



university of georgia

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I STARTED TO WRITE THIS LETTER by looking at the letter I wrote last year which began: “Last year ... we were optimistic that changing economic conditions would lead to increasing enrollment in Geology...”. I was referring to the spring before the recession when we thought that increasing oil prices would lead to increased enrollment. In fact “changing economic conditions” have led to increased enrollment but not for the reasons we expected. Our spring count of undergraduate majors increased to 56 and for the first time in memory some of our core majors’ courses were completely full. Students recognize that the geology major prepares one to be a professional geologist, and there are jobs for geologists even in these tough times. These undergraduate majors are the lifeblood of the department, and so we are pleased with the current enrollment. Our graduate student population remains stable at 37 students. This is well down from the 70 students we had during the late 1980s but consistent with the current national and state funding situation.



Alumni Advisory Board

A key new initiative was the creation of an Alumni Advisory Board, which held its first meeting in March. The purpose of the board is to provide advice to the department on professional and academic issues, to advise and help students find positions in the industry, government and academia, and to help and advise the department with regard to fund raising. The committee (Mack Duncan, chair, Gilles Allard, Dorinda Dallmeyer, Mark Hall, Jane Marshall, Jeff Reid, Roger Sharpe, Colleen Stapleton, and Andy Thomas) spent one day visiting the department to familiarize themselves with our strengths and challenges, and then spent a day planning for the future. The board will meet twice per year, and will meet again next fall (perhaps not coincidentally on a home, non-SEC football weekend). Initial nominations to the board came from the faculty but in the future the nominations will come from the board.

The faculty underwent significant changes this past year. Foremost, and saddest, was the loss of long-time instructor and curator, Barbara Ruff, who passed away this past fall after a long illness – there is more on Barbara’s career later in this newsletter. Chris Romanek left the department after spring semester, 2009, to take a position at the University of Kentucky, and Dave Dallmeyer will retire this June after 39 years of service to the department. (The department will host a symposium to honor Dave in November – there will be an announcement in the early fall).

Given the budget situation we have been unable to add any new faculty to the department. This situation is one of our most pressing issues because of the “graying” of the faculty. Moreover, when a faculty member departs or retires we have been unable to fill the position. This is a common problem across Franklin

College and in fact, in academia in general. The problem is most clear when we compare our lack of Assistant Professors to the faculty profiles of our peer institutions in the SEC. Over the past three years we have lost two positions (one retirement, and relocation of Chris Romanek) and we stand to lose another position with the retirement of Dave Dallmeyer. The faculty is currently discussing future directions which include requests for several new hires – even in the face of this bleak economy, we want to be positioned to act when the chance arises.

On a brighter note, faculty were extremely successful in acquiring grants during the current year – faculty brought in over \$1,000,000 in external support that included NSF grants to Sandra Wyld, Jim Wright, Sue Goldstein, Steve Holland, Paul Schroeder and Rob Hawman. This is a very important achievement for these faculty as well as the department, most importantly from the point of view of research productivity – instead of writing grants faculty can actively engage in research, and secondly because this brings positive publicity to the department. This year was our first with the renovated classrooms and in spite of a hiccup (collapse of brand new cabinets in the paleontology lab) it has been a pleasure to teach in these rooms. A second major renovation was begun in August and completed in January – this was the renovation of the 315 suite – formerly the home of Campus Media (the group who used to draft and make 35 mm slides for presentations) into two research lab/office complexes for Steve Holland and Sue Goldstein. This renovation allowed Sue and Steve to move their research labs from Riverbend to the Geography-Geology building and will increase the research productivity of their students as well themselves.

We are extremely grateful to our alumni who continue to support our students through donations to the Allard Award, the Berg Scholarship, the Watts-Wheeler scholarship, the Levy award as well as the general account for Geology. The primary use of all these funds is to support graduate and undergraduate research as well as student travel to scientific meetings. This year with the budget cuts, the alumni funds have been particularly important and have allowed us to support student travel to meetings of the Geological Society of America and the Georgia Geological Society. We are thankful for your past donations and hope that you will continue to support the department in the future. Please stop by the department when you are in Athens and visit our [website](#) – news events as well as weekly seminar schedules are also posted there.

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