Information Letter #11

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: 14 November 2007

New Logo Developed for the College

We are proud to introduce a new logo for the College of Geosciences. Designed by our web developer Jennifer Rumford, this logo has a modern look that reflects the global focus of the College and our position within Texas A&M University (see above). This logo should be used in all College publications and promotional items together with the TAMU logo (above right). Jennifer is developing letterhead and business card templates that incorporate both our logo and the new TAMU primary logo. Department heads will be notified when these templates are available for use. The Geosciences logo is available in several different formats – EPS, JPEG, and PNG. It should only be printed in Pantone blue 533, black, or in reverse. It should not be printed in any other color. For more information or to get copies of the logo contact Jennifer Rumford at jrumford@tamu.edu or Carol Trono, communications coordinator, at ctrono@tamu.edu.

Dr. Sarah Brooks Honored by President Bush for PECASE Award

Dr. Sarah Brooks, an assistant professor in Atmospheric Sciences, received a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) on November 1 at an awards ceremony in Washington, DC. The PECASE is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on outstanding scientists and engineers in the beginning their independent scientific careers. Selected for innovative research, PECASE nominees must show exceptional potential to shape the future through intellectual and inspired leadership. Their educational activities must reflect a spirit of community service and may include efforts to help their colleagues or the public understand the nature and implications of their scientific research. The White House, following recommendations from participating agencies, confers the awards annually. Dr. Brooks was nominated by the USDA in recognition of her work on assessing the impact of aerosols from agricultural sources on air quality and climate change.

Dr. Gerald North Receives the Jule G. Charney Award

Dr. Gerald North, Distinguished Professor in the Atmospheric Sciences, has been named the 2008 recipient of the American Meteorological Society's Jule G. Charney Award. This award is granted to individuals in recognition of highly significant research or development achievement in the atmospheric or hydrologic sciences. Dr. North is cited "for groundbreaking research on climate models, atmospheric statistics, and satellite mission development." Dr. North will receive the award at the American Meteorological Society Annual Meeting in January 2008 in New Orleans.

Dean's Distinguished Service Awards Presented

Congratulations to the following faculty and staff who received the Dean's Distinguished Service Award for 2007 at the College's annual Fall Meeting on 2 November. Recognized were Dr. David M. Cairns, Dr. Donald R. Collins, Dr. Matthew K. Howard, Mrs. Margaret "Peggy" Foster, Ms. Rhonda Simmons-Fulton, and Ms. Debra Stark. Dr. Cairns, associate professor in the Department of Geography, was recognized for Faculty Teaching. Dr. Collins, associate professor in the Department of Atmospheric Sciences, was recognized for Faculty Research, and Dr. Howard, associate research scientist

in the Department of Oceanography, was recognized for Research Scientist. Administrative Staff members recognized were Foster, assistant to the director of Texas Sea Grant; Simmons-Fulton, business associate III in the Dean's Office, and Stark, business associate II in the Department of Geology & Geophysics. Dr. Worth Nowlin was also recognized for being named distinguished professor emeritus in the Department of Oceanography. Dr. Nowlin has been on the faculty at Texas A&M since 1971. He could be considered a true Aggie having completed his B.A., M.S. and Ph.D. all at A&M.

Association of Former Students (AFS) College Level Teaching Awards Presented

Congratulations to Atmospheric Sciences assistant professor Dr. Craig Epifanio and Oceanography assistant professor Dr. Debbie Thomas on being named the 2007 AFS College Level Teaching Award recipients. Dr. Epifanio and Dr. Thomas were recognized at the College's annual Fall meeting on 2 November by Kelli Hutka '97, Director of Campus Programs for the Association of Former Students, who presented them with their awards.

Undergraduate and Graduate Student Coordinators for 2007-2008

Effective September 1, 2007, Dr. Ping Yang was appointed undergraduate program director and Dr. Ramalingam Saravanan was appointed graduate program director in the Department of Atmospheric Sciences. In the Department of Geography, Dr. David Cairns is graduate program director, and Dr. Robert Bednarz is acting undergraduate program director while Dr. Charles Lafon is on leave this semester. In the Oceanography Department, Dr. Shari Yvon-Lewis serves as department graduate advisor. For Geology & Geophysics, Dr. Bruce Herbert is assistant head and graduate program coordinator and Dr. David Sparks is graduate fellowship coordinator. Dr. Andrew Hajash is G&G undergraduate advisors committee chair and Dr. David Sparks is undergraduate curriculum committee chair

Facilities Report

These are exciting times with regard to College's facilities. All this infrastructure investment in Geosciences is good news. The bad news is that these activities cause dust, dirt, and inconvenience. We appreciate your patience. Below are specific projects and their status change since newsletter #10 (9/24/07).

- *Walkway between Halbouty buildings.* The walkway and awning were removed, but work slowed while changes were made to ensure the safety of the nearby cypress trees. Work should continue shortly.
- *Radiogenic laboratory (Halbouty 328-333).* Construction of the Radiogenic Lab has begun. Demolition caused a dust problem in adjoining rooms and halls and in the office below. During construction in 332, a conduit to Dr. Kronenberg's lab (Halbouty 334) was left open, resulting in the FTIR spectrometer being covered with dust but the extent of the damage is not yet known.
- *Perchloric hood installation in Halbouty 332 and asbestos alert.* During installation of the hood, workers penetrated asbestos-bearing transite located under the roof deck without the proper abatement. Halbouty's blueprints do not indicate that an asbestos product was used in construction of the roof. Austin Environmental was hired to test for asbestos in the work area and floor below. On 15 October they sampled air and debris in Halbouty 225, 226, 228, 332, and 334. They also collected air samples on 16-17 October. All tests for asbestos yielded levels in compliance with the Texas Health Department asbestos clean air standards. As a precaution, an asbestos abatement contractor decontaminated and cleaned Halbouty 332 on 17 October.
- *Halbouty 368A and 370 (Mike Tice's lab).* The chair of the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) (Doug Palmer) approved our request to revise the budget for the cold room (Halbouty 368A) to provide humidity control. Halbouty 370 is nearing completion. The estimate for installing a new gas line in the room has also been approved.
- *Locks for O&M building.* Automatic magnetic door locks now control the entrances. Card readers on two doors will permit after-hours access by authorized persons. TAMU ID cards are required to enter the building after hours. Keyed locks have been removed, and keys should be turned in to the departments that issued them. If your ID card does not work in the card reader, contact the administrative assistant in your department.
- *O&M 408/408A (Matthew Schmidt's lab).* Mold has been discovered in two walls of this recently renovated lab. Physical Plant will handle the abatement per state regulations. OCNG will decommission the adjacent cold room/freezer, which was the source of the problem.
- *O&M's particulate rain.* Particulates have rained down from the air conditioning vents in O&M for decades. This is particularly vexing in sensitive lab areas, such as O&M 410 and 411. A recent Physical Plant analysis has officially determined what the O&M residents have long suspected: the particles are mostly disintegrated insulation. Low levels of mold were also detected. Physical Plant is asking Maintenance to fund duct cleaning for the affected labs.
- *Renovation of O&M 707-711.* Work is nearing completion to convert the space on the 7th floor of O&M to GEOG offices and labs for GIS/remote sensing faculty.
- *Sea Grant offices at 727 Graham Road.* Plans to move Sea Grant into GERG West are on hold awaiting the results of lead testing. Sea Grant is negotiating an extension of its existing lease at 2700 Earl Rudder Freeway South.

- *O&M 12th floor.* Plans for renovation of the 12th floor offices (O&M 1209-1215) are being finalized by the contractor, the architect, and Physical Plant, and will be presented for review/approval by ATMO shortly. The projected construction start date is now mid-December, with completion expected by next April.

FY08 Departmental Operational Budgets

Approximately 95% of the budget the College of Geosciences receives from the University General Fund (E&G Budget) in September every year is locked up for faculty and staff salaries, including the merit increases for the year and any salary adjustments. The total amount received for FY08 was $14.1M. The Dean's Office allocates a portion of this budget to the academic departments in the form of operational funds. As we did get a budget increase, we were able to increase the operating budgets for the departments by $140K more than last year, for a total of $620K, a 24% increase.

To make certain that operational funds are distributed fairly and reasonably between the four academic departments, the College uses a 100% objective distribution formula, which was discussed and adopted by the College Executive Committee in 2005, and has remained the same since. After considerable scenario modeling, we decided to weigh teaching and research equally, 40% each, since each activity has an approximately equal impact on the College budget. Recognizing that departments with a larger faculty need more operational funds, 20% of the operational funds are 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 each year needs to be allocated in the beginning of the fiscal year, we calculated the SCH's based on the previous academic year. SCH's are a better teaching proxy then WSCH's (as shown in the Information Letter #3) and are more important for the allocation of the E&G budget to the Colleges as compared to the WSCH's. Moreover, departments already receive credit for graduate students taking highly-weighted courses in the allocation of GAT and GANT funds.

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 2006 and October 2006) and the amount of IDC generated on grants and contracts. These two measures are proxies, which fairly capture research excellence by the departments.

The allocation of bulk operational budgets to the academic departments for FY 2008, both recurring and one-time allocations, are shown in the two tables below along with all supporting numbers and assumptions.
The total Geosciences E&G budget for FY08 is $14.1M, of which $600K supports Sea Grant. As we did get a budget increase, we were able to increase the operating budgets for the departments by $140K more than last year, for a total of $620K, a 24% increase.

College of Geosciences Operational Budget Allocations for FY 2008

Total College of Geosciences operational budget FY 08: **$620,000**

DEPT	FTE Faculty (1 Sep 07)	W (0.2)	Teaching: Total SCH's (for FY07)	W (0.4)	Research: Total IDC (for FY06)	W (0.2)	GAR's * (1 Oct 07)	GAR's * (1 Feb 07)	W (0.2)	Σ W	Total OPS (for FY08)	OPS (FY 07)	Chg OPS (FY08-FY07)
ATMO	20	0.204	4,595	0.099	$588,551	0.465	35	38	0.493	0.272	**$168,697**	$126,397	$42,300
GEOG	21	0.214	19,085	0.412	$47,906	0.038	13	15	0.189	0.253	**$156,867**	$121,561	$35,306
GEPL	30	0.306	14,757	0.318	$144,508	0.114	7	7	0.095	0.230	**$142,821**	$110,449	$32,373
OCNG	27	0.276	7,900	0.170	$485,265	0.383	17	16	0.223	0.245	**$151,615**	$121,593	$30,021
Total	98	1.000	46,337	1.000	$1,266,230	1.000	72	76	1.000	1.000	**$620,000**	$480,000	$140,000

* on extramural grants and contracts

Calculation of Graduate Assistant Allocations for FY2008

	Courses	Sections	Students	Students/lab	Percent	Designated	Allocated	FY08	FY07	% Change
ATMO	8	28	653	23.3	0.093	$0	$100,048	$100,048	$98,556	1.51%
GEOG	11	63	1215	19.3	0.172	$15,000	$186,154	$201,154	$221,944	-9.37%
GEPL	21	208	3616	17.4	0.513	$0	$554,019	$554,019	$556,866	-0.51%
OCNG	2	74	1565	21.1	0.222	$0	$239,779	$239,779	$202,634	18.33%
CLGE(Reserve)						$5,000		$5,000	$20,000	-75.00%
	42	373	7049	18.9	1.000	$20,000	$1,080,000	$1,100,000	$1,100,000	0.00%

Notes:
- Total allocation to the College of Geosciences is $1,100,000 for FY 2008
- The ideal number of students per lab is no more than 20 and no less than 18
- Designated $'s are allocated as GANT support for large classes (more than 600 students/year) without labs, including: GEOG 202 (1971 students in 5-7 sections/semester); GEOG 301 (786 students in 2 sections/semester); and GEOG 305 (652 students in 2 sections/semester)
- Courses do not include 485's/489's

Graduate Program Enhancement Funding

The College of Geosciences has been allocated supplemental graduate program enhancement funds of $63,000 to be used for the following two initiatives:

- *Increase minimum GAT stipend rates.* Minimum stipend rates for all MS students in the College were set at $1,400/month (at 50% effort). The departments of Atmospheric Sciences and Oceanography already pay this amount. Salaries in the departments of Geography and Geology & Geophysics are being raised to this amount. The breakdown was $6,700 to Geography (to raise the stipends of 11 MS students) and $16,300 to Geology & Geophysics (to raise the stipends of 25 MS students).
- *Additional GAT assistantships.* The remaining $40,000 was allocated to the four departments in equal amounts ($10,000 each) for new assistantship funds or towards additional increases in stipends (especially at the doctoral level as needed).

Allocation of One-Time Grad Enhancement Funds for GATs - FY08 was:

	Increased stipend	**New GATs**	**Total**
ATMO		$10,000	$10,000
GEOG	$6,700	$10,000	$16,700
GEPL	$16,300	$10,000	$23,300
OCNG		$10,000	$10,000
Total			$63,000

Texas A&M University Campus Diversity Plan

As a major public institution of higher education, Texas A&M University has both an opportunity and a responsibility to create and maintain a climate that affirms diversity of persons as well as diversity of views. Among these characteristics are race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age, socioeconomic background, religion, sexual orientation, and disability. In August 2006 the University adopted an institutionalized strategic diversity plan. The Office of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity (VPAPD) facilitates, coordinates, and monitors the University and its many units as it develops strength in - and evidence of - respect for diversity. The University's core action areas in this plan are to:

- Improve the Campus Climate for all Faculty, Administrators, Staff, and Students;
- Expand and Improve Mentoring and Retention Programs for Faculty, Administrators, Staff, and Students;
- Expand Education on Obstacles and Advantages to Achieving and Valuing Diversity;
- Develop School and Community Partnerships;
- Recruit More Students from underrepresented groups, and
- Recruit More Faculty, Administrators and Staff from underrepresented groups.

The Campus Diversity Plan is being implemented in three phases.

- Phase 1 (2007-2008) establishes appropriate and specific evaluation metrics and communication processes. In addition, this phase will develop appropriate incentives for successes in current activities and for future phases.
- Phase 2 (2009) will focus on the continuation of Phase 1 successes and implementation of activities in all of the action areas.
- Phase 3 (2009-2010) of the plan will focus on a deeper reevaluation of the effectiveness of the Diversity Plan and either a reaffirmation of this plan or commitment to a revised plan.

To date, numerous units have been actively working to address recruitment and retention efforts for underrepresented groups. The three program areas of Phase 1 are to assess and respond to the current diversity climate at TAMU; educate staff on schemas that affect hiring, inclusion, and advancement; and internally benchmark and target diversity representation goals. The VPAPD will lead efforts to use information from Phase 1 (2007-2008) of this plan to develop appropriate tactics for Phase 2 (2008-2009). The effort will engage constituencies of the University for feedback and planning. The Phase 2 plan will be presented for approval by the President during the Fall of 2008.

Diversity within the College of Geosciences

The College of Geosciences is a multi-national college with 21 faculty members from ten different foreign countries. Increasing diversity among our faculty is progressing but at a rather slow pace, and we are still not where we would like to be or need to be. We have doubled the ranks of our female faculty members since the fall of 2002, and currently have 18 women faculty members or 17% of the total. Our current College faculty also include 12 Asian-American, 4 Hispanic, and 2 African-American. However, we will need to be much more proactive in identifying and recruiting qualified women, Hispanic and African-American candidates.

The diversity of our students has changed slightly in the past year, although percentage changes when applied to small numbers need to be treated carefully. We have increased our international students by 4%, our Asian students by 15%, and our African-American students by 17%, albeit representing an overall change of only 11 students.

The recent $600K grant received by Mary Jo Richardson, Ken Bowman, David Cairns, and Assistant Provost Joseph Pettibon from the NSF Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (S-STEM) program will help in minority student recruitment. The grant will provide two-year scholarship awards for at least twenty-six undergraduate students majoring in Geosciences. One emphasis of the project is increasing the ethnic diversity in the geosciences.

GEOCONNECTIONS to be Distributed Soon

The 2007 edition of Geoconnections is scheduled for delivery this week. Production of this year's College magazine is about four months behind due to personnel changes. Thank you for your patience. Each department will receive 150 copies of the magazine to distribute to faculty, staff and graduate students. Additional copies will be available in the Dean's office to be used for student recruitment, development, and College promotion efforts. Over 5700 copies will be mailed to former students of the College of Geosciences. Questions, comments, suggestions, and requests for additional copies should be directed to Carol Trono, editor, at ctrono@tamu.edu.

IODP Update

The *JOIDES Resolution* has been the workhorse of the Ocean Drilling Program and Integrated Ocean Drilling Program for the past 25 years. She is currently in the Jurong shipyard in Singapore being reconverted in a major way, expanding and improving most of her habitable space and laboratory facilities at a total cost allocated by the US Congress. Because of delays and budget challenges brought on by Hurricane Katrina and the escalating price of steel and petroleum, the SODV conversion project is taking longer and costing more than anticipated. The SODV conversion is now well on its way with the ship due to be ready in May 2008. Expeditions are already planned from the Bering Sea in the north to Wilkes Land in the south. IODP is entering into an exciting and challenging new phase of scientific discovery.

G&G Advisory Council Hosts Development Event

The Advisory Council for the Department of Geology & Geophysics hosted three hundred former students, faculty, and current students for the first Greater Houston Aggie Social, held at the Houston Petroleum Club on October 4th. The purpose of the event was to "reconnect" the Department of Geology & Geophysics with the Oil and Gas Industry. The event was sponsored by Mr. Dan A. Hughes '51 and Mr. Dan Allen Hughes '80.

Ron McWhorter of Devon Energy Corporation and Chairman of the Advisory Council was the emcee for the evening. Other keynote speakers were Interim Executive Vice President and Provost of Texas A&M Dr. Jerry Strawser, Dean Kjerfve, and Geology & Geophysics Department Head Dr. Kronenberg.

Inspiration for the event came out of a 3-day strategic planning workshop held last spring that brought together G&G faculty and advisory council members. The first product of these efforts was the department's Strategic Objective that was highlighted at the October 4th event: "Build a Geoscience community of students, staff, and faculty who excel through collaborative pursuits in teaching, research, and service."

Attendees at the Aggie Social included George Mitchell '40, developer of the Woodlands and member of the Board of Devon Energy Corporation, and David Eller '59, former chairman of the Texas A&M University Board of Regents and namesake of Eller O&M. Dan A. Hughes and Dan Allen Hughes, the evening's sponsors, were present and attracted a great number of former students, and classmates from the classes of '51 to '54. Industry executives from companies such as ExxonMobil, Schlumberger, ConocoPhilips, and Chevron were also in attendance.