and if Minnesota State Mankato has to take more cuts there are no more low- or mid-hanging fruit.

And we are doing some things to insure that URSI continues. We have opened a major presence at the University’s new satellite campus at 7700 France in Edina. We offer 3 classes in the evenings face-to-face, and by the fall it will be possible to take enough credits online for an undergraduate major in Urban Studies, the first program in Social & Behavioral Sciences to do this.

We have had a relationship with Normandale Community College for a while (credit goes to Mark Nagel), and we have been working with Inver Grove and North Hennepin Community Colleges to get something going.

URSI has always promoted community service learning opportunities. This year, the Graduate Studio class has provided both valuable applied experience for our students and outreach and support for our communities (see the Graduate Studio article included in this issue). We are also shifting resources to strengthen the internship opportunities for our students, with Dr. Jan Cherrington taking lead in that program - so, if you have opportunities for interns, keep Jan in mind. We have been ‘going through program review this year, and the consultants’ reports should give us additional guidance on strategies we might consider.

The other big news in the department is the retirement of Perry Wood. For more than 30 years, Perry has trained almost all of the planners who came through the Institute. He will be sorely missed, although he plans to continue to contribute to the department through online teaching and to help the University with some of its planning concerns. With no funds to replace him, or even for adjuncts to pick up some of his teaching, we have to shift his courses among the remaining faculty.

Finally, this fall the Upper Midwest regional conference of the American Planning Association will be held in Mankato on September 22-24. We plan to host a reception for our alumni and friends, and recognition for Professor Perry Wood upon his retirement. We look forward to seeing you at the conference and at the reception. There will be a track for student presentations, so you should have a chance to see some examples of the great work our students are doing.

Thanks to all of you for your support, whether it be with money (I know it’s hard, these days—but every little bit helps), opportunities (keep those referrals for studio projects and internships coming!), talent (we treasure the contributions you bring into our classrooms and, when we have the funds, your willingness to serve as adjunct faculty), and good will (your talking about the work we do here is what brings students to Minnesota State Mankato to study with us). Times are hard, but better times are coming!

Tony
Faculty Updates

Dr. Tony Filipovitch has been working with the Chairs & Dean and preparing for the budget cuts (“Other than that Mrs. Lincoln….”). He has been coordinating URSI’s efforts to become a major presence at the new campus at 7700 France in Edina. URSI teaches three evening classes at Edina, usually with regular faculty, although a few adjuncts are also in the mix. He has worked with faculty to develop Internet based courses that a student could earn the undergraduate degree in URSI completely online. He has been visiting a number of the two-year campuses in the Twin Cities, developing partnerships and transfer agreements to encourage students to take our courses in Edina.

Tony has also been involved in several applied research projects. This fall, he and Dr. Kwaku Kessey (visiting scholar from KNUST in Ghana) did an economic profile for the Greater Mankato City Center. This spring, Tony was part of the MCMA Educational Initiatives team that presented a workshop on economic issues in local government for high school social studies teachers at their annual statewide conference. The work he had been doing at KNUST on nonprofits in Ghana has been coming together; he should have a report ready by the end of the year. Also, this year URSI is hosting a Turkish Higher Education Council Fellow, Talip Ozturk, who is doing research on project-based learning and is studying the work we are doing with the MCMA on using local government to teach civics and other social studies.

Tony published three articles in the new International Encyclopedia of Civil Society, one on Corporate Social Responsibility and two on American foundations (the Cleveland Community Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation). And, along with Don Friend in Geography, he is working to develop a Center in the University for doing modeling, simulation, and virtual reality across the disciplines. He is calling it the “MinnModSim” Center. His particular interest is in modeling the up-stream, down-stream, and public infrastructure impacts of local & regional economic development. Tony has taught many of you a variety of tools for modeling population growth, fiscal impact, economic structure, land use forecasting, etc. He wants to work on a system for integrating these models so they can talk to each other, and present the results in a way that can make sense to the general public so it can inform community decision-making. He is looking for partners—for funding (of course), but also for interesting projects where he can test ideas. If interested, contact Tony Filipovitch at 507-389-1714.

Continued on page 4

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by Dr. Janet Cherrington

Today, the breakdown of small communities has become all too common. But what can be done? Where do these communities start? Communities have the need and universities have the means to improve community viability through student engagement. There are many small towns located in southeast Minnesota. Like most small Midwestern towns, they are tied to a shrinking agricultural base, dwindling Local Government Aid, and lackluster economic growth.

Many of these towns are located within close proximity to the campus of Minnesota State University, Mankato, which is forging town-gown partnerships between university research teams and business, industry, and communities. A major university goal is to integrate research, teaching, and service for students as well as faculty. Much of this collaboration is intended to make the university a more effective partner in community building.

Since 2003, these partnerships have been the guiding force for studio projects undertaken by my Public Information & Involvement class. The goal of these studio projects has been to help small towns identify the unique attributes that set them apart from other towns and to subsequently incorporate these elements into branding and marketing strategies. By 2008, four marketing projects had been completed for the towns of Saint Peter, Janesville, New Prague, and St. James.

In December of 2009, the fifth project was completed for the city of St. Clair, MN. With a population of just under 700, this was the smallest community to request URSI’s help. Among the things this brochure highlighted were education (the city has its own independent school district), recreation, housing, services, churches, and a new state-of-the art water facility. When the city clerk spoke to the students about St. Clair, she said the city was particularly proud of their new logo (three trees against a sunburst background). Knowing the students’ creativity in coming slogans for past brochures, she asked if it would be possible to link a slogan to the new logo. The slogan that the students coined was well-received—Roots Rich in History, Living for Today, Branching out for Tomorrow.

Together, the slogan and logo became the centerpiece of the brochure cover’s picture collage. As with the prior four marketing projects, the local TV station and newspaper praised the students’ community involvement.

Past marketing brochures included setup similarities. For example, the brochures developed after 2003 contained:

1 In Minnesota the state government gives a subsidy to cities known as Local Government Aid.
Dr. David Laverny-Rafter, AICP

In recognition of his years of research and teaching on global sustainable transportation issues, Professor Laverny-Rafter, AICP, was granted the prestigious Kearney Global Citizen award by Minnesota State Mankato in February, 2010. Specifically, this award recognized the fact that Professor Laverny-Rafter has obtained two Fulbright Scholar grants to conduct research and serve as a Visiting Professor at University College Cork and Trinity College Dublin, both in Ireland. His research emphasized comparative analysis of sustainable transportation practices in the European Union and in the United States. In addition, he has been appointed as a Senior Research Fellow at Queen’s University Belfast in Northern Ireland where he examined the effectiveness of bus and rail transit systems.

Since returning to Minnesota State Mankato, Professor Laverny-Rafter has continued his involvement with international planning by serving as Founding Coordinator of the Planner’s International Exchange Program for the International Division of the American Planning Association. This program provided planners in the U.S., Ireland and United Kingdom with opportunities for professional exchanges with their overseas counterparts.

Dr. Miriam Porter

For Dr. Miriam Porter, it’s been a period of acclamation. She returned to Minnesota State Mankato after spending the 2008-09 academic year in Kumasi Ghana teaching at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). By all accounts she had a tremendous experience. She feels her greatest achievements were developing a curriculum in urban management for the KNUST Planning Department and making some lasting friendships to facilitate future relationships between Minnesota State Mankato and KNUST.

Since coming back, Dr. Porter has shared her experiences in a presentation for Carver County residents through the initiative of School District 112 and the community organization, Funky Minds. The presentation was called Ghana-Customs and Traditions. She has also incorporated what she learned about comparative government into the courses she teaches.

Continued on page 5

“In To Africa” continued from page 1

had to slow my lectures down to be understood. Initially I didn’t understand even half of what was said to me in English. I found it helpful to watch the local news in English and try to learn the local accent from the newscasters.

I lived in relative comfort in a house provided by the university. It is hot in Ghana and I was fortunate to have a house with air conditioning in the bedroom. I also had a yard full of orange and avocado trees, bananas, plantain and many birds. Ghana is a very beautiful country.

I bought my own car and took frequent trips around the country. I traveled from the north for a safari at Mole National Preserve, to the south to experience the Gulf of Guinea. I often visited the villages around Kumasi. I made a point to become well-acquainted with the country. This helped me put my course content in context.

There are vast differences between cities and rural areas in Ghana. Rural villages typically get their water from a “bore hole” – a central well. Many houses have no bathrooms and many of their roads don’t amount to much more than a cow path. Many villages have unreliable electricity or none at all. Tribal Councils govern.

Cities, on the other hand, have roads and streets congested with people and vehicles, crowded housing, high levels of poverty and busy open-air markets. Central markets are chaotic with indescribable sights, sounds, smells and activity. You just swirl in all the commotion. They have elected and appointed members in their governing bodies.

Since most village families have no refrigeration in their homes, preparing food and feeding the family is often an all-day job. They have to gather wood for cooking, and then buy or harvest food for that day, and then cook the food.

I was there during Ghana’s presidential election and I witnessed first hand their democratic process. Ghana is known for its peace loving people and that was evident as the political process unfolded and a new party came into power. The students were also very interested in the American presidential election. I received an absentee ballot and I showed it to my classes before I sent it back.

The United Stated presidential election was front page news as we elected our first president with African ancestry. The Ghanaians showed much pride in this.

It was good to come home and return to what I was familiar with. But a part of me was left behind. I connect with that part of me when I hear from my Ghanaian friends and colleagues; and I remember, once upon a time….
Faculty Updates

Dr. Porter returned to her work with the Public Achievement Program at Minnesota State Mankato. She has also offered a new special topics class to add to the URSI curriculum. The course is called “The Art of Local Government Management: Mind, Body, and Soul.” In addition, she presented at the Carver County I.V.E.I.T. Youth Summit “A Pathway to Coming Together” on civic engagement.

Dr. Janet Cherrington [aka Dr. J] continues to remain active in International City/County Mgmt. Association (ICMA), the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC), and the Government Finance Officers’ Assn. In June, she attended the Government Finance Officers conference in Seattle, WA and will attend their spring conference in Atlanta, GA this year. Through this conference and membership, Janet intends to expand her Urban Finance course to teach practitioners and students not only the basis of fund accounting, budgeting, and strategies for capital improvement, but also debt management.

Janet has been included in the sixty-fourth edition of Who’s Who Among University Professors. Inclusion is limited to “…those individuals who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in their own fields of endeavor and who have, thereby, contributed significantly to the betterment of contemporary society.” One particular area in which Janet excels is building community-university partnerships to help cities respond to the intensifying challenge of “place” competition. Her research and efforts have stimulated a sense of place in the communities she works with and, in turn, have contributed to the development of real-world strategic marketing plans for them. Her recently published article in the Women in City Government spring newsletter provides further details.

Her fall 2009 Public Involvement and Information (PII) class researched and produced a community marketing brochure for the City of St. Clair. Students made a presentation to the city council on December 1, 2009, which made the six and ten o’clock KEYC TV news. Aside from the studio aspect of the course, it also prepares future city managers and planners for handling the media, encouraging pride-of-place, and marketing their communities. In addition to PII, Janet also teaches Administrative Services and Urban Finance at the graduate level and Community Leadership (face-to-face & online), and senior Capstone at the undergraduate level. In March, Dr. J’s Community Leadership class provided a helping hand for Blue Earth County’s Child Services Division.

“Roots Rich in History” continued from page 3

a page dedicated to the community’s profile, demographic, historic, and geographical information such as commuting distances from the specific city to major points, of interest. A state map, pinpointing the town’s location along with detailed city street maps, and special annual events were also included along with student and faculty names, newspapers, television, and photo credits as well as the names of other important contributors. The MN Bureau of Tourism has also endorsed the projects by giving permission to use their Explore Minnesota logo in the brochures.

All projects needed to be completed before the end of the 15-week semester. Students were required to design a PowerPoint presentation for each entity they worked with (i.e., city councils, a park & recreation board, and an economic development authority). The presentation explained the process students went through to develop the city’s marketing plan. Not only have students put together impressive PowerPoint presentations on the process of developing the marketing plan, they also incorporated their knowledge of technology by ending their presentations with video streaming and unique musical sound tracks.

Upon completion of each project, a 4’ x 7’ bulletin board outside the URSI office visually portrays the city’s marketing story with photos, work samples, press releases, news media coverage, class pictures, etc. This visual communication stimulates interest in these studio projects for students, faculty, and administrators across disciplines. Students learned how “to tell the story” of five small towns in Minnesota, through data collection, creative graphic design, and effective media strategies. Most importantly, students gained a greater awareness of their role in the community as agents of change through an applied-learning experience.

2 These distances included the MSP-airport in the Twin Cities, the Mall of America, Mayo Clinic, and other metropolitan areas.
3 In MN most small towns have adopted a theme around which they schedule an annual event. Some are focused around an agricultural theme, while others celebrate their ethnic heritage.
4 The last presentation for the city of St. Clair, students used the song I was born in a small town.

URSI Develops Education for Councils, Commissions, and High Schools

Students in URSI’s Foundations course at the Edina campus are finding themselves in a new position – that of research specialist. URSI has teamed with the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) and the Minnesota City/County Management Association (MCMA) to provide foundational education on local government.

Instead of the traditional “lecture-test-project” classroom format, URSI students are demonstrating their knowledge by combining online learning and their own research to develop training materials that reach out to two distinct audiences. They are creating these educational tools under the guidance of Dr. Beth Wielde Heidelberg of URSI, Dianne Miller of MCMA, Kevin Frazell of LMC, and Laura Harris of LMC.

MCMA has, for some time, been concerned that junior high and high school civics courses tend to focus on state and federal level government. Yet local government is such an important factor of everyday life, from applying for building permits, to understanding why a development is being put in the property behind their own. URSI will develop educational materials that focus on local government in two areas; sessions on local government structure and council leadership, and sessions on planning and community.

Continued on page 6

Continued on page 8
while learning aspects of project management. They collected donated toys, furniture, etc. and gave BEC’s family room (where children spend time with non-custodial parents) a total makeover at no cost to the County. Students efforts were acknowledged by the County’s Director of Human Services by a letter of appreciation.

On another community front, Dr. J remains very active in local government and serves on the Janesville Planning Commission and chairs the Janesville Economic Development Authority. If you would like more information about the courses Janet teaches, feel free to contact her with the email link on her webpage: http://www.intech.mnsu.edu/cherrington/

Dr. Beth Wielde Heidelberg is celebrating the publication of a chapter in the book Homer Simpson Marches on Washington, published by the University Press of Kentucky, which applies a social science methodology to determine how public servants are depicted in popular culture film. Minnesota State Mankato recently nominated her work in this area for a stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In addition to this work, Dr. Heidelberg is in the process of converting two of her highest enrollment courses into an online version; by fall of 2010, students will have the option of taking URBS 110: The City, Architecture and Design and URBS 401/501: Foundations online.

She was also recently interviewed for an article about amphitheaters for the Minneapolis Star Tribune. The article focused on the proliferation of amphitheaters in the Twin Cities metro area, and Dr. Heidelberg provided some background into the roots of amphitheaters, detailing their Greek and Roman traditions.

Aside from these research items, Dr. Heidelberg has also been working to innovate classroom methods. In Spring Semester, she tested a pilot project that utilized the talents and expertise in her Edina campus Foundations students to create a product that could, theoretically, be used by cities across Minnesota. The idea is that instead of traditional lecture-test format, students would read an online “lecture,” and use it as a resource to develop training sessions for groups such as the Minnesota City/County Management Association (MCMA) and the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC). This pilot project is one way URSI is attempting to create an applied learning experience for students that can be beneficial to communities (see article).

2010 has been and will continue to be a break out year.

Under the leadership of SURSI President Mark Andrews, President-elect Eric T Harriman and with great contributions from SURSI members Rory Stierler and others, SURSI has reestablished itself as a visible and engaged student organization.

Early in 2010 SURSI decided to reposition itself as an organization which enriches students’ academic experience through relevant programming, activities, professional engagements, networking opportunities, volunteering and advocacy.

This has led to an influx of ideas and contributions for new ventures which are not only ambitious compared to other Minnesota State University, Mankato Student Organizations, but some initiatives place SURSI as regional and national leaders.

Some of our new ventures include:

- Planning and organization efforts for the Upper-Midwest American Planning Association Conference which will be held in Mankato on September 22-24, 2010. Many SURSI members have signed up as volunteers to assist with the conference scavenger hunt, basic volunteering as needed by APA and also to serve as “couch-hop” hosts for out of town students looking to reduce costs of attending the conference. Beyond volunteering SURSI has assisted in gathering student presenters for the conference as well as developing poster displays of interesting URSI projects.

- SURSI’s Advocacy Coalition is a forum in which students can network with other interested students to support a cause they feel is worthy. This has directly led to students urging the department to form a Community Based Problem Solving course this summer that will result in a more focused approach to addressing the specific issue of International Advocacy and Engagement. One of the most ambitious undertakings, these students will be researching the feasibility of creating a new organization that will function as the planning professions version of Doctors Without Borders. The intent is to research potential projects....
Student Research Featured at Blanding Foundation Presentation

Graduate students from URSI participated in a student competition sponsored by the Blandin Foundation, where students conducted research into accessibility of high-speed internet service in rural communities. The outcome of the research was a presentation of findings at a conference for local officials sponsored by Duluth’s Blandin Foundation on November 18th and 19th. The student research, conducted by Mark Andrews, Nathan Bartell, and Tat Wei-Yeap, was well received.

“SURSI” continued from page 6

opportunities in under developed areas of the world in which planning students and professionals can engage and assist in solving real world planning issues.

- SURSI Awards Night is a new program designed to recognize the hard work and dedication which is invested on behalf of students. Our inaugural Semester Awards Night will be held at the conclusion of the Spring 2010 semester. We will commemorate those students who have gone above and beyond with our new Merit of Service Certificate and we will recognize Perry Wood and Rita McEvoy with our new Honorary SURSI Officer Award for their sustained and profound involvement in supporting students.

- We will be hosting our first Speakers Corner event which seeks to connect practicing professionals and students in a non-academic casual setting. The goal is to give students the opportunity to ask questions, to get to know practicing professionals, to better understand their professions and to help students prepare for their futures. We have also undertaken a more ambitious form of this event in which we are attempting to schedule nationally recognized professionals to speak on campus. Though at this time it is inappropriate to name our sought after speakers, we can say we’re looking to attract national leaders in fields such as federal policy, urban design and transportation.

- Our Student & Alumni Apparel Fundraiser has generated two new clothing categories. With clothing options for casual settings that sport a SURSI throw-back logo from decades past to a more professional option containing the department logo which is better suited for workshop or conference attendees. All alumni present at the September Upper Midwest APA Conference can stop by the URSI-SURSI table to order from our apparel selections.

As SURSI becomes ever more ambitious it must be noted that it is our student members which have sought to undertake these initiatives and it is the student body which continues to step forward to follow through on these projects. SURSI is proud to support the contributions of all Urban & Regional Studies students. So we call on you as alumni to support SURSI throughout these ventures, as it is your support that offers us the opportunity to continue to grow our ambitions.

Sincerely,
Eric T Harriman
SURSI President-elect
eric.harriman@mnsu.edu

SURSI students walk the skyways with Dr. Heidelberg (left).
Graduate Studio Course Provides Service to Minnesota Communities
By David Laverny-Rafter

The URSI Studio is supervised by Professor Perry Wood and provides an opportunity for URSI graduate students to engage in service learning (or S.L.) with Minnesota cities, counties and non-profits. In the Studio, the students apply their knowledge and skills to real world community problems as identified by community clients. The Studio involves breaking up the full class into teams with each team selecting a project from among the list of opportunities that have been proposed by Minnesota cities, counties and non-profit organizations.

During fall of 2009 semester, the Studio consisted of 11 students who were divided up into teams and implemented two projects:

1. **Mankato Area Transportation Planning Issues.** In this project, the students reviewed the results of an on-line survey that was conducted on travel behavior in the greater Mankato area. A report on their analysis was written for transportation stakeholders.

2. **South Central Minnesota Rural Transit Needs.** This project involved the students in an assessment of the need for expanded transit services in the rural counties surrounding the Mankato area. The findings of the study provided a detailed description of type of service recommended, the corridors where such service would be most appropriate, and an estimate of annual cost related to expanded service. The final report and PowerPoint presentation were made by the students to officials from Region 9 Development Commission and MnDOT.

We wish to recognize the following graduate students for their hard work on the fall, 2009 projects:

- **Mankato Area Transportation Planning Issues:** Katherine Barden, Chandra Gurung, Whitney Peterson, Pragyaratna Rai, Amanda Schroeder
- **South Central Minnesota Rural Transit Needs:** Frank Adarkwa, Jason Anderson, Mark Andrews, Mohamed-Rashid Murfin, Clay Wilfahrt

“URSI Develops Education” continued from page 5

The LMC project intends to provide orientation on some important laws, policies, documents, and processes that might be helpful for incoming City Council and Planning Commission members. Many newly elected and appointed officials have occupations outside of government, and may not know how to read a plat map, or understand the Open Meeting Law, or know the guiding documents such as the Comp Plan or a specialized Master Plan, or know the rules for Conflict of Interest. URSI and LMC want to provide a guide to get these individuals up to speed, so they can more efficiently transition into their role as a city official.

The end goal is that by creating these training sessions for LMC and MCMA, a) Foundations students will gain a deeper understanding of certain topics; b) Foundations students will form a sort of ‘learning community’ where they learn not only from Heidelberg’s online sessions, but also from each other’s research; c) students will demonstrate their knowledge by interpreting the material for a targeted audience; and, d) LMC and MCMA can use these materials to develop a series of training materials that could be used by cities and students all over Minnesota, thus creating a consistent message about Minnesota statutes and policies that guide Minnesota cities.
Dr. Perry Wood Announces Retirement

Dr. Perry Wood, specialist in the field of economic development, growth management, long range and strategic planning, and mentor to hundreds of current and future planners, has announced his retirement after 34 years with the University.

Perry leaves URSI with a legacy that spans not only education, but community involvement and professional outreach. He has presented papers on population fluctuations and community growth. He has led projects that included examinations of strategic planning, downtown revitalization, land use and zoning, tourism, parking issues, strategic planning, and light rail studies.

From 1996-2000, he served as the Downtown Redevelopment Coordinator for the City of Mankato, from 2000-2003 he was the director of the Center for Applied Social Science, and since 1999 he has been the director of URSI’s Community Outreach Center.

Perry’s accomplishments go beyond his extensive resume. His enthusiasm for planning curriculum and his Wry sense of humor have made Perry a much sought-after instructor and advisor. Students past and present remember Perry’s colorful ways of expressing ideas (for evidence, see the following pages of collective memories).

Fortunately for the profession, Dr. Wood isn’t leaving the profession behind for a life of leisure, he intends to teach his well known Intro to the City course online, and has mentioned several planning projects he will remain involved with in upcoming years.

URSI would like to thank Perry Wood for his service to students, alumni, faculty, and the profession as a whole, and will welcome him in his new role as community planner and online instructor.

In Recognition of Dr. Perry Wood

Tony Filipovitch, URSI Chair and Professor — I remember back in the 80s when he was running the MCPZA (MN Coalition of Planning and Zoning Administrators). He worked like a dog, putting together training and technical support for county and town planning officials. I also remember Perry as a consummate “deal maker”. He would come into a meeting, having thought everything through, and say, “Let me make you a deal…” And he’d lay it all out, and more often than not he had it better than anyone else at the table.

David Lavery-Rafter, URSI Professor — “In 19th century Paris, Baron Haussmann was the “go to planner” of his day who the government sought out to solve problems of streets, infrastructure, open space, etc. In the same way, Perry Wood has played a significant role in Mankato. In addition to teaching physical land use planning for many years, Perry has always been available to assist Mankato and other local governments in the area to address development issues. Therefore, wherever you go in the Mankato area, you will see some improvement that Perry had a hand in implementing. As a result, his planning knowledge skills will be greatly missed.”

Miriam Porter, URSI Professor — Perry had been the person to bounce ideas off of. In return I’d get some great insights. I’ll miss having him around to talk to.

Rita McEvoy, URIS Office Administrator — I was the secretary in the Geography Department when Perry was hired at Minnesota State Mankato. Seventeen years later Perry transferred from Geography to URSI. Another 17 years has passed and Perry is ready for yet another challenge! URSI will surely miss his excellent teaching ability, outstanding grantmanship, advising expertise, gentlemanly demeanor, aptitude in locating and balancing all types of materials in his office, and age-defying good looks! I wish him the best in retirement and will think of him whenever I look at a pheasant feather.

Beth Wiedel Heidelberg, (MAUP ’99) URSI Professor — Perry has the best sly sense of humor — he was always cracking up over something my classmates said or did when I was a student in URSI. Perry had the patience to teach me how to lay out a subdivision, which could not have been an easy task. As a colleague, he’s been an amazing source of support and morale, and has been a cherished mentor as I have started my career at Minnesota State Mankato.

Philip Cordes, (class work done in 80-81; awarded degree in 1983), Self Employed Fibers Artist (Hand painted textiles, and assorted leather bags) — “When last I saw you, Sir you were still in the Geography department, but I was pleased that you agreed to be part of my orals.

Chris Elekavuk (’02 – ’04), Community Development Director, City of Jonesville — Thanks to Perry for introducing us to the full lexicon of planning terminology. Without him we never would have known how an 1840’s colloquialism still has a place in the modern classroom as we frequently ran all “cattavampus” through his assignments, nor would we have learned that “wah!” is an official term used best when discussing the strange tangents taken in student projects or when Notre Dame loses a football game.

Coralie (LaSelle) Fox — I returned to college in 1976 after being a stay at home Mom for 14 years. The entire URSI staff made me feel welcomed and comfortable. In 1980, my mother was diagnosed with bone cancer and began treatments at University Hospital in Minneapolis. The rest of my siblings lived in Wisconsin, so I tried to spend as much time as possible with Mom at the hospital. I was taking a course from Dr. Wood at the time and could not keep up with the coursework. He was extremely kind and understanding of the difficulty that I faced, driving 110 miles round trip per day to Mankato and another 70 to the hospital in addition to caring for my kids and farmwork. He helped me realize that it was ok to take an incomplete and finish the course in the fall of 1980. I graduated with the class of 1981 and worked for the next 23 years in City Administration. I’ve retired again as of March, 2010, after serving as interim City Administrator in Breezy Point for nine months.

Jill Corman Hutmacher (MAUP ’99), Acting Administrator, Bloomington Port Authority — For the first time in years, I found myself thinking about Perry’s subdivision assignment the other day and how we carried those “scrolls” around with us for an entire term, trying to fit in just a few more lots here and there. The experience made me more understanding of developers trying to make their pro forma work (well, more understanding of most developers). I also occasionally hear myself referring to children as “ankle-biters” and notice the quizzical looks on the faces of anyone listening. A Perry-ism I’ve never been able to shake, even now that I have my own ankle-biter.

Continued on page 10
“In Recognition of Perry Woods” continued from page 9

Heather Jergenson ('07), Consultant – Perry’s lectures, he was a straight shooter and to the point. He also made everyone laugh by adding his “bass awkward” comment if someone didn’t quite have the right concept or calling the ice cream shop the “Whip de Dip” stand.

Kimberly Johnson, AICP, City Planner, City of Fairbiult – My first “major” test as an undergrad in my URSI major Urban Geography with Perry Wood: I started reading the test and in total panic, thought, Did I buy the wrong book? Upon looking around the room, everyone else had much the same expression! OR “somewhere in a kettle of fish…”

Kenneth D. Ondich (MAUP ’06), Planning Director, City of New Prague – Perry was instrumental in guiding me towards an internship with Blue Earth County to work on GIS and Planning projects as an undergraduate – it was from that one opportunity I have continued to build my career. From his operational planning class, I will never look at a subdivision without thinking of all the “little Woodinski’s” that might be living there one day.

Anita Rasmussen (MAUP 1998), AICP, City of Sartell Planning and Community Development Director – “Perry was one of my favorite profs. His lingos was legendary. I still ask my “ankle-biters” if they want to go to the “whipty dip.”

Amanda Schroeder (’10) Graduate – Perry Wood (and his Intro to the City class) was the reasont I switched majors my junior year to Urban and Regional Studies. Thank you, Perry, for your guidance and support!

Mike Stradman (’04), Minnesota Rural Water Association – Dear Perry, Thank you for everything!! I remember meeting with you on a few different occasions not sure which direction to go. I appreciate you taking the time to sit down with me and providing direction.

Dan Taylor, Grant Manager, Lead Hazard Control Grant, Environmental Health Division, MN Department of Health – Perry found me standing in the hall looking at the Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) people had designed and ask if I was in the program. I said “NO” and then explained that I was unhappily enrolled in the Master of Science in Sociology Planning and Administration program. Next thing I know he convinces me to switch my major to Urban Planning, transfers all my classes, and I happily graduate 2 years later. URSI was a great program and college experience and best career move I could have ever made. Thanks Perry! Enjoy Retirement.

In Recognition of Office Administrator Rita McEvoy

Faculty, alumni, and students of URSI share some favorite memories of Rita, in thanks of her service to the department:

Tony Filipovitch, URSI Chair and Professor – I have so many memories of sitting in my office and overhearing Rita on the phone talking a student through a problem with registration, or getting through the graduation checklist, or working through program requirements. She was always calm and helpful, and knew when to say, “Oh, that’s a new one for me. Let me check it out.” I remember, back in the days when Bob Barrett would invite the department over to his place on Duck Lake, some would stay after for a game of poker. And there would be Rita, right in the middle, with her big smile on her face and one of the larger piles of pennies in front of her. Bob loved it.

Perry Wood, URSI Professor – Congratulations on your retirement! You have served as the cornerstone of the Institute for so many years you will be irreplaceable. Thanks for all the help you have given me and our students.

David Laverny-Rafter, URSI Faculty – “When I began teaching in Urban Studies, Rita was the one person who everyone recommended that I should talk to when I had a problem with bureaucratic paperwork, finding the right person to see, etc. Sure enough, Rita never failed to have the right answer for any question that I have had. In addition, to being the defacto
“boss” of Urban Studies, she has always had a great smile and a kind word to cheer up the day. It is hard to imagine Urban Studies without her but I know she will enjoy an active retirement and we all wish her the best of luck at the casino.”

Miriam Porter, URSI Professor – Rita has been the warm smile of URSI for many years. I can’t tell you how much I’ll miss Rita and everything she has brought to our office and our lives.

Beth Wielde Heidelberg, (MAUP ’99) URSI Professor – When I was accepted into the master’s program at Minnesota State Mankato, the university seemed to have lost all records of my acceptance. With a few calls, Rita made sure I was recognized as a student, which set me on a path to my current career. Returning to Minnesota State Mankato as a professor, Rita has always been patient, even with my pathological inability to remember where anything is located in the office! I’ve enjoyed Rita as a professional, a confidante, and a mentor (particularly in her patience and communication skills). I stand by my assertion that Rita shouldn’t be allowed to retire until we’ve made a copy of her brain.

Philip Cordes, (class work done in 80-81; awarded degree in 1983), Self Employed Fibers Artist (Hand painted textiles, and assorted leather bags) – Thanks again for assisting me in proofreading & typing my internship paper, so that I could get my graduate degree. I hope that the leather roll bag that I made you stood up well and provided you with many years of service.

Chris Elvebak (’02 – ’04), Community Development Director, City of Janesville – A very special thanks to Rita for keeping all of us - students and professors - sane and on the beaten path. We couldn’t have made it without you.

Melissa Enter (current student) – I made a last minute switch to Urban and Regional Studies, I’m not sure I could have done it without Rita. Countless times I stopped by and told her what I was having a problem with or needed and she, with a few strokes of her keyboard, would turn to me and say “I took care of it for you!” What a blessing! Future students are missing out!

Kandis Hansen, City Manager, Mound, MN – I graduated from Minnesota State Mankato with a BS in 1983. I acquired all of my electives from the Department of Urban and Regional Studies. As a farm girl, I was fascinated by the talk of cities and main streets. I became a URSI groupie and enjoyed the eccentric URSI office environment. As I was about to graduate, Rita caught me and asked if I’d like to be on the department mailing list and I enthusiastically replied, “yes!” A couple of years later, I received a single piece of paper in the mail (two sides). I answered the simple questionnaire and returned it to the department. A few weeks later Rita called me at home and said, “You have been selected for a HUD grant that is intended to further women and minorities, and classes started yesterday!” I will never forget the good news that Rita delivered me that day. From that day, and for the next two years, Rita’s shining face was an integral part of my ‘new life.’ I continue to be very grateful!

Heather Jergenson (’07), Consultant – Rita was the glue of the department for the four years I was a student/GA in URSI. She always could be counted on by all of us students and staff! She always made my day by being so helpful and caring. I appreciated it very much. I will always remember Rita for her “couch” shawl that she wore around the office if she got chilly!

Kimberly Johnson, AICP, City Planner, City of Faribault – That sultry, soothing voice at the other end of the phone line…always had an answer and a smile.

Harry Persaud, AICP, PMP, Manager of Planned Communities/Planning/ OCPublic Works, County of Orange, CA – It has been an absolute joy knowing and getting assistance from Rita during my tenure at Minnesota State Mankato in 1976-1978. Best wishes in her retirement.

Kenneth D. Ondich (MAUP ’06), Planning Director, City of New Prague – I can never thank Rita enough for her assistance in helping me wrap up my alternate plan paper forms and fees, from long distance, so that I could [finally] graduate.

Amanda Schroeder (’10) Graduate – Rita, thank you for being so helpful over the years! There was never a question I knew you couldn’t answer - - and it is greatly appreciated by all of us! You will be missed!!

Mike Strodtman (’04), Minnesota Rural Water Association – Dear Rita, You were so much help when it came to keeping us organized as to what we needed to get. No matter what was happening or may have gone wrong you knew the answer. Thank You!!
Getting them in touch and keeping in touch with the Institute.

URSI Roster Update

Help us update our URSI Roster and mailing list by completing the following information and returning it to: Rita McEvoy, Urban & Regional Studies Institute, Minnesota State University, Mankato, 106 Morris Hall, Mankato, MN 56001 or fax it to 507-389-6377 or e-mail to rita.mcevoy@mnsu.edu. Thanks.

NAME: ________________________________________________________________________________________________________

TITLE: _______________________________________________________________________________________________________

COMPANY NAME: ______________________________________________________________________________________________

COMPANY ADDRESS: _____________________________________________________________________________________________

HOME ADDRESS: _______________________________________________________________________________________________

E-MAIL: ______________________________________________________________________________________________________

I AM A: [ ] ALUMNI - YEAR GRADUATED: _________, DEGREE: ____________________________________________________________
[ ] FRIEND OF URSI
[ ] CURRENT STUDENT

I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE MORE INFORMATION ON:

[ ] SERVING AS A PROFESSIONAL MENTOR
[ ] PROVIDING AN INTERNSHIP
[ ] CONTRIBUTING TO THE URSI DEVELOPMENT FUND AT THE MINNESOTA STATE FOUNDATION (tax deductible)
[ ] CONTRIBUTING TO THE BARRETT ENDOWMENT (tax deductible)
[ ] CONTRIBUTING TO THE SMITH ENDOWMENT (tax deductible)

THANK YOU!