



# SAPROLITE

NEWSLETTER of the SOUTHEASTERN SECTION  
GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
Winter 2017-2018

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## A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

As I write this letter, the fall semester just ended and the holidays are quickly approaching. It's a great time of year. I hope others enjoy it and share my optimism for what 2018, and the years that follow may bring.

### **Geoscience Economics—Then and Now**

In my last "Letter from the Chair" (2006-2007), I focused on the favorable outlook for employment in the geosciences that had just emerged, following 20 years of hardship. That was 10 years ago. Though complicated by a recession and other influences, the favorable outlook has proven true; the last decade has been good for geoscience and its academic programs. According to AGI's 2016 report on the *Status of the Geoscience Workforce*, geoscience enrollments at 4-year institutions in the United States increased a remarkable 50% from 2007 to 2015; this dwarfs the modest 12% increase in overall enrollments for the same period. Our (UTC's) relatively small undergraduate geology program is a near-perfect reflection of these and related statistics. Over the last decade, we have grown from 30 majors to 50 and from 3 faculty to 5. Our additional faculty were selected to provide expertise in soils, geomorphology, Quaternary geology, geological engineering, environmental geology, and remote sensing, consistent with trends in employment opportunities and students' interests.

It's difficult to predict the future of geoscience, particularly considering today's uncertain political landscape, and there is more to it than employment and enrollment. A panel of geoscience professionals from the oil and gas industry, state and federal government, and academia, assembled at the most recent South-Central Section meeting to consider the future of employment in the geosciences. As summarized in the November 2017 issue of *GSA Today*, the panel extends the favorable outlook and foresees employment opportunities for future graduates in most sectors. This and other indicators cause me to be optimistic that geoscience has a bright foreseeable future.

### **The State of the Section**

By all measures, the Southeastern Section is in good shape and serves its membership, the Society, and the geoscience community well. This came to light most recently in a report by the 2016-2017 Ad Hoc Committee on Sections, which presented statistics for the sections for the past 10 years.

Formed in 1947, we are among the oldest of the sections. In terms of geographic area, the southeastern United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Mexican states of Campeche, Quintana Roo, and Yucatan, we are the smallest, yet our membership (nearly 3,000) is robust (by my calculations, we are geographically slightly smaller than South-Central). In terms of assets (cash balances), we have plenty and, relative to our membership, we are among the wealthiest of sections. Most germane to the charge of the ad hoc committee and a clear indicator of our wellbeing is meeting attendance. Over the past 10 years, our annual meetings have been very well attended and included a large number of student participants. I am proud to say that we are also among the most generous of the 6 sections in terms of student support (travel and research grants and implementation of mentor programs). Support of our students is an investment in the Section's future and in the prosperity of geoscience.

### **The Future of GSA and the Southeastern Section Depends on Your Involvement**

GSA has been a mainstay of my education and my career for more than 30 years, from graduate school through my present academic position. During this time, the Society has served my interests and those of my colleagues in more ways than I can describe. I am proud of my service to the Southeastern Section and urge you, its members, to become involved. Whether you are a student, professional, or retired, vote in the Society's elections, at national, sectional, and divisional levels; help with one of our upcoming meetings (Knoxville '18, Charleston '19, Reston '20, Auburn '21); serve on a committee (Liaison, Student Support, Education, Geology and Public Policy); encourage your students and colleagues to join and to participate; and support the Society's many programs. Considering the present-day strength of the Section and that of geoscience, our future is bright, but only with an involved membership.

### **Recent and Future Meetings and the People behind Them**

Having chaired the 2015 meeting in Chattanooga, I know well of the effort involved in planning such an event and the sense of satisfaction that comes with seeing it happen. We should all thank local committees that work so diligently. Last year's meeting in Richmond, VA, was a success due to the efforts of David Spears and Karen Layou (Co-Chairs), Mark Carter and Beth McClellan (Technical Session Co-Chairs), Chuck Bailey and Shelley Jaye (Field Trip Co-Chairs), Chee Saunders (Exhibits Chair), Matt Heller and Steve Leslie (Sponsorship Co-Chairs), and Lynsey LeMay (Student Volunteer Chair).

Our 67th Annual Meeting will be in Knoxville, TN, April 12-13. Colin Sumrall (General Chair), Linda Kah (Technical Program Co-Chair), Bob Hatcher (Technical Program and Field Trip Co-Chair), Annette Engel (Field Trip Co-Chair), Ed Perfect and Larry McKay (Sponsorships Co-Chairs), Bradley Thompson (Exhibits Chair), Hap McSween (Treasurer), and Christopher Fedo (Student Volunteer Chair) have planned a great meeting with a remarkable variety of field trips and technical sessions. Be sure to attend. For most, it is an easy day's drive. If you haven't already done so, register online at:

[https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Events/Section\\_Meetings/GSA/Sections/se/2018mtg/home.aspx](https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Events/Section_Meetings/GSA/Sections/se/2018mtg/home.aspx)

Looking further ahead, the 2019 meeting will be in Charleston, SC, which is a great coastal location. The local committee, chaired by Scott Harris and Katie Luciano, has been planning this meeting since last May. Look for announcements of details later this spring and please plan to attend.

The following year, the 2020 meeting will be a joint meeting with the Northeastern Section, in Reston, VA. The Southeastern Section Co-Chair will be Arthur Merschat (USGS) and the Northeastern Section Co-Chair will be Patrick Burkhart (Slippery Rock University). If you are willing to help with any of these meetings, please contact me or any of the section officers.

### **A Few More Words of Thanks**

Blair Tormey (Secretary/Treasurer), Bob Tracy (Past Chair), Venkat Lakshmi (Chair Elect), Colin Sumrall (Vice Chair), David Spears (Past Vice Chair), Chuck Bailey and Mark Little (GSA Councilors), and chairs of standing committees, which include Beth McClellan (Student Support), Blair Tormey (Education), and Bob Tracy (Geology and Public Policy) comprise the Management Board. All deserve our appreciation for their service to the Section.

On behalf of the Southeastern Section Officers, I wish you a happy and productive 2018.

Sincerely,  
Jonathan Mies  
Chair, Southeastern Section  
[Jonathan-Mies@utc.edu](mailto:Jonathan-Mies@utc.edu)

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## **SOUTHEASTERN SECTION ANNUAL REPORT 2017**

### **Management Board, 2017-2018**

Chair:	Jonathan Mies	University of Tennessee, Chattanooga
Chair Elect:	Venkat Lakshmi	University of South Carolina
Past Chair:	Robert Tracy	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Vice Chair:	Colin Sumrall	University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Past Vice Chair:	David Spears	Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy
Secretary-Treasurer:	Blair Tormey	Western Carolina University

<b>GSA Councilors:</b>	Chuck Bailey	College of William and Mary
	Mark Little	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

### **Membership**

At the end of December 2017, SE Section membership stood at 2,776 total members, including 929 Professionals, 450 Seniors, 1 Honorary Fellow, 363 Early Careers, 931 Students, 61 K-12 Teachers, and 41 Affiliates.

### **Financial Status of the Section**

At the end of the fiscal year, 30 June 2017, the section had \$143,266 in its accounts. The total interest realized during FY17 was \$1,956. This interest, together with a reported surplus of \$15,076 from the section meeting in Richmond, VA, and section members' dues, is used to fund the Section's Student Research Grants, Student Travel Grants, and general operations of the section.

<b>Future Section Meetings</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Local Chair(s)</b>
Knoxville, TN	April 12-13, 2018	Colin Sumrall
Charleston, SC	March 28-29, 2019	Scott Harris and Katie Luciano
Reston, VA (joint NE)	March 20-22, 2020	Arthur Merschat and Patrick Burkhart
Auburn, AL	2021	Willis Hames and Mark Steltenpohl
Lexington, KY (joint NC)	2022	TBD
Harrisonburg, VA	2023	Steve Leslie and Steve Whitmeyer

### **Student Research Grants**

The Section has two research grant programs, one for undergraduates and another for graduate students. The graduate grant competition in the spring of 2017 resulted in the expenditure of \$5000 from remaining FY17 funds to support the research of 5 graduate students from a pool of 10 applicants. In the late spring of 2017, we awarded 12 undergraduate research grants, from a pool of 12 applicants, resulting in an expenditure of \$5,422 from the \$11000 allocated for FY18.

### **Student Travel Grants**

The Student Travel Grant program continues to be very popular. In the fall of 2016, the Section expended \$5619 to support the travel of 86 students presenting papers at the annual meeting. In the spring of 2017, the section expended \$4050 in support of 27 students presenting papers at section meeting. The Section appreciates the matching funds provided by the GSA Foundation and the contributions from members. Total student expenditures for 2016-2017 was \$9669.

### **66<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Section**

The 66<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the section was held in March, 2017, in Richmond, VA. David Spears and Karen Layou chaired the meeting. There were 4 symposia, 16 theme sessions and 7 discipline sessions. 11 field trips were run successfully, and a field trip guidebook was produced. The meeting was well planned and well attended (672 attendees).

### **67<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Section**

The 67<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the section will be held in the spring of 2018 in Knoxville, TN. **Abstracts are due January 16, 2018.** Hosted by the University of Tennessee – Knoxville, Colin Sumrall will be the meeting's General Chair. The Technical Program Co-Chairs are Linda Kah and Bob Hatcher, and the Field Trip Co-Chairs are Annette Engel and Bob Hatcher. The Sponsorship Co-Chairs will be Ed Perfect and Larry McKay, and Bradley Thompson will be Exhibits Chair. The Student Volunteer Chair is Christopher Fedo, and Hap McSween is the Treasurer. The meeting should be successful both scientifically and financially.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Blair Tormey  
 Secretary-Treasurer, Southeastern Section

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## NOTES FROM THE GEOLOGY AND PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

The Geology and Public Policy Committee of GSA met twice during 2017 (since the last edition of *The Saproliite*). The first was in Washington DC on March 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> – this meeting includes Congressional Visits Days in which GPPC members and GSA staff visit with senators, congressmen or their senior staffs to inform them of policy matters of interest to the geosciences community. The second meeting was in Seattle at the GSA Annual Meeting for two half-days on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The GPPC is responsible for formulating and recommending to GSA Council public policy-related issues of relevance to the geosciences and the GSA community. This includes both new initiatives as well as periodic reviews and updating of existing Position Statements and Critical Issue Statements. The membership of GPPC consists of at-large members appointed by GSA Council and by an elected representative from each GSA Section. The current elected representative from the Southeastern Section is Bob Tracy, Virginia Tech.

At our meeting in September of 2016 in Denver, our most intense discussion involved a Position Statement on Energy. This discussion reviewed unsuccessful efforts of the last 10 years to develop this Position Statement and the many considerations and viewpoints involved in drafting such a statement (the 10 years reflects how difficult this task is!). The principal motivation in creating this position statement is to make the strongest case for a place at the table for geoscientists in formulation of national energy policy. Significant progress was made in drafting a revised statement and when we resumed discussion in Washington in March of 2017 we finally voted successfully on a strong consensus version. This went to Council for its Spring 2017 meeting where it was also approved and as a new Position Statement it was then sent out to the general membership for comments. There were surprisingly few but overwhelmingly positive comments, and so GSA Council gave its final approval in October 2017 and the Position Statement is now published on the GSA website. Kudos are due to John Chermak of Virginia Tech (an at-large GPPC member and a member of SEGSA) who worked tirelessly to keep this effort alive and to bring it to final fruition.

Most GSA Position Statements require periodic review and revision as necessary (typically every 5 years) and following the spring 2017 GPPC meeting, GSA Council approved seven revisions of existing Position Statements: *Supporting Planetary Exploration*, *The Value of Geological Mapping*, *Water Resources*, *Geoheritage*, *Rewarding Professional Contributions in the Public Spheres*, and *Teaching Evolution*. At the October 2017 meeting, GPPC made revisions to the following Position Statements and sent them on to Council for final approval: *Visas for Foreign Scientists and Students*, *Data Access*, *Improving Natural Hazards Policies through Geoscience*, and *Geoscience Data Preservation*.

Finally, another new Position Statement that had been earlier proposed was brought forward for detailed discussion following an extensive peer review process involving GPPC, the Geology and Society Committee and the Diversity Committee of GSA, and the Association of Women Geoscientists. This proposed statement *Removing Barriers to Career Progression for Women in the Geosciences*. GPPC approved the draft statement and it has been forwarded to GSA Today for comments from the membership.

(R.J. Tracy, Virginia Tech, SEGSA Representative to GPPC)

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## NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTION

### **Important Dates in 2018:**

January 16, 2018: Abstracts due for Knoxville meeting

February 1, 2018: Session Submission Deadline, GSA Annual Meeting

February 1, 2018: Graduate Student Research Grant Deadline

March 5, 2018: Knoxville Early Registration Deadline

April 1, 2018: Undergraduate Student Research Grant Deadline

April 12-13, 2018: Southeast Section Meeting, Knoxville, TN

September 12-13, 2018: Geosciences Congressional Visits Day (GEO-CVD)

November 4-7, 2018: GSA Annual Meeting, Indianapolis, IN

### **Congressional Visits Day Report**

This past September I had the opportunity to attend Geoscience Congressional Visit Days (Geo-CVD) in Washington, DC. This two day program allows geoscientists from all over the country to visit Washington and advocate for federal funding for geoscience research. The first day was filled with updates about the current status of federal funding for geoscience, geoscience-related bills currently being discussed by Congress, and multiple workshops on how to communicate our science. At the end of the day, we divided into our teams for the next day.

The second day was hectic! We walked (and sometimes ran) many miles across the Capital from meeting to meeting. Our team (comprised of 3 graduate students and 1 professor from Massachusetts, Virginia, and South Carolina) met with staff members for Senators Tim Scott (R-SC), Linsey Graham (R-SC), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), and Ed Markey (D-MA).

First, we introduced ourselves and talked about our research. Our diverse research interests included: space weather, sediment plumes, hurricane forecasting, and petrology, which allowed us to advocate for the breadth of research that geoscience entails. At the end of each of our meetings was a clear ask: for Congress to continue supporting geoscience research.

Each meeting was exciting and I was impressed by our group's ability to take complex topics and explain their relevance to policy makers. For example, many of our conversations revolved around storm events and the recent Atlantic hurricane season. We were clearly able to explain that our federally funded work directly affects communities in preparing for disaster resilience.

I am very thankful that the Southeastern Section supported my travel to Geo-CVD and I would encourage graduate students who are interested in public policy to attend next year!

(Alexandra Nagurney, PhD student, Virginia Tech)

**\*\*Note:** The Southeastern Section was proud to support Allie as our representative in the Geo-CVD. Each year, the Southeastern Section provides funding for a graduate student to participate in the Geo-CVD program. If you would like information on how to participate, please visit the [Geo-CVD webpage](#).

**Do you have news to share with the Southeastern Section?**

Email the Section Chair, (Jon Mies, [Jonathan-Mies@utc.edu](mailto:Jonathan-Mies@utc.edu)), or Section Secretary-Treasurer (Blair Tormey, [btormey@wcu.edu](mailto:btormey@wcu.edu)) and we'll be sure to include it in the next issue of Saproliite!

**Vote for Section Officers**

A copy of the ballot for officer elections is included at the end of this newsletter. The ballot will also be made available electronically through GSA this spring.

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**IN MEMORIUM**

The following are members of the Southeastern Section that we lost between March 2016 and March 2017. If you know of any members that we have lost this year, please notify GSA Membership. Also, if you wish to share any remembrances in the next issue of Saproliite (2019), please contact the Section Secretary-Treasurer, Blair Tormey ([btormey@wcu.edu](mailto:btormey@wcu.edu)).

Harold G. Coffin	Chatsworth, GA	Notified: 11 August 2016
Harold E. Gill	Cumming, GA	Notified: 06 December 2016
Wallace D. Lowry	Blacksburg, VA	04 February 2016
William G. Melson	Strasburg, VA	07 October 2016
Charles W. Naeser	Herndon, VA	01 November 2016
William C. Overstreet	Santa Fe, NM	14 April 2016
Donald L. Streib	Morgantown, WV	01 January 2016

TO MEMBERS OF GSA SOUTHEASTERN SECTION  
**Ballot for 2018 - 2019 Officers Southeastern Section**

Please vote by completing the section at the bottom and mailing it to GSA postmarked no later than 1 March. Biographical information on the candidates is on the following pages.

You may vote online **by 1 March** at: <http://rock.geosociety.org/ballot/vote.asp?Name=SE>

Access the online e-ballot by using either your GSA member number or your e-mail address that is in your GSA member records. For membership assistance, please contact GSA at: [gsaservice@geosociety.org](mailto:gsaservice@geosociety.org) or call (888) 443-4472. You may also submit your completed ballot by Fax: (303) 357-1074.

**Section Chair** (one-year term):

- ( ) Venkat Lakshmi  
( ) Write-in \_\_\_\_\_

**Chair Elect** (one-year term):

- ( ) David Spears  
( ) Write-in \_\_\_\_\_

**Vice Chair** (one-year term):

- ( ) Scott Harris  
( ) Write-in \_\_\_\_\_

**Secretary-Treasurer** (one-year term):

- ( ) Blair Tormey  
( ) Write-in \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail Ballot To:** Section Office, Geological Society of America  
PO Box 9140, Boulder, CO, 80301-9140

Mailed ballots should be postmarked no later than 1 March.  
You must complete the following section to validate your ballot:

**Your Name** (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Signature** (required) \_\_\_\_\_

**Your GSA Member Number** \* (required) \_\_\_\_\_

\* Your 7 digit GSA member number is on the top right corner on the external mailing label. If you need assistance with your member number, call: (888) 443-4472



## **Biographies of Candidates for 2018 - 2019 Section Officers**

### **Section Chair (one year term)**

**VENKAT LAKSHMI**, Geophysics. Education: Roorkee University, B.E., 1987; Univ. of Iowa, M.S., 1989; Princeton University, M.A., 1992, Ph.D., 1996; Professional Experience: Professor, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1999-present; Member: GSA, AGU, AMS, ASCE, IEEE.

### **Chair Elect (one year term)**

**DAVID SPEARS**, Structural Geology, Public Policy. Education: Lafayette College, B.S., 1981; Virginia Tech, M.S., 1983. Professional Experience: Petroleum Geologist, Chevron USA 1983-1991; Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy 1991-present; STATE GEOLOGIST OF VIRGINIA, 2009-present; Member: GSA.

### **Vice Chair (one year term)**

**SCOTT HARRIS**, Coastal Plain and Continental Shelf Stratigraphy. Education: College of William and Mary, B.S., 1988; University of Virginia, M.S., 1992; University of Delaware, Ph.D., 2000; Professional Experience: Coastal Carolina University, 1998-2007; Associate Professor, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON, 2008-present; Member: GSA, AGU, AMQUA, Geological Society of Greece.

### **Secretary-Treasurer (one year term)**

**BLAIR TORMEY**, Sedimentology and Stratigraphy. Education: Pennsylvania State University, B.S., 1996; University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, M.S., 1999; University of Wisconsin, 1999-2002. Professional Experience: Coastal Research Scientist, WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY, 2005-present; Member: GSA; AAPG; NAGT.