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Two Clark University students in the Geographic Information Sciences for Development and Environment (GISDE) program within the Department of International Development, Community, and Environment (IDCE) have received prestigious awards this past summer.

The Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA) announced that Safaa Aldwaik (GISDE/MA '07) has been selected to receive First Place in the URISA Student Paper Competition. Tomas Vaclavik (GISDE/MA 06-07) was selected by the Review Committee to receive Second Place in the competition.

Aldwaik's paper, "The Corridor: Using GIS to Propose Satisfactory Transportation Paths between the West Bank and Gaza Strip," also serves as her completed master's research project and could literally alter the physical and political landscape between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Trained as an urban architect, Aldwaik is a passionate scholar, who expects to put her mapping expertise and architectural skills to work to improve the quality of life and preserve the cultural heritage of Palestine.

"This prize came as a wonderful surprise to me." When asked about her paper, Aldwaik explained, "Contiguity of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is a critical factor to promote the Palestinian prospective State's success. Such contiguity cannot be guaranteed without providing Palestinians with a transportation path or 'a corridor' through Israel that includes roads, a rail link, and infrastructure. The Palestinian Ministry of Planning needs a flexible process modeling tool to propose a range of acceptable ground based transportation paths between the two territories."

Tomas Vaclavik's paper is called "Identifying Trends in Land Use/Land Cover Changes in the Olomouc Region, Czech Republic." The paper addresses the application of Remote Sensing techniques to identify trends in land change from satellite images in his home country of the Czech Republic in the context of the post-socialist transformation of the country.

"Having been recognized by URISA represents a great start in my professional GIS career and it is an honor for me to present the project at the 45th annual URISA conference in Washington, D.C. Many thanks belong to my advisors, Geography professor John Rogan and GISDE professor Yelena Ogneva-Himmelberger and Clark University, which has such a wonderful GIS program. I'd also like to thank the Fulbright program that funded my studies at Clark." Established in 1946, the Fulbright Program aims to increase mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and other countries, through the exchange of persons, knowledge, and skills.

Vaclavik attended IDCE as a Fulbright exchange student during the 2006-2007 academic year. For the last three years, he has been employed as a GIS analyst at the Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic. Recently, he enrolled in the University of North Carolina at Charlotte where he is starting a Ph.D. program in Geography and Urban Regional Analysis - Applied GI Science Stream. As a doctorate student and research assistant, he plans to focus on the application of GIS in ecological research and work on a project funded from an National Science Foundation grant to understand problems in forest ecosystems caused by a pathogen called Sudden Oak Death (*Phytophthora ramorum*).

The Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA) is a non-profit professional and educational association that promotes the effective and ethical use of spatial information and information technologies for the understanding and management of urban and regional systems. It is a multidisciplinary association where professionals from all parts of the spatial data community can come together to share concerns and ideas. The Student Paper Competition Award recipients will be officially recognized during the URISA 2007 Conference Awards Ceremony on Wednesday, August 22 at 8:00 am in Washington, DC. URISA's 45th Annual Conference will generate discussion and debate about the most serious topics faced by those trying to improve our urban and regional environments through the use of information technology.

To learn more about Clark University, visit www.clarku.edu. For more information about the graduate programs offered within the IDCE Department, including the GISDE program, please visit www.clarku.edu/idce.

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