

#### **Information Letter #4**

TO: Faculty and Staff of:  
Department of Atmospheric Sciences  
Department of Geology & Geophysics  
Department of Geography  
Department of Oceanography  
Geochemical and Environmental Research Group  
Integrated Ocean Drilling Program  
Texas Sea Grant Office

FROM: Björn Kjerfve, Dean  
College of Geosciences

DATE: 04 August 2006

#### **Faculty Hiring News**

Several new faculty members have joined the College of Geosciences during the summer. They include Dr. Tom Bianchi, Professor of Oceanography, a biogeochemist from Tulane University; Dr. Franco Marcoantonio, Associate Professor of Geology and Geophysics, a geochemist from Tulane University; and Dr. Kathleene O'Reilly, Assistant Professor of Geography, a water resources policy and human geographer from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who will arrive shortly.

Successful negotiations have also been concluded with other faculty, who will be joining the College of Geosciences by 1 January 2007. They include Dr. Yuefeng Sun, Associate Professor of Geology and Geophysics, a petroleum geophysicist from the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi; Dr. Don Lucas, Assistant Professor of Atmospheric Sciences, an atmospheric pollution modeler from Frontier Research Center for Global Change in Yokohama, Japan; Dr. Mitch Lyle, Professor of Oceanography and our most recent ODASES hire, a paleoceanographer from Boise State University; and Dr. Annette Olivarez-Lyle, Associate Research Professor in Oceanography, a geochemist from Boise State University.

During the summer, two faculty members have resigned from their positions in the College of Geosciences. They are Dr. Stephen Dorobek, Professor of Geology and Geophysics and Dr. Brian Willis, Assistant Professor of Geology and Geophysics. Both have assumed positions in the private sector and we wish them success in their new jobs.

#### **Dr. Duce to Retire**

Dr. Robert Duce, Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Sciences and Oceanography and former Dean of the College of Geosciences (1991-1997) will retire 31 August 2006. Dr. Duce will continue to occupy office space in the O&M Building and we look forward to his continuing participation in international science projects.

#### **Heads of Department Searches**

Two departments in the College of Geosciences are currently without a permanent Department Head. OCNG is in the final stages of evaluating the three candidates who have interviewed during the summer. In the meantime, Dr. John Morse continues as the Interim Head of Department until 31 August. Dr. Rick Carlson has decided to step down as Head of Department of GEPL as of 31 August 2006 to focus his energies fully on teaching and research. No decisions have been made as of yet with respect to an interim or permanent head of GEPL.

## How Does the College Support Faculty Startup?

Startup is a critical component of faculty recruitment, one that is in increasingly short supply. Startup is cost-shared 25/25/50 between department/college/VPR for reinvestment and ODASES faculty. The split is 33/33/33 between department/college/VPR for replacement faculty.

Returned indirect cost (IDC) is the primary funding source used to support startup. Most research in the College is administered through the Texas A&M Research Foundation (TAMRF). For every \$100,000 in total sponsor support, assuming full indirect cost at the 45.5 % rate, 33.13% of IDC or \$10,360 is returned to the College. The College in turn allocates the returned IDC at 2.5/1.0 between the department and College.

In the end, the department nets \$7400 and the College keeps the remaining \$2960. How does this translate into startup? Simply put, for every \$100,000 in total sponsor support it generates, a department can (assuming it uses all its returned IDC) provide for about \$29,600 in reinvestment and ODASES startup and about \$22,200 in replacement startup. A Reinvestment faculty candidate asking for \$200,000 in startup would require a research-funding base of about \$675,680 at the TAMURF.

By securing research funding, faculty in the College provide funds that invest in our future. Yes, there are other funding sources that can help with startup, including: salary savings, donated gifts, and industry matching. Recently, ATMO supported its startup needs with faculty who buy out their teaching time.

Needless to say, reinvestment hires can be a blessing and a curse. It is not easy to hire top faculty with limited resources. Moreover, it is incumbent for every one of us to find creative solutions for this problem. This unprecedented hiring is an opportunity for us that is unlikely to be repeated in many decades.

## Technology and Communications Update

*O&M 112 Technology Upgrade Underway* - Information letter #1 described a plan to upgrade instructional tools in O&M 112 that will offer a completely overhauled classroom presentation system. Amenities will include a projection system, second computer, document camera, podium, sound system, DVD/VHS video system, enhanced support by Instructional Media Services, and a basic video conferencing system for lectures. We are pleased to announce that construction began on 13 July as planned, and will be completed by Tuesday 22 August. Faculty members teaching in O&M 112 are encouraged to attend a short training session offered the week of 21 August. Reserve a seat today by sending an email request to Jim Rosser (jrosser@tamu.edu).

*College Web Site Update* – The new Geography web pages were made public today. They look gorgeous, please, take a look. Progress has been steady on the Geosciences, Geology and Geophysics, and Oceanography web sites. Over the last 45 days, we have improved the look, navigation, regulatory compliance, web search engine rankings, and overall usability. In an effort to improve usability, we remodeled the entry page to highlight links to department websites. Additionally, web pages have been modified for functional printing. From now on, pages will print neatly with logical organization. Most of our development effort has been applied to the Geosciences page, and once tested, will be applied to all college web sites. Currently, the Geosciences web site is 99% complete, the Geology and Geophysics site is 25% complete, and the Oceanography site is 14% complete. For details, visit <http://geosciences.tamu.edu/it/wip.html> and click on the “Overview,” “G&G” or “Oceanography” tabs. At the same time, GERG, IODP, and Sea Grant have updated their web sites to be more consistent with the look of the other web sites in the College of Geosciences.

*Portraits To Be Taken of All Faculty, Staff, and Graduate Students* - In order to add consistency to official College portraits, we will be holding photography sessions 12-14 September for all College faculty, and graduate students from departments and units. Location and scheduling will be established and disseminated throughout the College. Photographs are a necessary item for the web, media services, and publications.

## **O&M Facilities Renovations and Maintenance**

A number of building renovations are under way or have recently been completed in the O&M Building, home to ATMO, GEOG, and OCNG. Maureen Reap, College of Geosciences Facilities Coordinator reports:

*O&M Building façade waterproofing* - This process involves inspection of every joint and limestone block; excavation and replacement of old grout; and power washing of 115,000 square feet (10,726 m<sup>2</sup>) of stone façade, followed by applying of a sealant. The detergent and sealant applied to the building are not hazardous to humans nor to cars parked below. TAMU Physical Plant is funding this project as a part of deferred maintenance with an end date of January 2007.

*O&M Building stairwell upgrade* – The stairways from the ground floor to floor 3 have been repainted. TAMU Physical Plant, which funded this project as part of deferred maintenance, reports that this task project has been completed.

*O&M Building ground floor upgrade* - Refurbishment of the non-stone portions of the ground floor has been completed, some wallpaper will be replaced, and other areas repainted in the near future. TAMU Physical Plant is funding this project as part of deferred maintenance.

*O&M Building ground floor improvement* – Planned is the cleaning of the travertine; re-staining of the oak doors and transoms; new floor mats, inside and out; and jardinières with live plants. A work order was recently submitted for automatic door locks and card-swipe entries. The College of Geosciences is funding this project with an anticipated completion date of 1 November.

*O&M Building lab and office renovations* – This renovations are aimed at incoming Reinvestment faculty, students and staff on the fourth floor (OCNG) and either the seventh or eighth floor (GEOG), pending the advice of Physical Plant architects. TAMU is funding these renovations from Reinvestment Faculty funds, approved by CBE, and work orders have been submitted.

*O&M Dean's Office Renovations* - The floor plans for the renovation of the Dean's Office area has been finalized, but the project will only proceed when private funding has been secured to cover costs. The TTVN facilities in O&M 205 will continue to serve the College and accommodate all classes throughout the fall semester as scheduled. Enhanced TTVN service will be installed in O&M 206 as part of the Dean's Office renovation during the end-of-year holiday break.

## **Halbouty facilities upgrades and financing**

A number of building renovations are also under way or have recently been completed in the Halbouty Building, home to GEPL. Dr. Chris Mathewson, Halbouty Proctor, reports:

*Repairs of leaking hot water pipes* – Line repairs for the heating/cooling system over the microprobe, mass-spec laboratory and the Halbouty Library are scheduled to take place this month. TAMU Physical Plant is funding this project as part of deferred maintenance and GEPL is also providing some funds. The project is anticipated to be completed by the end date of this month.

*Cleaning of the mold infestation* – Mitigation in the main lobby of the Halbouty Building near the main office and rooms 102-103 was started on 5 July and completed on 7 July. Licensed mold consultants from the TAMU Environmental Health and Safety Department inspected the remediation work on 10 July. Their visual inspection identified a small area that required coverage with a mold resistant sealant. Air quality samples collected from within the containment areas indicated that all samples met or air quality standards for a remediation project, and the remediation was completed and declared a success on 11 July 2006. TAMU Physical Plant funded this project as part of deferred maintenance.

*Structural failure in the Halbouty Building* – A significant building subsidence occurred on the floors below the GEOL 101 laboratories. Repairs to these laboratory rooms will require complete removal of the old (1932) floating concrete slab-on-grade floor and the installation of a new slab-on-grade foundation, tied to the structure of the Halbouty Geosciences Building. The cause of the floor failure will have to be determined before any reconstruction activities can begin. TAMU Physical Plant will fund this project as part of deferred maintenance. No dates have yet been set.

*Radiogenic Isotope Laboratory* - Architectural and engineering designs for the Radiogenic Isotope laboratory on the third floor are progressing. The 60% cost estimate was above the authorized \$2 million limit, as set by the Texas Legislature. To respond to this information the project has been divided into three sections to allow the University to continue with construction of the main laboratory should the final construction bids come in over the authorized limit. TAMU, the College of Geosciences, GEPL, OCNG and private donations will fund this project and the anticipated completion date is April 2007.

*Classroom and office renovations* - Student worker crews are replacing the ceiling tiles, painting and preparing the third floor east wing to house two class rooms (temporarily scheduled for GEOL 101 labs), a graduate student office, offices for Drs Will Lamb and Franco Marcoantonio, Dr. Lamb's research laboratory, and the research microscope laboratory. The College of Geosciences and GEPL are funding this project with an anticipated completion date at the end of this month.

### **TAMU-Galveston Science Building**

The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents has approved funds to build a new science building on Pelican Island on the TAMUG campus. Planning is underway, and a Galveston Science Building Committee has been constituted to address design and construction issues. The committee will be chaired by Dr. Bill Seitz, and will include Dr. Rainer Amon, Dr. Jaime Alvarado-Bremer, Donna Lang, Dr. Jim McCloy, Mr. Brad McGonagle, Mr. Bill Neal, Dr. Jay Rooker, and Dr. Gil Rowe from TAMUG, Dr. Wes Tunnel from TAMUCC, and Dr. Luis Cifuentes from the College of Geosciences. The first meeting of the committee is scheduled in September.

I have asked Dr. Cifuentes to provide me with monthly reports, which I will pass along to you via information letters. It is the intention of TAMUG to designate a portion of this building for inter-campus research and teaching with OCNG and the College of Geosciences. The College has not previously had such access to office, laboratory, and meeting space in Galveston, and the hope is that the provided space in the future TAMUG Science Building will foster and enhance research collaboration. Please contact Dr. Cifuentes for ideas and suggestions.

### **Salary Raises**

All faculty salary raises are merit raises. A 3% merit pool was approved for FY07. Ten percent of the faculty merit pool was designated for faculty equity adjustments (0.3%) in the College of Geosciences, leaving 2.7% as the faculty merit pool.

### **University Studies Degree**

A new University Studies Degree has been proposed with the full support of President Robert Gates. The proposed degree originated in the recommendation by the Undergraduate Program Task Force Committee, chaired by Dr. Jerry Strawser. To quote from the report, this degree will provide "a reasonable course of study and a greater degree of options for students who are in good academic standing at TAMU ... also students who qualified for admissions based on normal university standards but are not able to pursue their desired course of study."

Each College can decide whether a BA or BS degree should be made available. The University Studies Degree requires a "Super Minor" (21-24 SCHs) in an area of concentration, two minors, and free electives for a total of at least 120 SCHs. The University Studies Degree will be discussed in the Faculty Senate during the fall and each department head will bring this up with their respective Curriculum Committees for them to define an appropriate set of courses for

the “Super Minor” in each department. This plan is strongly backed by President Gates and may provide a real opportunity for the departments in the College of Geosciences, especially OCNG, which does not offer an undergraduate degree.

### **Comment/Correction on Information Letter #3**

In Information Letter #3, I reported on how teaching impacts the “net income for the University General Fund.” Although the numbers and calculations are correct as reported, the health insurance for graduate students is actually paid for by the State of Texas and does not directly impact the University General Fund.