

Information Letter #21

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

FROM: Björn Kjerfve, Dean
College of Geosciences

DATE: 3 March 2009

Morse And Orville Elected AGU Fellows

I would like to congratulate John Morse, professor of Oceanography, and Richard Orville, professor of Atmospheric Sciences, on their election as Fellows of the American Geophysical Union (AGU). This is a great honor and accomplishment. The title of "Fellow" is given to only one in every thousand AGU members annually and is reserved for those who have "attained acknowledged eminence in the geophysical sciences." John and Dick will be honored this May at the AGU Joint Assembly in Toronto.

Liu Wins ASPRS President's Award for Practical Papers

Hongxing Liu, associate professor of Geography, has won the 2009 John I. Davidson President's Award for Practical Papers from the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS). Hongxing's paper titled "Incorporation of Flow Stripes as Constraints for Calibrating Ice Surface Velocity Measurements from Interferometric SAR Data" was published in the December 2008 issue of the society's journal *Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing*.

Bill Bryant to Present Distinguished Lecture

On April 14, Oceanography Professor Bill Bryant will present a lecture titled "In Search of the Sea Floor" for the 2008-2009 Texas A&M University Distinguished Lecture Series. Established in 1998, this annual series features lectures by renowned individuals from outside the University and also accomplished members of the Texas A&M faculty. The lecturers are selected by a committee of faculty members from each college, the George Bush School of Government and Public Service, and the General Libraries, as well as representatives from Student Government, the Graduate Student Council, the Distinguished Professors, the Council of Principal Investigators, and the Texas A&M Press. The lectures are held at the Annenberg Presidential Conference Center, and admission is by ticket only. Free tickets are available from the MSC Box Office. The College will host a dinner in Bill's honor before the lecture.

Zhang Wins Bush Excellence Award for International Research

Renyi Zhang, professor of Atmospheric Sciences and Chemistry and director of the Center for Atmospheric Chemistry and Environment (CASE), received the 2009 Bush Excellence Award for Faculty in International Research from Texas A&M. This award is presented to one faculty member each year by the Office of International Programs in recognition of the international nature and preeminence of the faculty member's research.

Cifuentes Returns

I would like to welcome Luis Cifuentes, Interim Vice Provost, back to the College. Luis will return as Executive Associate Dean effective 15 March 2009. I would also like to thank John Nielsen-Gammon, Professor of Meteorology and Texas State Climatologist, who has served as Acting Executive Associate Dean and Dean for Research since 1 September 2008. John has done an outstanding job in the few months that he has served in this capacity.

Luis has served as Interim Vice Provost for the past 20 months during a period of transition at the University. He served with Interim Provost and Executive Vice President Jerry Strawser, and according to Provost Jeffrey S. Vitter, he was an important asset to Vitter in his transition to Texas A&M University. Prior to accepting the Interim Vice Provost appointment, Luis, who is a Professor of Oceanography, served one year as interim and three years as Executive Associate Dean of Geosciences.

College of Geosciences IT Vision

Since the early 80s, departmental information technology (IT) support at TAMU has evolved as a grassroots initiative in response to demand for services. Over time, IT positions were carved out and often filled by tech savvy early adopters including faculty. This worked relatively well in the 1980's and 1990's when the computer footprint was small, but today's IT systems demand much more. Now, it is virtually impossible for one or two people to sustain proficiency in all IT disciplines and maintain software applications and hardware.

The College is aggressively addressing these issues to improve IT service performance and reliability. The IT vision for the College of Geosciences is simply assured access – assured access to people, places, things, and data. Assured access means that IT services are secure and always available anywhere, at any time, and under any circumstance. Assured access to people means that users have the ability to communicate with colleagues and students via near-real-time collaboration services. Assured access to places gives users the capability to connect with anyone at any location throughout the world via high speed networks, whether ashore or afloat. Assured access to things is the ability to access printers, scanners, copiers, cameras, computers, and assured access to data is the ability to access and share data and information.

Collectively, the College IT team is striving to achieve this vision by focusing on fundamental principles:

- Enable education and research by aligning IT priorities with overall College priorities;
- Minimize computer baseline complexity and consolidate common IT services to maximize value and performance, minimize cost, and achieve higher service availability;
- Adhere to strict configuration and *change management* principles;
- Work together as a cohesive IT team to leverage expertise, achieve goals, and remain focused on customers' needs;
- Protect IT resources and data;
- Ensure IT team members have the tools and resources to do their jobs and are well trained to accomplish their tasks successfully, and
- Centralize management, but decentralize execution.

Achieving this vision with current IT staff requires focused work, dedication and effort. During summer 2007, one IT organization was created with new positions designed to support the entire College, and all IT personnel transferred to this organization. Each team member is graded on customer service, performance, output, and, most importantly, teamwork. This team provides support and resources and works to support customers across all departments.

In March 2008, the IT team introduced the College of Geosciences' new ticketing system, the Web Help Desk. This service enables customers to submit and view their help desk tickets and permits analysis of trends and performance metrics and average response time.

In late December 2008, work on phase I of the College's new 1,000 ft² data center was completed. This important initiative is already enabling the College to host PI research clusters and common IT services in a protected space with copious amounts of power, air conditioning, network connectivity and environmental monitoring capability. When completely filled, our data center will host 20 server racks. We expect to realize energy savings by relocating heat generating clusters from warm office spaces which are overloading building air handlers.

In January 2009, IT began rolling out three new College GeoNET services: (1) email, calendar, address book, and task tracking, which can be accessed via the GeoNET Communications Web Portal computer software (e.g., Thunderbird, Outlook, Apple Mail), and push services for mobile devices (iPhone, Blackberry Windows Mobile); (2) shared and personal folders on centralized storage with daily backup; and (3) computer authentication. These services will be

available to customers as users are migrated from department-provided common IT services to the College services. This migration will occur over the next 18 months in sequence: Dean's Office; OCNG; GEOG; GEPL; ATMO. Users will have the option of using two email addresses: @tamu.edu or @department.tamu.edu. To the extent possible, departmental IT services will be decommissioned and shut down to reduce baseline complexity and overhead cost, also freeing up administrator time for department and College projects.

Classroom upgrades are ongoing. In early summer 2008, four faculty members volunteered to help re-design instructional technology in the College's TTVN room. Completed in August 2008, phase I significantly enhanced equipment reliability and reduced faculty frustration. Phase II, largely funded by a CIT grant received in December, will upgrade the video conferencing suite and audio system to better support Centra web collaboration and TTVN functionality.

In the next 18 months, the IT team will focus on accomplishing the following goals:

- Migrating users to GeoNET services and shutting down department servers;
- Developing a disaster recovery and business continuity plan for the entire College;
- Fixing potential security holes and establishing policy regarding risk management decisions;
- Building solid configuration control and *changing management processes* for IT service management;
- Establishing a monthly IT Advisory Information Meeting, where two non-IT representatives from each department and institute can participate.

College Data Center Begins Operations

With completion of the new College Data Center, the College can now offer a sufficiently cool, secure location with extensive power and high speed connections to host research clusters or other rack mounted servers. The College funded initial infrastructure costs, including chiller, power modifications and UPS capability. However, to offset rack installation and recurring operating costs such as data center management and mechanical maintenance fees, the College must pass on some of these costs to users.

Each department is invited to occupy one rack space in the data center at no charge, including up to 12 free gigabit drops. However, fees will be charged for additional racks: (1) an initial installation fee of \$7,540, and (2) an annual maintenance fee of \$1,724. The installation fee includes labor and material to connect two rack power feeds and shared cost for six remote cooling units (RC units). The annual maintenance fee helps fund data center management and monitoring plus UPS battery replacement after four years and repairs to the data center remote cooling unit fans ~10 years. The initial fee is due upon rack installation, and the annual maintenance fee is due each September. The College Finance Office will invoice the departments and PIs. These fees are subject to change following an annual review of equipment prices and labor rates.

Development Update

The Texas A&M Foundation's total assets experienced a significant decrease in the last quarter of 2008. Foundation total assets were \$1.38 Billion on 30 June 2008, the end of the 2007-08 fiscal year. By 31 December, assets had dropped to \$1.12 Billion, with significant depreciation in the long term investment portfolio. This depreciation, totaling 23%, impacts endowment funds in the College of Geosciences as well as endowments for other colleges. The actual decline of the College of Geosciences endowment was 24% because of the timing of deposits and receipt of donations.

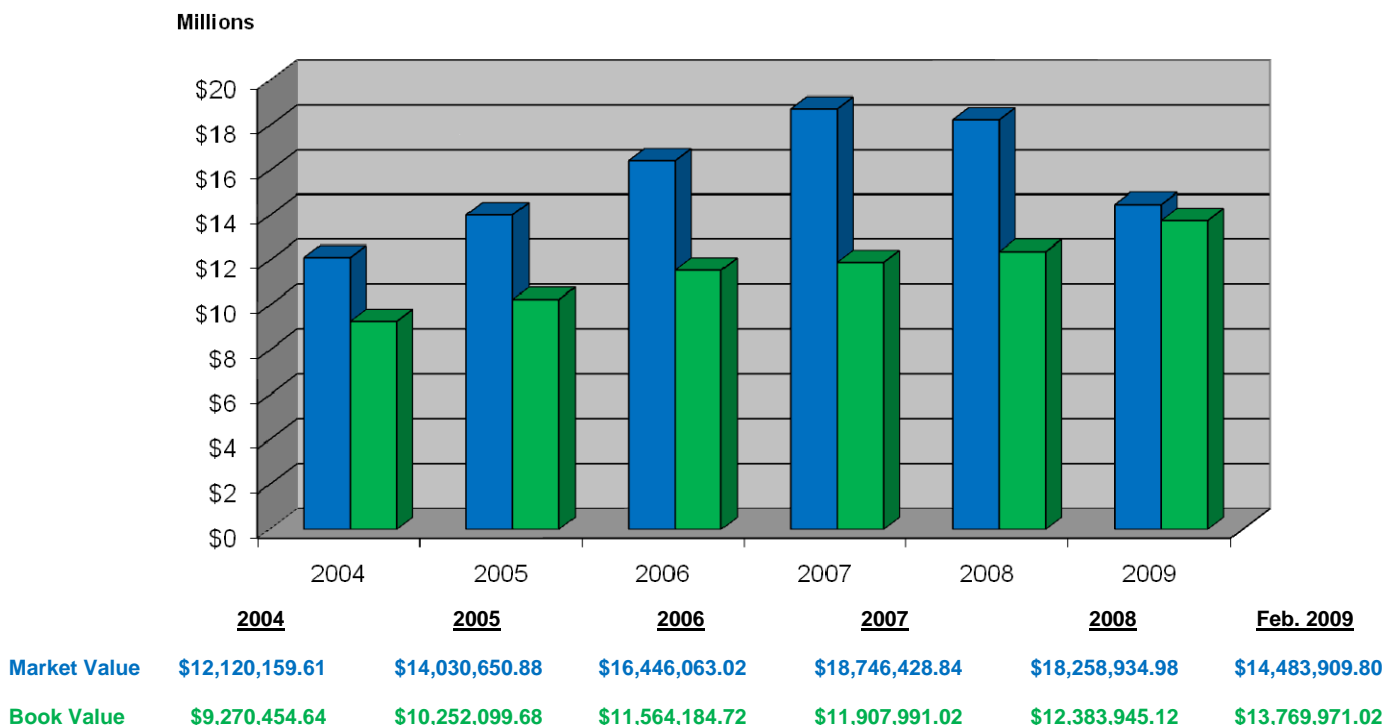
The overall effect of the long term investment strategy can be seen by comparing the endowment's Market Value with its Book Value. In general terms, the Market Value is the current worth of the endowment in today's market, and the Book Value represents the worth of the endowment at the time funds were received from donors and "booked" in by the College. In fiscal years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, the Market Value was greater than the Book Value by 58% and 47%, respectively. The table below shows the Annual Endowment Report for these two fiscal years.

College of Geosciences Annual Endowment Report*

	<u>FY 2006-2007</u>	<u>FY 2007-2008</u>
Beginning Market Value	\$16,690,798.00	\$18,746,428.00
Contributions & Miscellaneous	\$168,867.00	\$475,954.00
Apprec (Deprec)	\$1,886,763.00	(\$963,448.00)
Ending Market Value	\$18,746,428.00	\$18,258,934.00
Book Value	\$11,907,991.00	\$12,383,945.00

*This information is developed from internal accounting and is not an audited statement.

The sharp market decline this past fall produced a subsequent 24% decrease in the Market Value of the College endowment, dropping from ~\$18,259,000 on 1 July 2008 to \$13,890,000 on 31 December 2008. The following graph shows the Market Value and Book Value of the total endowment for the years 2004 through 2009.



During 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 fiscal years, many generous contributions were made to our College and its departments including:

- The \$2 M contribution of Mr. R. Ken Williams '45 for the Radiogenic Isotope Geosciences Lab. Mr. Williams has also pledged to rebuild a \$500K endowment used to purchase lab equipment, and this replenished endowment will provide direct support for the laboratory.
- A \$1M Endowed Chair in the College from Mrs. Elizabeth Whatley, paid in full on 20 February 2009. Mrs. Whatley is the wife of the late James R. Whatley '47, whose degree is in business but who maintained a lifelong association and friendship with Michel T. Halbouty and was a longstanding member of the College of Geosciences development council. Whatley specified the creation of this chair in his will.
- The \$1 M William R. Bryant Chair in OCNG created by 23 of Bill's friends and former students and being fulfilled with gifts of cash over a five-year period beginning in 2007.
- Planned or estate gifts of an anonymous bequest for an endowed Professorship (\$250K) in the College; an IRA bequest from Terrance Pritchard '73 for an endowed Fellowship (\$250K) in GEPL; and a Trust bequest from Patricia and George Morgan '48 for an endowed Fellowship (\$250K) in GEPL.
- Endowed gifts funded with cash including Thomas E. Kelly '53 for an endowed Fellowship (\$250K) in Petroleum Geosciences; Dusty Marshall '75 for an endowed Fellowship (\$125K) in GEPL; The Ralph Rayburn '69 Texas Sea Grant Scholarship in OCNG; and the Mike Frossard '80 endowed Fellowship in honor of Dr. Tieh in GEPL.

College of Geosciences Relay for Life Team

The Aggie Relay for Life, which benefits the American Cancer Society, will take place on 3-4 April 2009 at Anderson Track and Field. College faculty, staff and students are invited to join the College of Geosciences Relay for Life team. Team members are required to personally donate/raise \$100 or participate in team fund raising activities. Anyone interested in joining the team or needing additional information should contact Debz DeFreitas at GERG (phone: 862-2323 ext. 125; e-mail: debz@gerg.tamu.edu). Those unable to join the team this year are still invited to participate. Donations to the American Cancer Society can be made through the Geosciences team on the Aggie Relay web site at <http://aggierelay.tamu.edu/>. Click on donate, and then search for the "College of Geosciences" team. Donations can be made in honor of the entire team or any team member.

College Communications Update

In the past year, the College has included social media in its communication mix. We now have audio and video podcasts posted on the [University's iTunesU](#) site, videos posted to our [YouTube channel](#) named "Texas A&M Geosciences," and most recently, a [College Facebook page](#). The Facebook page features videos, photo albums, a wall and discussion board, an RSS news feed, and information on upcoming College events. Fans can make posts and upload photos and videos. A new video of Geography Assistant Professor Kathleen O'Reilly was just posted as well as an album of photos from Aggieland Saturday. The video was produced by the communications staff for the Geography Department website. Visit these sites and give Communications Coordinator Carol Trono your feedback.

Facilities Update

Halbouty

- Radiogenic Lab. Physical Plant has met with the PIs and contractors to review the proposed new exhaust system to replace rusting ductwork. Drawings are being drafted, and the vendor is finalizing details of the equipment proposal. CPVC duct work will be installed throughout the labs and connect to a scrubber in the vestibule/changing room. Scrubbed exhaust air will be discharged up to a trunk duct above the changing room.
- Roof. The roof is finished. A post-construction walkthrough is scheduled for Tuesday 3 March.
- Automated Door Locks. The electrical work for this project has begun and will require several more weeks. Instructions for using the new keyless entry system will be provided by GEPL when the installation nears completion.

O&M

- Renovation of Rooms 104, 105, 106 – Environmental Programs. Work on the new offices for Environmental Programs began on 2 March. Conference Room 109 will be updated at the same time. Due to the long delay in initiating this job, construction work will occur during class times. The contractor is aware of the problem this creates and is scheduling the work to minimize inconvenience to classes meeting in Rooms 103 and 110. The noisiest demolition will be done the week of spring break.
- Rooms 714-715 (Heath Mills). Physical Plant is planning for renovation to begin shortly, but has not provided a firm start date.
- 2nd Floor Teaching Lab. The architect has submitted final plans to Physical Plant, and the furniture vendor will submit a proposal for lab benches shortly. Physical Plant's business office is preparing contractor announcements.
- 4th Floor Lab Furniture Replacement. Work will begin on 2 March proceeding from Room 410 to 411, and then 408 and 406. Physical Plant expects the entire project to take one month. The contractor will work to limit the down-time for each lab. Special precautions will be in place to limit dust and debris being tracked to other parts of the building.