Hello all, and welcome to the resurrected SSU Geology Department Newsletter, GeoLog. The faculty and staff of the Geology Department would like to extend greetings to our alumni and returning students. We have decided to put together this newsletter to improve our communication with our alums as well as provide a venue for our graduates to keep in contact with each other. Our hope is to make this a yearly publication (we realize that you’ve heard this promise before) which will be available primarily as an electronic document distributed via e-mail and available for download from the Geology Department web site. There is a short questionnaire on the last page of this newsletter that you can e-mail your response to help ensure that your newsletter reaches you in the optimal way. We hope that you enjoy the third issue of GeoLog.

To see a color copy of this newsletter, please visit our webpage at http://www.sonoma.edu/geology/SSUGeologyNewsletter-2010.pdf
Greetings geology alumni, students, and friends of SSU Geology,

We are thriving in the fully renovated Darwin Hall, now with offices on the first floor, and with classrooms and labs on both the first floor and the basement. No more running from the third floor to the basement and back multiple times a day, as many of you remember! The biggest change has been the retirement of all the original faculty members, “the Founding Fathers” as we fondly refer to them. Rolfe lives locally in Cotati (we see him often), Terry splits his time between Forestville and Benton near Bishop in the Owens Valley (still doing much geologizing and skiing), Tom lives in Reno (and has been teaching field camp at UNR), and Walt lives in Sebastopol and this Spring finished his last round of Ig Met and Senior Field.

The department is now a group of four full-time faculty, who you’ll hear from in this newsletter: Dan Karner, Matty Mookerjee, Mike Smith, and myself. We are working to hire a 5th full-time faculty member in the near future, bringing us back up to the five faculty level so many of you remember from your days here as students. Our departmental technician is Sue Nosker (SSU geology alum, 1976) and we have valuable help from John Collins in the machine shop in the basement.

As always, we have really good majors who care deeply about geology, and I’m impressed how year after year we get such good people in our program either through junior transfers or who start here as freshmen. It remains true that the Geology Department is more like a family that learns and travels together than just an academic department.

One of my underlying goals during the time I’ve been chair is to strengthen and expand our field program, a traditional strength of our department. As an elective field course in 2003, I started an international trip to the Burgess Shale fossil deposits in British Columbia, which Tom Anderson has assisted with each year with SSU students. As budget allows, we have brought back GEOL 120: Regional Field Geology, a class for non-majors over Spring Break, and we hope to run it again in Spring 2011. Sometimes you get an itch to visit places you’ve heard of over the years, and that’s what I did with a big road trip of SSU geology majors to Arizona in Fall 2008 to visit Meteor Crater, Petrified Forest National Park, and to hike down into the Grand Canyon. And there was a similar motivation to visit the House Range in western Utah with Tom Anderson in Spring 2007. Various courses also have me taking students to Shasta Lake in the eastern Klamath Mountains (though I haven’t gone in a couple of years), the southern Nopah Range for mapping and trilobites, the Marble Mountains and the Granite Mountains in the Mojave National Preserve, and all over Nevada for fossil fish, ichthyosaurs, archaeocyatha, and, of course, trilobites. To encourage more interest in all SSU students, I started a Minor in Paleontology two years ago and it is proving to be quite popular. Did I mention trilobites?

When not teaching or doing department business, I have a writing project all about the 1905-06 Galapagos expedition of the California of Sciences (have traveled there 11 times), and I have given talks on this topic all over northern California, including once to a “captive audience” at San Quentin. This involved walking unprotected across the exercise yard and a basketball court to reach a classroom, saying “Excuse me, excuse me, hey, how’s it goin’? Excuse me, how’s it goin’?” Suffice it to say I did not get shanked and came away with many stories to tell.

My goals as department chair have been to maintain the traditions of our department, while realizing change can be good in the curriculum to meet the needs of our majors as they go on to work or to graduate school. I look forward to hearing from our alumni any time, either by stopping by the department or even on Facebook!

Kind regards,

Matt James
Department Chair
Dan Karner, Professor of Geology. After graduating from Sonoma State in 1992, I headed to UC Berkeley where I studied geology with Walter Alvarez, geochronology with Paul Renne, and applied geophysics with Richard Muller. What I adopted from that experience, which continued another six years after receiving my Ph.D., was the philosophy that was simply stated by Louis Pasteur- “Chance favors the prepared mind.” What interests me as a scientist is, well, nearly everything! As a researcher I gravitate toward questions that lurk in the shadows between traditional fields of study. As a teacher, I try to convey to students that geology is a multidisciplinary science, drawing on astronomy, biology, chemistry, computer science, geography, mathematics, and physics. Combined with the spatial and temporal relationships recorded in rocks, geology offers students to pursue interests ranging from the simply mundane to the nearly religious. What could be better than that?

Hello all,

This is my first newsletter since being hired at SSU, so I would like to take some time to introduce myself. I am the new (as of Fall, 2006) Structural Geologist at SSU. I am replacing Terry Wright (as if that’s possible) whom many of you will know. Terry was gracious enough to assist with my transition into the department and help me get acquainted with the “local” geology (so, yes I still take the Structure class to Poleta Folds). So a little bit about me: I got my degree from the University of Rochester with Gautam Mitra as my advisor. For my thesis I studied the kinematics of the Moine Thrust zone in NW Scotland. I taught for two years before landing the SSU job (one year at Bryn Mawr College and the following year at St. Lawrence University). I am currently juggling several projects (with varying degrees of success): 1) I am investigating the thermal and kinematic evolution of a metamorphic core complexes in the Bitterroots, in Western Montana, 2) a couple of students and I are trying to characterize the transpressional deformation of the Rosey-Finch Shear zone near Mammoth Lakes, CA, 3) I am collaborating with Sanghoon Kwon at Yonsei University on a Finite Element Model (FEM) of irregular fault surfaces, 4) I am also collaborating with Eric Horsman at the USGS on modeling the development of crystallographic fabrics, and 5) I recently starting a project with a student examining some of the deformation associated with the San Andreas Fault near Point Arena. Combined with teaching courses in Structural Geology and Structure Field, Geophysics, Advanced Principles of Geology, Geologic Mapping and Report Writing, Our Dynamic Earth, Natural Disasters, Senior Field, and a new course in Computer Applications in Geology, I am able to keep myself busy enough.

I have really enjoyed my first four years at SSU. I enjoy getting to know our students and taking them into the field and getting them involved in independent research projects. I am also really enjoying my time in Northern California (considerably different from Michigan where I grew up). My wife and I are getting settled into the area and have just purchased a house in Sebastopol. I am looking forward to a long career here at SSU. Hopefully, I will get the chance to meet many more alumni in the coming years. Please feel free to drop me a line any time, or drop by the department if you are in the area.

I hope this newsletter finds you all well,

Matty Mookerjee
Assistant Professor
Greetings all,

I'm the new Sedimentary Geologist at Sonoma State. Between getting used to the harsh climate of Sonoma County and figuring out all the secret passageways of Darwin Hall I've had my hands full. I come to SSU from the midcontinent, where our tectonic plates haven't done much since the Penokian (1.7 Ga), and have been pleasantly greeted by the diverse rocks of California. Matt, Matty, Dan, Walt, and Sue are all great and have been wonderful help since my arrival. As far as SSU Geology classes go, I teach Sed Pet (soon to be renamed Sedimentary Geology), 205 (when there are budget crises), 303, 304, and Senior Field. This spring semester I'm teaching Sedimentary Geology and Senior Field (with Walt), and I'm keeping my fingers crossed regarding El Niño. My research interests range from radioisotopic dating of the stratal record, ancient lacustrine depositional systems, and modern sedimentary processes, all with the overarching goal of better understanding the behavior of ancient lake and river systems in orographic landscapes. I'm currently working on Ordovician, Eocene, and Holocene projects and have undertaken field campaigns to the Absaroka Mountains of Wyoming (with SSU student Jason Hoefer), the mountain ranges of central Idaho, and the canyon country in SW Wyoming. Closer to home, projects are getting started on the King Range in Humboldt County and the local volcanic strata in Sonoma and Napa Counties.

Nice to meet you!

Cheers,
Michael E. Smith

Sue Nosker, the Department Technician has been around the Geology Department for four decades. She received her BS in Geology in 1976 and was one of the students in the first field trip class that Walt Vennen taught in the early '70s. Upon graduation she worked for Aminol USA, a Geothermal Company in Santa Rosa where she was involved with early exploration and mapping of the Geysers Steam Field.

Sue received a MS in Geology from Mackay School of Mines, University of Nevada, Reno in 1981. She mapped a township in the very northern part of Dixie Valley, Nevada which had high geothermal potential. Upon returning to Sonoma County with an MS degree and a new baby, she and her former husband started Nosker & Nosker, Geologic Consultants which consulted to the geothermal energy industry for 18 years. During that time she intermittently taught Geology labs for the Geology Department at SSU.

In addition to a career in geology, Sue also started a bilingual elementary school in Graton, CA and became a professional Tour Director. She continues to be the sole proprietor of Sonoma West Tours in Sebastopol.

Sue joined the department as the Technician in 2005. She delights in working with the students, faculty, and staff. She helps to keep the department organized and manages and cooks on the field trips. She has a heart rock collection and treasures the heart gifts that she has received from students and colleagues over the years.

For fun, Sue enjoys the time she spends with her three adult kids, gardening, making herbal medicines, singing in the Occidental Choir, hunting for mushrooms, seaweed, and of course, heart rocks.
Alumni Notes

We, in the Geology Department, love to hear from our alumni. Please send us a note if you have any new (or even old) news in your life. I’m sure that the rest of the alums would love to hear from you. Also, feel free to include a picture of you, your family, and/or something geological. E-mail your notes to matty.mookerjee@sonoma.edu

Marianne Holtz

Since 2007 I have worked in environmental consulting field, remediation of underground storage tanks (USTs) and dry cleaning solvent sites. I am currently working on MS in Geology at CSU East Bay. Thesis with emphasis on water quality and human health. (Source, fate, and transport of nitrate in groundwater using stable isotopes to distinguish the age and source of water, i.e. surface water/groundwater interaction). I will be intern this summer at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in the Chemical Sciences Division. Not sure what project(s) I will work on there. Personal life: Living with a kind, friendly Chinese couple and enjoying the cooking lessons! Great culture. Good friendship.

Hope things are well with you and everyone at SSU.

Ramona Taylor

Hello. As they say, the good ol’ days….What fun we had on all of our adventures into the desert. In the lab you just can’t learn how to make a white gas bomb out of a wine bottle, see the biggest wildflower bloom in ten years, or map the Poleta Folds. It seems so long ago and yet, I have some of the greatest memories of that time. Immediately after summer field in Arizona, I returned home to Humboldt County. For several years after graduation, I worked for a geology consulting firm doing road assessments to protect fish habitat (resolving sediment issues and fish passage). In 2003, I got so tired of the fog I moved inland and started working for the Karuk Tribe. I work for the Department of Natural Resources on the mighty Klamath River in Orleans, California. Unfortunately, I am not using my geology degree, although I thank all my professors for honing my technical writing skills. I’m running the Energy and Solid Waste Programs, I oversee Environmental Ed and the fiscal/administrative staff. I love the programmatic work, hate the fiscal stuff and love being so close to the Salmon River. The Salmon is cold, clear and amazing. My friend said, “You live in a National Geographic magazine.” I got married in 2008 (hence the name change). My husband and I just bought the house we’ve been living in for the past several years. We have a big garden on five acres that we share with our three dogs and two cats. I miss geology a ton and have been working with the Environmental Ed program to develop a geology curriculum for the local schools. I often wonder what everyone is up to. Hope y’all are living the dream. Take care.
Hilary Van de Pol

My name is Hilary Van de Pol, maiden name Oliveria. I graduated in Dec. 2003. I've only been back once to see the new building. Amazing! After I graduated I worked for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory studying earthquakes in the Livermore Valley and then for Delicato Family Vineyards making maps. I got married in 2005 to Henry and moved on to the family dairy in Escalon. Henry is third generation dairyman. I have a 15 month old daughter, Olivia, two dogs and a cat. I work part time for the dairy keeping the dairy in compliance with state regulations that come down from the Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Air Resources Board and local regulations that come from all over the place! If that wasn't enough to give me a headache, my father-in-law is my boss :) I enjoy helping out the family business though and really enjoy being able to stay home and raise my daughter. I'd love to hear what everyone else is up to :)

Matthew Grandjean

Since graduating in 1994, Matthew Grandjean has worked as an environmental consultant for various companies. Currently he is a Senior Geologist for Stantec Consulting Corp. (formerly SECOR International, Inc.) for the previous 11 years. He is the Nevada portfolio manager for a national retail gasoline station client and manages the Nevada staff in various aspects of environmental site assessments. Matthew lives in Las Vegas with his wife, 6 yr old son and two dogs and enjoys to experience all the beauty- and Geology! - the desert southwest has to offer.

Jonathan Florez

Since graduation in 1991, I've worked as a staff geologist for an environmental consulting firm for a year, then moved to Hawaii and worked as a geologist for the state Department of Land and Natural Resources doing potable ground water and geothermal development. I then worked as a air pollution inspector for the Hawaii Department of Health for a couple of years. In 1999 I became a special agent with the CA Department of Justice and have worked narcotics, illegal firearms, Medi-Cal Fraud and now tribal gaming.
I currently live in Riverside County and have three sons with my ex-wife. The oldest (19) lives with me and the other two - 7 and 10, live with her and I see them on weekends. Its wonderful being a father to my sons. My oldest wants to pursue a career in law enforcement and the younger ones are doing well in all their studies and love hiking, fishing and shooting rifles.
Alumni Notes

Susan White

I graduated from SSU with a BS in Geology in 1998 (this was during the Tom, Walt, Terry and Matt years). After graduation I went to work for Solano County Public Works as an Engineering Technician and have been fortunate to stay with them part-time as I raise my son (8 years) and daughter (6 years). Although I am in the civil engineering field, my geology background comes in handy every now and then. Two years ago my husband and I went to the Big Island and I finally saw an active lava flow!! Had to go up in a helicopter to see it, but it’s now crossed off my list of things I want to see before I die! I am especially having fun right now choosing natural stone accents for our master bath remodel…Scabos Travertine or Tumbled Quartz?? How can one decide???

Lorie (Oleesky) Bartee

My husband, Mark, and I are both 1994 grads. Mark is an Environmental Geologist working for Trihydro in Signal Hill, CA. I was working as an Engineering Geologist up until 2007, when I quit to be a stay-at-home mom to our then 3 year old daughter, Shayna. We were married in 2000 and will be celebrating our 10-year anniversary this year! We are also expecting another child (boy this time - William Finn Bartee) any day now, as my due date is Jan. 27th. Here is a picture of the family in front of the "World Famous Crowbar!"
Students hanging out in Darwin 128

Students at Poleta folds

At Yosemite National Park

Burgess Shale field trip, BC Canada

Student measuring strain on the microscope
Wet field trip to Ring Mountain lead by David Bero

Field trip to the Geysers

Geol 102 field trip to Point Reyes

Sedimentary Geology field trip, measuring section

Senior Field on their way Shoshone, CA

Geology Club trip to Lassen Volcanic National Park
Department News

Congratulation to this years graduates:

Allison Morgan Abicht  Daniel James Cicchetto  Michael Francis Jewett
Erik Arnesen (Cum Laude)  Kyle E. Engen  Benjamin Bannister Jones
Robert Gordon Ball  Evan Nickolai Ernstson  Kyle Elsdon Larson
Sarah Boogay  Jason Hoefer  Kelsey R. McLaughlin

Graduating with Distinction:

Daniel James Cicchetto
Jason Hoefer
Evan Nickolai Ernstson

Woodard Scholarship Awardees:

Daniel James Cicchetto
Matt Cruz
Erik Arnesen

Students Presenting at this year's National GSA in Portland, OR

Daniel James Cicchetto
Forest Fortescue
Jason Hoefer

Each of these students were partially funded through internal SSU grants; however, they paid for the meeting fees, travel and hotels out of their own pockets (as did the professors that accompanied them). To be able to continue getting our students involved in interesting and relevant research projects and to give them the opportunity to present their findings at professional meetings, we need a steady revenue source to draw upon. Please think about donating to the Geology Department so that we can keep getting our students into the field.

If you are (or know of anyone who is) just THAT close to graduating, but never did, please contact us so we can discuss the possibility of moving you toward completing your degree. e-mail: james@sonoma.edu

Also, be sure to check us out on Facebook (Sonoma State University-Geology Department).

And, please send this newsletter to any alumni and/or friends of the SSU Geology Department that you are in contact with that might not have received it.
Congratulations Walt!
The Geology Department would like to wish Walt Vennum a happy retirement. Walt finished his last semester at SSU this spring (after 39 years of service). Walt is currently off to Bolivia with his wife Lois to do some climbing. We’re sure that this is just one of many adventures that will occupy Walt during his retirement.

The Geology Department hopes to replace Walt’s position with another Igneous and Metamorphic Petrologist; however, we first have to have the position approved. In the current economic climate, it may take a while before this happens. It is important that the administration understands that this is a very important position for our department. We certainly try to convey this to them, but we are seen as having our own agenda. On the other hand, if our graduates contacted the administration and respectfully described to them how Mineralogy and Ig Met Pet are an important part of the geology curriculum, it may have a greater affect...just something to think about.
Questionnaire

1) How did you receive this newsletter?
2) Is there a better/different e-mail address where we should send you the newsletter in the future?
3) Would you prefer a printed copy even if it was not in color?
4) Is there anything that you would like to see in the newsletter that we did not include?

Please e-mail your responses to matty.mookerjee@sonoma.edu