

## **Homing in on Student Interests**

Anupma Prakash, Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska Fairbanks, AK

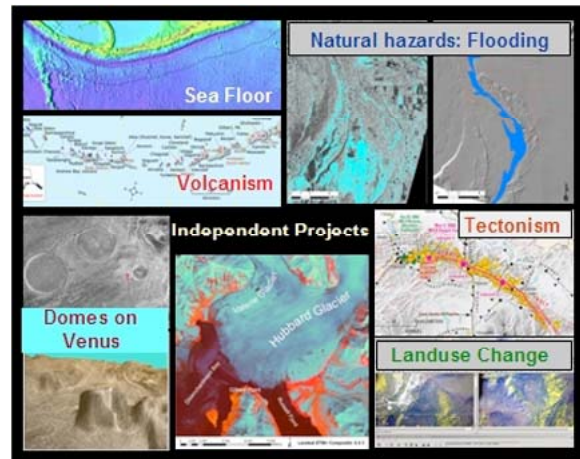
*Diversity in projects promotes interaction among students, who discuss ideas, voice concerns, share success stories, and learn from one another's experiences*



A great way to get students involved and excited and to augment their learning is to include an independent student project as an integral part of a course.

At the University of Alaska Fairbanks, students carry out independent projects in upper level undergraduate courses in remote sensing and geoinformatics. They are encouraged to think of an Earth system science question that is closest to their heart. They then outline a project that uses remote sensing and GIS data sets to address the selected question/problem. These projects provide students with a hands-on experience in handling geospatial data, analyzing spatial and temporal trends in data sets, and presenting useful information in an effective manner.

Each student carries out a unique project and encounters conceptual challenges and technical hurdles that may be partly similar or completely different from his/her colleagues. Such diversity in independent projects stimulates curiosity and interaction among course participants, who ultimately learn not only from their own projects but also from those of their peers. The process of identifying a problem and addressing it using the available data and tools promotes critical thinking and problem solving skills, preparing students for jobs in and outside the academic world.



For examples of diverse independent student projects visit:

GEOS 378: Past student projects

<http://www.gi.alaska.edu/~prakash/teaching/geos378/projects.html>

GEOS 422: Past student projects

<http://www.gi.alaska.edu/~prakash/teaching/geos422/projects.html>

ESS at the University of Alaska Fairbanks

[http://esse21.usra.edu/ESSE21/esse21\\_alaska.html](http://esse21.usra.edu/ESSE21/esse21_alaska.html)