SAPROLITE

Newsletter of the Southeastern Section of the Geological Society of America

Winter 2006-2007

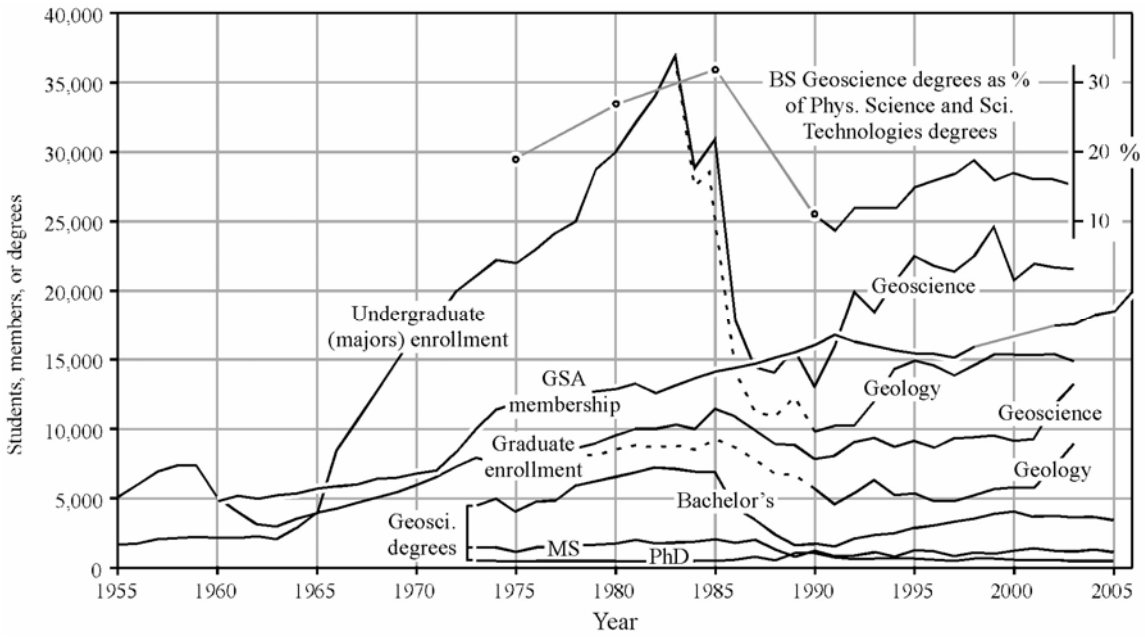
A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Concern about the future of geology has generated countless heartfelt discussions among representatives of academia, industry, and government. Numerous reports and papers written on the subject of geology's future and the survival of its academic programs describe a crisis that is complicated by economic and political factors and the disconnect between public perception and the reality of Earth processes (e.g., Feiss, 1996; Drummond, 2001; Rossbacher and Rhodes, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Feiss, 2005; Furbish, 2005; Wuebbles, 2005; all available from http://serc.carleton.edu/departments/resources.html). With this letter, I join the discussion and offer an optimistic outlook on the future of our science.

I came from our national meeting in Philadelphia considerably encouraged about the future of geology. At the meeting, I sensed satisfaction with present levels of employment for our graduates and optimism about future employment opportunities; I sensed greater acceptance of "geoscience" and considerable excitement about some of the interdisciplinary science that has come of it; and I saw marvelous applications of technology and new technology-driven research strategies that will soon be transformed or superseded by exciting new technologies. These factors, coupled with an acute public awareness of Earth processes due to recent events and perceived threats, such as earthquake, tsunami, global climate change and hurricanes, lead me to believe that the future of geology or geoscience is not necessarily in peril. I would rather think that the tide has turned and that, with strategic planning and insightful leadership, geology and its academic programs will flourish.

During the last few weeks, I revisited trends in the geosciences. It is not surprising that strong growth of the petroleum industry during the 1960's and 1970's and the subsequent bust of the industry during the early to mid 80's had a profound influence on undergraduate enrollment in geology and the number of bachelor's degrees granted in the United States (AGI, 2001). Statistics kept by the American Geological Institute (AGI) indicate that enrollment peaked in

1983 at nearly 37,000 students (AGI, 2006a). In response to the bust, enrollment fell sharply during the mid to late 80's, to fewer than 15,000 students. As one might expect, a sharp decline in the number of bachelor's degrees also occurred during the late 80's (AGI, 2006b). It has now been nearly 20 years since those declines. I sense that we are recovering, though not as strongly or as steadily as we would like. As indicated by available data, enrollments and degrees have generally increased since 1990.



Assessing the significance of post-bust trends of the past 20 years is complicated by the boom-related peaks that preceded them and the nearly coincident emergence of "geoscience". Starting in 1990, statistics reported by AGI distinguish total enrollment in more traditional solid-earth "geology" programs from that of broader "geoscience" programs. Comparison of pre-1965 enrollment and post-1990 enrollment in more traditional geology programs loosely defines a trend that describes long-term average growth of nearly 300 students per year. It is encouraging to note that enrollment in more traditional geology programs from 1990 to 2003 seems to have grown at a similar or slightly greater average rate and that estimated total enrollment in introductory geoscience courses increased 5% in 2004-2005 (AGI 2006c). It is also encouraging to note that GSA membership has increased at about the same average rate over the past 50 years and that we have grown to more than 20,000 members. Comparing the number of geoscience degrees granted from 1990 to 2003 (AGI 2006b) to the total number of

physical science and science technologies degrees granted during the same period (NCES, 2003, 2005) indicates that our "market share" increased through 1998 to nearly 20%, though this may be an artifact of continued emergence of “geoscience” during those 8 years. By this measure, our "market share" has fallen slightly since 1998, reflecting the slight decline in the number of bachelor's degrees since 2000, though it remains well above the 1991 low of 9%.

At the heart of my optimism is the favorable outlook for employment in the geosciences and the opportunity it presents (Milling, 2002; Loudin, 2004; AGI, 2006d; Doggett, 2006; Freeman, 2006; Roy, 2006). Ironically, this is largely due to the petroleum-driven boom that peaked in the early 80's and contributed to our problems of the past 20 years. The disproportionately large number of geoscientists that entered the workforce during that boom and are now employed in a variety of geoscience fields will retire during the next 10 years. Upcoming retirements, present upswings in petroleum and minerals industries, relatively low graduation rates, and students’ preferences of careers (AGI, 2006d,) contribute to a forecasted shortage of geoscientists that some industries and government entities perceive as nothing less than a crisis. This is where geology programs would benefit from strategic planning and insightful leadership. We should take full advantage of this situation to promote and strengthen our programs. Considering that it will take 6 to 8 years for the typical ambitious student to complete bachelor’s and master’s degrees, time is of the essence. Ideally, we should already be enlightening undergraduates and high school students of geoscience career opportunities. As strategic planners, we would be wise to scrutinize our curricula and realign them, if necessary, with jobs of the next decade. We would also be wise to further study the cyclic trends in our discipline and take measures to lessen them.

I am not suggesting that we should lower our guard; the road ahead may still be a bumpy one. However, I do think we should draw encouragement from some of the recent trends and the favorable outlook for employment in the geosciences. If nothing else, let it serve to change our mindsets to one of optimism and let us promote our disciplines in this new light. It would serve our interests to do so.

In closing, I would like to encourage all members to attend our Section meetings. Beyond the technical sessions, vendor displays, etc., these meetings provide opportunity for us to meet with our regional colleagues, to share our ideas and our experiences, and to discuss the challenges we face. Some of our colleagues work very hard for our meetings to be as

successful as they are. In particular, I would like to thank Claudia Mora, Bob Hatcher, Linda Kah, Ted Labotka, Ed Perfect and the many others that worked so diligently on last year's meeting in Knoxville. This year's meeting in Savannah is shaping up well, due largely to the efforts of Pranoti Asher and Mike Kelley. Hope to see you there.

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Financial Status of the Section

At the end of fiscal year, 30 June 2006, the section had $109, 853 in its accounts. The total interest realized during the fiscal year was $5708. This interest, together with a reported surplus of $24,632 from the section meeting in Knoxville, TN, and section members' dues, is used to fund the Section's student Grant Program, Student Travel Program, and Educational Grant Program as well as general operations of the section.

Education Grant

The Management Board awarded an Education Grant of $1000 to Gail Russell of Southern Mississippi University to aid in replacing earth science teaching materials at ten middle schools that were hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina.

Student Research Grants

The Section has two research grant programs, one for undergraduates and another for graduate students. In the fall of 2005, there were no applications for the undergraduate grants. In the Fall of 2006 there were two applicants, and both were funded. The grant competition in

the spring of 2006 resulted in the expenditure of $7000 to support the research of the following graduate students.

Charles "Scott" Allen	George Mason University
Alyssa Bell	University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Sandip Bordoloi	University of Alabama
Rachael Czechowskyj	University of Alabama
Julie Floyd	University of Kentucky
Heather Hutchinson	East Carolina University
Patrick Johnson	East Carolina University
David Cuevas Miranda	University of Puerto Rico
Christopher Moore	East Carolina University
Emily Sekula	University of South Carolina
Jennifer Sliko	University of South Florida
Curtis Smith	East Carolina University
Alison Spengler	Virginia Tech
Amanda Waldron	University of North Carolina, Charlotte
Brent Wilhelm	University of Kentucky

Student Travel Grants

The Student Travel Grant program continues to be very popular. In the spring of 2006, the section expended $4500 in support of 21 students presenting papers at the Knoxville, TN, meeting. In the fall of 2006, the Section will expend $4500 to support the travel of 50 students presenting papers at the annual meeting in Philadelphia, PA. The Section appreciates the matching funds provided by the GSA Foundation. Total student expenditures for 2006 will be $9000.

55th Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Section

The 55th annual meeting of the section was held March 23-24, 2006, in Knoxville, TN. Claudia Mora of the University of Tennessee was the General Chair of the meeting. A total of 371 papers in 6 symposia and 16 theme sessions were presented. The meeting sponsored 9 field trips.

56th Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Section

The 56th annual meeting of the section will be held in Savannah, GA on March 29-30, 2007. Pranoti Asher of Georgia Southern University will be the General Chair. Five symposia and 22 theme sessions, 7 field trips and 4 workshops are planned. Everyone is invited to attend. For more information or to register, please go to: http://www.geosociety.org/sectdiv/southe/07semtg.htm. The early registration deadline is February 26, 2007.

Allen Dennis, former chair of the Southeastern Section, is a candidate for GSA Council. When it comes time to vote, consider voting for representation from the southeastern section.

Election of Officers, 2007-2008
Southeastern Section, GSA

The slate of officers for the Southeastern Section election is presented below with biographical data. Please vote by checking the box after each candidate's name. To vote for a person not listed on the ballot, write his/her name on the blank line for the appropriate office and check the corresponding write-in box. Your ballot must be returned to GSA at the address below no later than March 15, 2007:

Geological Society of America, Attn: SE Section Ballot
P.O. Box 9140
Boulder, CO 80301-9140

If you prefer, you may fax your ballot by March 15, 2007, to (303) 357-1074, Attn: SE Section ballot, or you may vote online by March 15, 2007, at <https://rock.geosociety.org/ballot/vote.asp?Name=SE>.

BALLOT

Chair

Mark S. Groszos ☐ ☐ Write-in: _____

Chair Elect

Roy B. Van Arsdale ☐ ☐ Write-in: _____

Vice Chair

Andy Bobyarchick ☐ ☐ Write-in: _____

Secretary-Treasurer

Donald W. Neal ☐ ☐ Write-in: _____

MARK GROSZOS, STRUCTURAL GEOLOGY/TECTONICS. Educ: Eastern Illinois University, BS 78; Florida State University, Ph.D. 96. Prof Exp: Florida Geological Survey and Tallahassee Community College 1987-1989, Exploration Geologist, Hecla Mining Company 1990-2000, Assistant Professor of Geology, VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY 2001-present. Mem: GSA, GAS, Sigma Xi. Res: Structural geology and tectonics of the western Blue Ridge, industrial minerals. Mailing Add: Department of Physics, Astronomy and Geosciences, Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA 31698; email: msgroszo@valdosta.edu

ROY B. VAN ARSDALE, TECTONICS. Educ: Rutgers Univ, B.A. 72, Univ of Cincinnati, M.S. 74, Univ of Utah, Ph.D. 79. Prof Exp: Union Carbide International Minerals Exploration 75-76, Eastern Kentucky University 80-84, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville 85-93, Professor of Geology, UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS, 94 to present. Mem: GSA… Res: Active tectonics, paleoseismology, structural geology, geomorphology. Mailing Add: Department of Earth Science, 1 Johnson Hall, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN 38152; email: rvanrsdl@memphis.edu

ANDY BOBYARCHICK, STRUCTURAL GEOLOGY. Educ: Birmingham Southern College, B.S. 74, Virginia Tech, M.S.76, Albany State Univ, Ph.D. 83. Prof Exp: Associate Prof of Earth Sciences, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA – CHARLOTTE. Mem: GSA, AGU, NAGT. Res: Structural geology. Mailing Add: Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of North Carolina – Charlotte, 9201 University City Blvd., McEniry Building, Room 336, Charlotte, NC 28223-5973; email: arbobyar@uncc.edu

DONALD W. NEAL, STRATIGRAPHY. Educ: College of William and Mary BS 73; Eastern Kentucky Univ, MS 75; West Virginia Univ, Ph.D. 79. Prof Exp: Logging Geol, Exploration Logging of USA, Inc, 75-76, Research Assoc West Virginia Geol and Econ Survey, 77-79, Asst to Assoc Prof EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY, 79-present. Mem: GSA, SEPM, IAS, SGE, NAGT. Res: Appalachian Basin stratigraphy, petrology, petroleum geology. Mailing Add: Dept of Geological Sciences, East Carolina Univ, Greenville, NC 27858-4353; email: neald@ecu.edu

Please fill in the following required information before returning your ballot. It is used only to confirm voter eligibility.

Name (Print)_____ Signature_____

*GSA Member #_____

* If you do not know your GSA member number, please contact the GSA Service Center by e-mail at gsaservice@geosociety.org or by phone at (303) 357-1000 (option 3) or toll-free in the U.S. at 1-888-443-4472.