

UGA Geology News - 2020

Fall 2020 Geology News

Greetings to all! Fall term is nearing its end and I begin by letting everyone know how important it is to keep the mission of the Geology Department moving forward. We are grateful to all the students that have adapted to all forms of instruction, which now ranges from fully online to fully face-to-face (and every variant in between). We are seeing the silver linings of going virtual. We have over 800 UGA Geology alumni and with the help of the UGA Foundation office, invitations to attend our colloquia are going out to all we can reach. It is impressive to see alumni of all ages show up and view the speakers. This fall we had stimulating talks from 1. *Dan Richter* at Duke discussing the every- changing Critical Zone, 2) *John Eichelberger* at the University of Alaska exploring how to study crustal magma, 3) *Michael Pyrcz* at University of Texas about how molecular modeling can guide understanding to organic-mineral interactions in the atmosphere. We will continue to send out invites with passwords (sorry, zoom bombing is a real thing) and new protocols require people to enter a waiting room at first. For those as might have missed our colloquia, don't worry, we will be here to let you in.

Despite pandemic conditions, the faculty have been remaining productive in both teaching and research. It looks like the near future for teaching will continue to offer a full range of formats, going from fully online, to hybrid, to face-to-face. We have a wide spectrum of accommodations, course sizes, and course levels to deal with, meaning that we must custom fit every course. It's lots of work, but the good news is that we are using teaching tools and styles that can do things that we have not done before, such as explore virtual parts of the Earth that are difficult to get to in person. We are putting more news content to our homepage (<https://geology.uga.edu/news/all>), so please visit it often to hear about the exciting developments from our faculty, staff, and students.

With the help of **Bruce Railsback**, we are now posting a new section to our website about the history of Geology at UGA. Biographies of early year (1800's) and later emeritus professors are presented. It is interesting to note that in today's views for the need to increase diversity in the Geosciences, it is transparent in some of the biographies of the early geologists that discrimination and unacceptable cultural practices were commonplace. We are challenged to recognize both the great scientific legacies and the poor social/historical legacies for some of those who preceded us. We cannot forget both legacies, with the hope that we do not repeat the egregious ways of the past. The culture of the geology community has changed quite a bit, but there is still a long way to go.

We acknowledge the many retirements that are occurring. **Jim Wright** retired this past summer and the faculty have approved establishing emeritus status for him. **Sue Goldstein and Alberto Patino-Douce** are retiring on January 1, 2021. Sue has been an outstanding asset to the department. Her expertise in forams physiology and paleontology is internationally recognized. She was the first and only female to serve as Department Head. It is with sincere thanks that we give to Sue for her contributions to the UGA Geology program as exemplified by her teaching, mentoring, and research. Alberto has also been an asset, with global recognition for authoring an extensive tome on planetary thermodynamics. Alberto too has served in various capacities, such as Graduate Coordinator and leaves a fine legacy of teaching, mentoring, and research. I imagine that both Sue and Alberto will be in emeriti status by the time of the next newsletter. In the arena of much appreciated staff, we will see the departure of **Chris Fleisher and Michael Lewis**. Chris has been part of Geology for as long as anyone can remember. The long run and well-recognized reputation of UGA Geology as being a center of excellence for electron microprobe work can mostly be attributed to Chris' steadfast operation of the probe. We must also acknowledge his contribution to the annual running of Field Camp. Many do not realize all the things Chris did around the department and we will be challenged to replace what he did for UGA Geology. Michael Lewis and his talent to make electronic devices work will be missed. In addition to keeping all our computers functioning, he really is a master for understanding of how things work (and making them work when broken). Although we are transitioning to a centralized College-wide IT support system, we will sorely miss Michael's personal touch, guidance, and understanding. **Catherine Moore**, our smiling face and voice for the front, did not retire, but she decided to seek other life opportunities and we will miss her friendly demeanor. So, if you do the math, that is six people who have left. We are appealing for new hires in both the front office and faculty. We all know that a "geology career" is destined to experience cyclic changes (i.e., ups and downs).

We are currently in a down, but we remain optimistic as the faculty are working hard to create a vision for the future of the department. The faculty have been and will continue to explore the emerging trends in geosciences to guide the new directions for hiring, while at the same time keeping the foundations of geology as a core to our curriculum and train geologist for the future. All economic and employment indicators forecast that the demand for geoscientists will remain strong and be higher than most all other career sectors.

Please remain safe in these times of the pandemic. I imagine that we will be challenged for at least another year but remain optimistic that we will be able to get back out into the field and see each other in face-to-face events. Finally, we want to express our extreme gratitude to all the donors who give to the Geology Department. We have created several new endowments, including the newly established ***Shellebarger professorship***. Also included are two new funds that are 1) an undergraduate research endowment and 2) a faculty enrichment fund. We have also

had a renewal to our ***Chevron-supported graduate student fellowship fund***. These complement our longer standing endowments that support graduate research and travel. These programs are life-changing, and we can't say enough how appreciative the beneficiaries (students and faculty) are to receive contributions. Thank you so much!

Go Dawgs!

Best,

Paul Schroeder
Professor and Head