Information Letter #19

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: 5 December 2008

Department Operational Budgets for FY09

More than 95% of the budget that the College of Geosciences receives from the University General Fund (E&G Budget) is allocated for faculty and staff salaries and graduate assistant stipends. The total amount received for FY09 was $14.6M of which $600K supports Sea Grant. The Dean's Office allocates a portion of the remaining E & G Budget to the academic departments in the form of operational funds. This year, we were able to increase the operating budgets for the departments by $40K to $660K, a 6.5% increase.

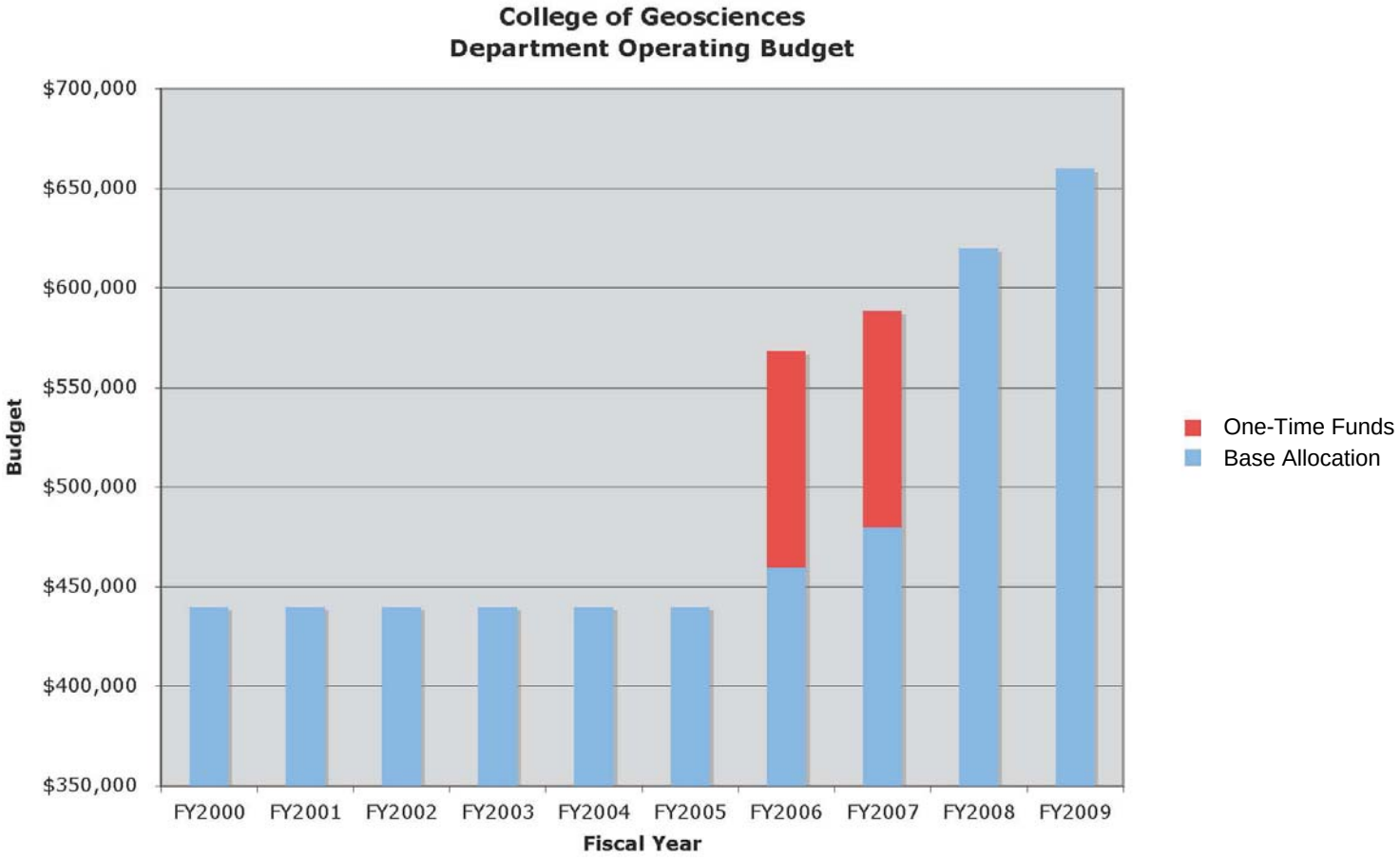
To make certain that operational funds are distributed fairly between the four academic departments, the College uses an allocation formula utilizing several objective metrics. Teaching and research metrics are weighted 40% each with 20% of the operational funds distributed based on the number of FTE faculty in the department. In assigning the 40% teaching weight, the College uses SCH's as an objective proxy to assess teaching production. Since the budget is allocated in the beginning of the fiscal year, SCH's are based on the previous academic year (FY2008). The proxy used to calculate the 40% research weight is equally based on the number of GAR's on extramural grants (average between snapshots in February 2008 and October 2008) and the amount of IDC returned to the College on grants and contracts during FY2008.

The allocation of operational funds to the academic departments for FY 2009 are shown in the spreadsheet below and a summary of departmental operational fund allocations during the past ten years is shown in the subsequent graph.

College of Geosciences Operational Budget Allocations for FY 2009
Total Budget FY09: $660,000

			Teaching:		Research:									
DEPT	FTE Faculty (1 Sep 08)	W (0.2)	Total SCH's (for FY08)	W (0.4)	Total IDC return (for FY08)	W (0.2)	GAR's * (Oct 08)	GAR's * (Feb 08)	W (0.2)	Σ W	Total OPS (for FY09)	OPS (FY 08)	Chg OPS (FY09-FY08)
ATMO	18	0.176	4,514	0.087	$ 413,896	0.422	33	36	0.448	0.244	**$ 161,172**	$ 168,697	$ (7,525)
GEOG	23	0.225	21,482	0.415	$ 112,107	0.114	11	17	0.182	0.270	**$ 178,343**	$ 156,867	$ 21,476
GEPL	31	0.304	16,814	0.325	$ 69,154	0.071	12	8	0.130	0.231	**$ 152,265**	$ 142,821	$ 9,444
OCNG	30	0.294	8,990	0.174	$ 385,196	0.393	16	21	0.240	0.255	**$ 168,220**	$ 151,615	$ 16,606
Total	102	1.000	51,800	1.000	$ 980,353	1.000	72	82	1.000	1.000	**$ 660,000**	$ 620,000	$ 40,000

Notes:
- Total IDC return reflects IDC return to College
- * GARS supported on extramural grants and contracts



College of Geosciences Research Plan

In conjunction with the Academic Master Plan development process instituted by the Provost, Jeffrey S. Vitter, the College of Geosciences undertook the development of its own research plan. This development concluded with the submission of the College Research Plan to the Provost on 1 December 2008. The plan identifies four notable areas of technological expertise within the College, five areas of research prominence, and four proposed new research initiatives for the next ten years. The focus of the plan is on cross-departmental activities. Research strengths and initiatives that are more disciplinary in character are the purview of departmental strategic plans.

The College Research Plan, http://geosciences.tamu.edu/paper/documents.html, is a result of broad participation across the College and was ably spearheaded by John Nielsen-Gammon. In September, faculty were invited to submit interdisciplinary research ideas which were presented and discussed in a College-wide meeting on 3 October. At that meeting, several ideas were consolidated and merged into five coherent initiatives. The initiatives were endorsed by the College Research Plan Oversight Committee, which included representatives of administrators, faculty, students, and student groups. Faculty were asked to describe the existing strengths of the College more fully, while those working on the new initiatives were asked to contribute College-specific plans. In the end, the College submitted plans for four new initiatives. These initiatives are (1) CHANGES 30/30: Changing Human and Natural GeoEarth Systems in the 30°N/30°S Tropics Belt; (2) Science Education; (3) The Health of the Human Environment (including the INFLUENCE project), and (4) The Energy-Water Challenge

Faculty members are now actively working on converting these and other ideas into university-wide White Papers for consideration as possible university signature research areas. Whether or not they are chosen, these ideas represent important collaborative opportunities within the College for addressing some of society's biggest challenges in the coming decades.

Undergraduate Student Diversity within the College/Departments

The following data represent undergraduate student enrollments for fall 2008, highlighting the diversity of the College of Geosciences.

Department	% First Generation Students	% Hispanic Students	% African-American Students
ATMO	35.9	13.1	1.0
CLGE (includes ENGS)	28.8	13.6	0.0
GEOG (includes ENST/SPSC)	31.0	7.0	1.9
GEPL	22.6	5.6	1.4
COLLEGE TOTAL	29.2	8.1	1.2

The Census Bureau recently reported that the U.S. minority population now exceeds 100 million with seventy-five percent of this country's expected population growth coming from immigrants and their children. Forty-eight percent of Texas residents are Hispanic and/or from underrepresented backgrounds. In order to mirror the population of Texas in the College of Geosciences and at Texas A&M University, increased efforts are being made to recruit and educate individuals from these sectors. As these population trends develop, colleges and universities that are unsuccessful at diversity recruiting will lose ground. Diversity recruiting and mainstream recruiting are merging. What used to be considered diversity recruiting is now becoming the norm.

The College of Geosciences has aligned itself with guidelines in Vision 2020 and set the goal of increasing diversity by targeting recruitment efforts towards Hispanic and African American students, female students, and students who are the first generation in their family to obtain a college degree. This fall, an Undergraduate Recruitment Advisory Committee (URAC) was established with a representative from each department and interdisciplinary program. The URAC will advise on, assist with, and advocate for programs and activities to improve overall recruitment at the College and efforts to recruit underrepresented students in particular. Committee members will help the recruitment program grow and improve awareness within the College of the importance of diversity and inclusion in recruiting, retention, and professional development. URAC is coordinated by Associate Dean for Academics Sarah Bednarz and Director of Recruitment Sonia Garcia. Members are Andrew Millington (ENST), Charles Lafon (GEOG), Mary Jo Richardson (OCNG), Ben Giese (OCNG), Will Sager (OCNG), Rick Giardino (GEPL), Bruce Herbert (GEPL), and Don Collins (ATMO).

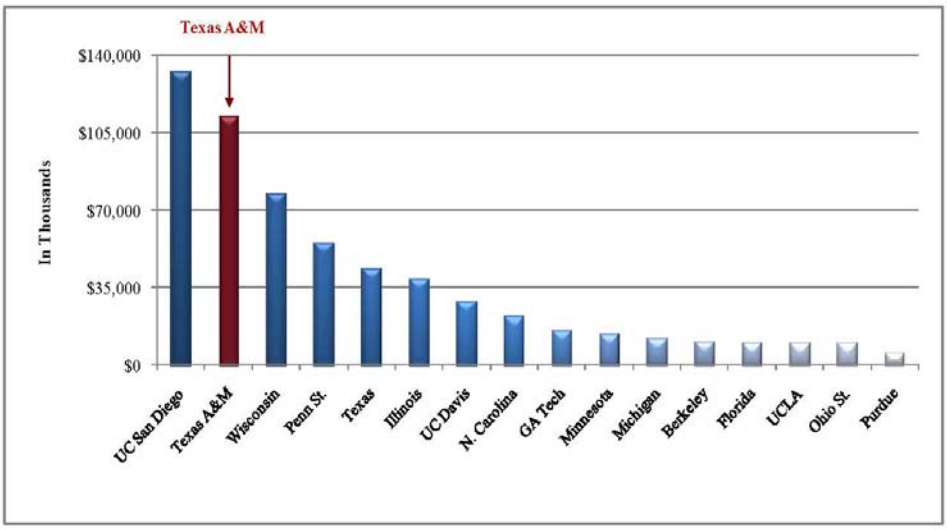
Since joining the College in August, Sonia Garcia has established relationships with the Texas A&M Prospective Student Centers around the state to identify academically competitive high schools with diverse student populations. She also is developing relationships with geosciences magnet schools and with community colleges such as Del Mar and Blinn in order to reach prospective transfer students from underrepresented groups. Other projects include developing marketing materials such as a scholarship brochure, a targeted recruitment brochure for high school students, and prospective student pages for the College website. She is coordinating efforts to reach prospective undergraduate students through an increased presence for the College of Geosciences in Aggieland Saturday activities next February.

Research Funding, FY 2007

NSF has reported that federally-funded research and development at universities declined in real dollar terms for the second straight year. Texas A&M University was an exception, however, with federally-funded research achieving its highest total ever at $228,363,000, an increase of more than $15M over the past two years. In overall research expenditures, Texas A&M falls just outside of the top 20 nationally, at $543,888,000. With respect to universities without a medical school, Texas A&M is third, behind MIT and UC Berkeley. The remaining research expenditures are expenses self-funded by the University (including cost-sharing and waived IDC), $146,757,000; state and local government sponsorship, $121,498,000; industry sponsorship, $36,465,000; and other sources, $10,805,000.

Texas A&M's Office of Institutional Studies and Planning has compared our research expenditures to those of our Vision 2020 Peer Universities during the past five years. Overall, our research expenditures are approximately 13% below our peers. This percentage is going down, but the total monetary gap is holding steady. We have a smaller percentage of federally- and industry-sponsored research, but a larger percentage of state and local government and self-funded research. In terms of research, the bright spots for A&M are engineering (third overall among our peers, at $164,434,000, behind only Georgia Tech and Penn State) and environmental sciences. As defined by the NSF, "environmental sciences" consists mostly of atmospheric sciences, earth sciences, and oceanography. Due in large measure to the International Ocean Drilling Program, Texas A&M's environmental sciences research expenditures rank second among our peers, behind only UC San Diego. Indeed, the International Ocean Drilling Program by itself would rank second or third.

Excluding IODP, the remainder of environmental sciences research expenditures would place Texas A&M University somewhere around sixth compared to our 15 peer institutions, which is still above the median.



Among all the 16 Vision 2020 institutions, Texas A&M ranked second in receiving 2007 R&D dollars in Environmental Sciences from all sources.

Geosciences Regents' Scholars

The Regents' Scholarship assists first generation college students in achieving their educational goals at Texas A&M University. To qualify for a Regents' Scholarship, students must be Texas residents who are the first in their immediate family to attend college. Family income guidelines must also be met, and neither parent can have a bachelor's degree. The College of Geosciences has seven Regents' Scholars this year, with five majoring in meteorology: Anna Jauregui from Plainview, Gabriel Marenco from Tomball, Justin Joplin from Granbury, Kaitlin Dorenkamp from Sealy, and Manuel Medina from Eagle Pass. Majoring in environmental geosciences is Jacquelyn Campbell from Seadrift, and majoring in environmental studies is Miguel Duque from Houston. As part of the requirements to receive the $20,000 four-year scholarship, regents' scholars must live on campus their first year and attend a freshman community to ensure smooth transition and retention. They must also complete 75% of their course work in one year in order to keep the scholarship. All of these students will have an opportunity to travel abroad during spring break, either through the Regents' Scholars mentoring program or with Aggie Access.

Tenure & Promotion Committee Changes

The College Tenure and Promotion Committee guidelines were recently revised, changing membership on the committee from four members to eight. Each department is represented by two members who will serve a two-year term. Members of the 2008 T&P Committee are Mary Jo Richardson and David Brooks (OCNG); Andrew Millington and Jonathan Smith (GEOG); Gerald North and Renyi Zhang (ATMO); and Anne Raymond and Rick Giardino (GEPL). In 2010, these members will rotate off. Since Andrew and Gerald served on the committee last year, they will serve a total of three years before rotating off.

Redistribution of Scientific Ocean Drilling Cores Complete

All cores recovered through scientific ocean drilling under the auspices of the Deep Sea Drilling Project (DSDP 1968-1983) and the Ocean Drilling Program (ODP 1983-2003) have been moved to the Gulf Coast Repository (GCR) here in College Station, the Bremen Core Repository (BCR) in Germany, and the Kochi Core Center (KCC) in Japan. These three permanent archive locations are also home to all cores taken by the Integrated Ocean Drilling Program (IODP 2003-present).

In a strategic move to realize efficiencies and save operations costs, IODP and the lead government funding agencies decided to redistribute the older collections of cores that were at two other U.S. repositories, the East Coast Repository (LDEO/Columbia) and West Coast Repository (Scripps IOC). These repositories officially closed their doors on 30

September 2008. Long-term savings to IODP from storing cores in this way will exceed $300,000 per year. The core redistribution took three years to complete.

With the start of IODP - and the associated expansion of the program's reach and global partnerships - program curators established a new alignment scheme for storing cores based on their geographic origin. Cores from the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans (north of the Bering Strait) are housed at the BCR. The GCR houses cores from the Pacific Ocean (Pacific plate east of western boundary), the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico, and the Southern Ocean (south of 60° except Kerguelen Plateau). The KCC houses cores from the Pacific Ocean (west of western boundary of Pacific plate), the Indian Ocean (north of 60°), all of Kerguelen Plateau, and the Bering Sea. Cores recovered during DSDP and ODP are now stored according to this same geographical distribution plan.

Distinguished Achievement Awards

The Association of Former Students' College Level Distinguished Achievement Awards program recognizes, encourages and rewards superior classroom teachers. Two awards are presented to faculty members in Geosciences each year, with each award being a $2,000 gift and a framed certificate. The nomination process is administered by the Geosciences Faculty Advisory Committee facilitated by Associate Dean for Academics Sarah Bednarz. Nominations for the college level AFS awards are due at the end of June. The 2008 AFS College Level Distinguished Achievement Awards for Teaching were presented to Dan Thornton (OCNG) and Ping Yang (ATMO) on 13 November at a reception at the Stark Galleries.

The Association of Former Students' University Level Distinguished Achievement Awards program was established and first presented in 1955. The awards honor faculty and staff members in the areas of teaching, research, student relations, graduate mentoring, extension/outreach/continuing education/professional development, administration, and staff support. Each award consists of a $4,000 gift, a framed certificate, and an engraved watch. This program is administered by the College of Geosciences Executive Committee with nomination packets due by January 30. The 2008 University Level Distinguished Achievement Award for Teaching was presented to Charles Lafon (GEOG) in April.

The College of Geosciences Dean's Distinguished Achievement Award program is administered by the Dean's office and recognizes faculty and staff for outstanding achievement. The 2008 winners announced 13 November were Mark Everett (GEPL) for outstanding Faculty Research; Courtney Schumacher (ATMO) for outstanding Faculty Teaching; Mark McCann (OCNG) and Clayton Powell (GEPL) for outstanding Technical Staff; and Sandra Dunham (GEPL) and Barbara Straube (ATMO) for outstanding Administrative Staff. Award recipients received a framed certificate and a financial reward.

GERG Initiates Formation of a College of Geosciences Relay for Life Team

Relay for Life is a fund raising event that benefits the American Cancer Society. Prior to the event, team members work together to raise money. The event itself takes place overnight to emphasize the fact that cancer never sleeps. GERG employees first participated in the Brazos Valley Relay for Life in 2000 and have fielded a team every year since that time. Many colleagues in the College of Geosciences have participated in their fund raisers. A few years ago, the students of Texas A&M University organized an Aggie Relay for Life. The students do an excellent job and have created a successful event every year. GERG has decided to participate in the Aggie event in 2009 and would like to invite interested individuals to join them to create the first College of Geosciences team. The Aggie Relay for Life will take place 3-4 April 2009, at Anderson Track and Field. Anyone interested in joining the team should contact Debz DeFreitas (phone: 862-2323 ext. 125; e-mail: debz@gerg.tamu.edu).

Texas Sea Grant Hires New Associate Director, Extension Leader

Logan Respess, a former Texas Sea Grant College Program marine agent with 10 years' experience in two coastal Texas counties, has been named Associate Director and Extension Program Leader for Texas Sea Grant. He will begin his new duties in mid-December. Logan has been an extension agent-horticulture with Texas AgriLife Extension Service for Travis County since August of this year. Previously, he was the natural resource agent in Aransas County, a dual position with Texas AgriLife Extension and Texas Sea Grant, for more than six years. He also served as the marine extension agent in Matagorda County for four years and has worked as a contract research diver for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and as a marine engineering technician and contract field biologist. He holds a bachelor of science degree in marine biology from Texas A&M University and a MS in educational technology from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Mills Awarded Big 12 Faculty Fellowship

Heath Mills (OCNG) has been awarded a 2009 Big 12 Faculty Fellowship to collaborate with Wayne Gardner at the UT Marine Science Institute and John Morse on two projects involving biogeochemical sampling of the Nueces River. Heath plans to combine geochemical analysis with molecular characterizations to determine fine scale resolution of sulfate and iron cycling in sediments. The second project will compare nitrogen cycling rates to specific functional groups. The Big 12 Faculty Fellowship Program was created by the provosts of the universities in the Big 12 Conference to enhance faculty collaboration among the schools and to stimulate cross institution scholarly activities. Fellowship funds are awarded to defray travel expenses. The Big 12 Fellowship Awards are funded by the Dean of Faculties Office, the College of Geosciences, and all four departments.

Heyman Elected to Board of Directors of GCFI

Will Heyman (GEOG) has been unanimously elected to serve a four-year term on the board of directors of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI). The institute was founded in 1947 to promote the exchange of information on the use and management of marine resources in the Gulf and Caribbean region.

Gardner Awarded Fulbright Scholarship

Wilf Gardner (OCNG) will complete a Fulbright Scholarship in Greece during spring semester 2009, studying the distribution of particulate organic carbon in the eastern Mediterranean Sea in collaboration with Aristomenis Karageorgis at the Hellenic Center for Marine Research near Athens. They have been working together since 1999 to develop, refine and apply algorithms to estimate the concentrations of particulate organic carbon concentrations in surface waters from satellite ocean color data. Aristomenis spent three months in OCNG at Texas A&M as a Fulbright Scholar in 2003.

Facilities Report

O&M

- Rooms 104-106 and 109 (Environmental Programs offices). Renovation is expected to begin shortly. A completion date has not been set, but it appears that ENST will be able to occupy this suite in January.
- 4th Floor Lab Cabinets (C14 Remediation). Cost and materials estimates for this job have been unavoidably delayed by the vendor but are expected shortly.
- Suite 702 (DiMarco). Walls are in place and are being taped and floated. The scheduled completion date for this renovation is 15 December.
- Labs 714 and 715 (Mills). This project is waiting for the furniture vendor (VWR) to schedule installations.
- Teaching Labs 207-209. Blueprints for this renovation are in the final stages of review with construction projected to begin in May 2009.

Halbouty

- Roof. This project is nearly completed. Physical Plant has several items to address to meet the manufacturer's warranty requirements. When resolved, a lightning arrest system will be installed. Warranty qualification and lightning rods should be completed in early December.
- Radiogenic Lab. Materials to repair the Radiogenic Lab's floor that was damaged by roof leaks during Hurricane Ike are on order.
- Automatic Door Locks. This job is in progress. Required materials are being purchased by Physical Plant and the contractor. There is no confirmed installation date as of yet.