

## Information Letter #8

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: 22 May 2007

The spring semester is now completed and Texas A&M University finds itself in the unusual position of a major leadership transition. Dr. Eddie J. Davis is doing an admirable job serving as Interim President and is spending much effort with the State Legislature as this important legislative session comes to a close. The outcome will define budget allocations to Texas A&M and other universities and colleges in the state for the next biennium. At the same time, David Prior, the Executive Vice President and Provost and also the former Dean of the College of Geosciences, has recently announced that he will leave the university and assume the position of Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Texas System in Austin on 14 June. Dr. Jerry Strawser, Dean of the Mays Business School, has been appointed as Interim Provost. Dr. William Perry, Vice Provost, will also leave the university in June to become President of Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois. Clearly, there are changes on the horizon with far-reaching effects for all colleges and departments.

### Promoted and Tenured Faculty

Five faculty members in the College of Geosciences were officially approved for tenure and/or promotion at the April meeting of the Board of Regents, effective 1 September 2007. We congratulate:

- Sarah Bednarz promoted to Professor in Geography
- Lee Panetta promoted to Professor in Atmospheric Sciences
- Hongbin Zhan promoted to Professor in Geology and Geophysics
- Andrew Dessler promoted to Professor with tenure in Atmospheric Sciences
- Charles Lafon promoted to Associate Professor with tenure

### New Web Content Management System in College of Geosciences

A little over a year ago, we embarked on a quest to build an attractive, interactive college web service that aids in student recruiting, serves the university and broader community, generates participation by former students, increases collaboration, and highlights outstanding accomplishments. Not only did we adopt and build upon TAMU's new web template, we added an intuitive navigation structure, access to more information, and geosciences-related news feeds, calendar events and vivid pictures. Although our effort has led to the successful redesign of over 2,000 individual web pages, we are far from finished. In fact, several hundred old pages remain in queue for revalidation and reformatting, including faculty profiles, which desperately need updating. Some 3,000 man-hours of work remain until completion.

Web development is very much an iterative process where design, technology and content management are always evolving. The problem of managing content can easily become overwhelming, especially when coordinating several sites. So, how do we successfully tackle a large mountain of content while satisfying incredibly high customer demand for growth with only one communications specialist and a few student workers? We believe the answer lies, in part, in a web-based tool designed to ease the tasks associated with creating and publishing web content: the content management system ([CMS](#)).

In January, our communications team, led by Jay Slovacek, began the gargantuan task of designing a new college web service construct based on [Joomla](#), a widely adopted open source content management system. The idea behind using a CMS is to speed up web content delivery and freshness by reapportioning a bulk of the site's content management to content owners/subject matter experts, such as faculty and staff. This concept is typically called "Web 2.0" and it is what drives much of the Internet.

By placing easy-to-use web tools in the hands of our customers and establishing a solid workflow process, individual faculty members, staff members and graduate students can change information that relates to them. In turn, this information will "feed" the rest of the website. In the very near future, creating and publishing news articles with pictures and updating calendar events will be easier than getting dressed in the morning; no knowledge of html or any other geeky code is required. Creating a new item will be like writing an email. Type the content, give it a title, add some images – and you are done! By adopting the use of a CMS, we will reduce publishing delays traditionally experienced when web content flows through individual communications office personnel for html formatting, review and web posting. However, professional web sites and content management systems are not created overnight with the wave of a magic wand.

The college communications team, which is conducting methodical planning, designing, developing and testing to ensure CMS releases are successful, has broken this enormous task into three logical milestones: Revision A focused on converting all our old content into the new CMS and was completed on 21 April; Revision B will utilize built-in advantages of sort, search, calendars, etc. and is planned for release in June; and Revision C will introduce custom-made applications that will serve the departments and college. Ultimately, the goal of this project is to bring the usefulness of the web to the individual faculty or staff member. End users will be able to add calendar events, update their CV, add photos/videos and make announcements. Advanced users will have the option to create blogs, photo galleries, podcasts and many more Web 2.0-style features. Across the campus, our CMS effort is by far one of the most ambitious web development projects to date. And your college is leading the way for inevitable campus-wide CMS migration.

### **Changes in TAMRF Research Administration Policy**

During the past year the Research Foundation (TAMRF) met with representatives within the Texas A&M University System to study several issues related to the cost of research services provided by TAMRF. Members of the cost committee represented Texas A&M University (TAMU), including TAMUG, Texas Agriculture Experiment Station, Texas Transportation Institute, The Texas A&M University System Health Science Center, and The System Administrative and General Offices (SAGO). Although the recommendations from the committee were not unanimous, they did reflect the majority of the committee on the various issues.

One objective of the committee was to recommend changes to assure that each System member was treated equitably and that amounts charged to System Members were more closely aligned with actual services provided by the TAMRF. Prior to 1 March 2007, TAMRF retained a portion of the indirect cost (IDC) earnings to fund its administrative costs. Indirect cost earnings were split with 71% distributed to the System Member, 28% retained by TAMRF to cover operating costs, and 1% set aside for research enhancement programs.

A fee for service cost model has now been developed and implemented by TAMRF that is based on core services and volume of activity handled for each System Member. The methodology was approved by the TAMRF Board of Trustees in December 2006. In February 2007, the review committee approved effective rates, which is 6.47% for TAMU, for FY07 to be applied to total direct costs. An additional 1.5% will be charged for services previously provided as part of the TAMRF fee but now shifted to TAMU, including public relations in Washington, DC, security clearances, and research enhancement programs.

The new rate structure became effective 1 March 2007. At the same time, with the transfer of the TAMU Sponsored Contract Office to the Office of the Vice President for Research, and the recent hiring of Charlene Miller, formerly of TAMRF, the new Office of University Research Services (OURS) will soon provide identical services to TAMRF, but at only a 3.5% charge. Depending on the IDC charged to a project, the decision to use TAMRF or OURS will have significant financial implications for the PI, the Department, and the College. For example, consider a contract with \$100,000 in total direct expenditures but with two IDC scenarios: (i) 45.5% IDC rate, and (ii) 0% IDC rate. The table below shows these calculations. The bottom line message is that submitting a proposal through TAMRF costs more than through OURS.

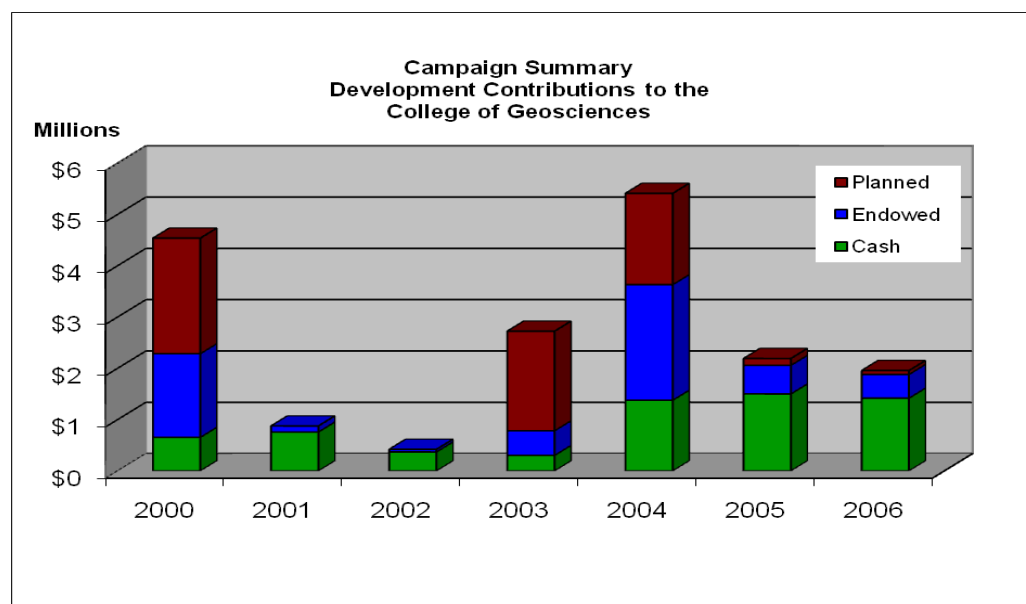
As stated earlier, the 6.47% will be charged on total direct costs (TDC), not modified total direct costs (MTDC). Although the 6.47% was arrived at by TAMRF by estimating a 2% on equipment, fellowships, and tuition, and a higher rate on salaries, wages, operating expenses, the charge on all direct costs will have a major impact on projects, where total direct cost is vastly different from MTDC (e.g. those that contain major subcontracts, capital equipment, tuition, and

fellowships will be charged the 6.47% administrative fee, but generate IDC only on the MTDC portion of the proposal) or where the IDC rate charged is significantly less than 45.5%. For example, consider a \$100,000 contract with a Texas State agency which only pays a 15% IDC rate. Assume MDTC are \$40,000. This project would generate \$6,000 in IDC, but would still be charged \$7,970 in administrative fees. In other words, the College would lose money to TAMRF on this project, but not so if it were submitted through OURS. Needless to say, we will review all requests for reduced IDC on projects and will only consider approval in exceptional cases. Moreover, with the help and input of faculty, research professors/scientists, and department heads, we will develop a College policy for research project administration with flexibility to PIs and quality services, but which at the same time ensures maximum IDC return to the College for distribution to departments and PIs.

	TAMURF		OURS	
IDC Rate	45.5 %	0%	45.5 %	0%
Total IDC Earned	\$45,000	\$0	\$45,000	\$0
TAMRF Cost (6.47% Direct)	-\$6,470		N/A	
OURS Cost (3.5% Direct)	N/A		-\$3,500	
IDC to TAMU	\$39,030		N/A	
TAMRF Shifts (1.5% Direct)	-\$1,500		N/A	
VPR Portion (40% IDC)	-\$18,200	0	-\$18,200	0
College Return/Cost	\$19,330	-\$7,970	\$23,800	-\$3,500

### Status of Development Resources in the College of Geosciences

The recently concluded One Spirit One Vision Campaign raised \$1.52B for Texas A&M University with the College of Geosciences credited with \$116 M. Of this amount, 84% constitutes private grants and contracts by faculty and researchers, whereas “true” development funds raised through the 7-year (2000-2006) campaign amounts to \$18.1M. The \$18.1M is made up of \$6.18M in planned gifts (i.e. future bequests through “wills”), \$5.55M in pledged endowments (scholarships, chairs, other designated endowments), and \$6.38M in one-time, non-endowed gifts, as shown in the table and graph below.



Planned gifts are the donor’s intent to bequeath dollars to the College of Geosciences and are therefore not available until the donor’s estate is settled after death. Pledged endowments reflect the donor’s intent to provide a permanent source of giving through the establishment of an endowment that generates “spend-able” interest income at a rate of 5% per year. The campaign secured \$5.55M in pledged endowments for scholarships and fellowships, chairs and professorships, and other designated endowments. The amounts of development dollars during the 7-year campaign are shown in the table below.

						<b>Total</b>		
	<b>Cash</b>		<b>Endowed</b>		<b>Planned</b>	<b>Development Dollars</b>		
2000	\$654,000.00		\$1,630,000.00		\$2,252,000.00	\$4,536,000.00		2000
2001	\$758,000.00		\$117,000.00		\$0.00	\$875,000.00		2001
2002	\$369,000.00		\$50,500.00		\$0.00	\$419,500.00		2002
2003	\$303,000.00		\$480,000.00		\$1,940,000.00	\$2,723,000.00		2003
2004	\$1,378,000.00		\$2,253,000.00		\$1,779,000.00	\$5,410,000.00		2004
2005	\$1,500,000.00		\$557,000.00		\$133,000.00	\$2,190,000.00		2005
2006	\$1,418,000.00		\$462,000.00		\$75,000.00	\$1,955,000.00		2006
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$6,380,000.00</b>		<b>\$5,549,500.00</b>		<b>\$6,179,000.00</b>	<b>\$18,108,500.00</b>		

One-time, non-endowed gifts represent both cash and gifts-in-kind gifts. For example, the College of Geosciences received \$1.42M in non-endowed gifts in 2006. Of this, the College received a \$0.75M gift in kind (remote sensing equipment from Chevron) and \$0.67M in cash gifts. These gifts benefited the College units in the following manner:

GERG	\$10K	Unrestricted
SEAG	\$26K	Designated (teaching vessel/publications)
G&G	\$246K	Scholarships/Fellowships (non-Endowed)
G&G	\$47K	Unrestricted
G&G	\$30K	Designated (field camp, seminars, etc)
CLGE	\$279K	Designated (Deans Office renovation)
CLGE	\$28K	Scholarships/Fellowships (non-Endowed)
Total	\$666 K	

### College Data Center Update

In the last information letter, I discussed our progress regarding design and construction of the college's new data center. Back in March, our expectation was that Physical Plant would complete the design work and begin construction by May. However, during the course of our planning, the Physical Plant project manager who was originally assigned to work this project retired. Additionally, we recently discovered a much better product for cooling our new data center. These two factors caused the completion date to change by several months to November 2007. However, even though construction is delayed, our progress on restructuring college IT services has not. The good news is O&M room B04 (college data center) offers enough cooling and power to begin hosting services before and during construction.

Jim Rosser and Steve Tran continue to make great strides in procuring, testing and configuring the college's new IT infrastructure (email, calendaring, storage, backup, database, web, authentication services and gigabit network). Some college customers will begin using these services this fall. And thanks to Steve's dedication and hard work, the new web content management system, storage components and database services are already operational. We may have experienced a minor construction setback, but we're very much on track for providing you with extremely high level performance and availability in the near future. Those interested in learning more about this effort should contact Jim Rosser ([jrosser@tamu.edu](mailto:jrosser@tamu.edu)).

### Student Travel to International Destinations

Effective September, 2006, prior to travel - all students traveling internationally must contact the Study Abroad Office at <http://studyabroad.tamu.edu/application.asp> and provide them with the requested information. Please do not forward international travel and leave for students, to the Dean for approval, unless you know this has been taken care of.

### Facilities Update

There are numerous College facilities projects underway or about to begin. I am well aware that deadlines are often not met with regard to completion and that this is and will be a source of frustration to many of us. Delays have historically been an issue with Physical Plant, and this problem has worsened as a consequence of Reinvestment renovations and large-scale building projects throughout the campus. Maureen Reap, College Facilities Coordinator, works diligently to

keep Physical Plant on task and will continue to do so. She is the designated project representative to communicate with Physical Plant. Make sure to discuss problems with either Maureen or Luis Cifuentes and not with Physical Plant directly.

#### *Reinvestment Projects*

O&M 4th floor: Rooms 403ACA, 406, 410 and 411 have punch list items to address. Construction begins May 10th in 406A and 408, now assigned to the incoming OCNG ODASES hire Matthew Schmidt. O&M 7th floor: Renovation of Rooms 707-711 will begin on 1June with expected completion in August. O&M 12th floor: ATMO is reviewing the floor plan, and the architect is determining if rerouting the air within the east exhaust chase is feasible. If so, this would significantly reduce noise, which in turn would permit greater flexibility in designing the space. There is no announced start-date for this project as this depends on approval of the floorplan by ATMO and the exhaust work by CBE.

Halbouty Radiogenic Lab: Bids for construction were higher than expected. Principals are reviewing the scope of work to see if economies can be made. A rebidding of this project likely will be required. Physical Plant knows that Rom 101 is firmly booked for fall classes. The now delayed construction will be scheduled to avoid reassigning classes in that room.

Teague 002 A and C: CBE approval and funding have been obtained to renovate these rooms for teaching computer labs. Work will be completed by mid-August.

#### *Non-Reinvestment Projects*

Halbouty ground floor: The source of the undermining of the ground floor was identified and the problem corrected. Reconstruction of the floor was completed in March.

Construction is underway at IODP for upgraded storage and lab functions. Completion of both projects is projected for June.

Renovation of Room 206 to become the new TTVN room began immediately after the last exam on May 9th. Completion date of the first phase (to make it functional) is 15 June. Additional decoration and acoustic work (if needed) will be done by 15 August.

Physical Plant has the work request for renovation of 727 Graham Road ("GERG West") for Sea Grant. Construction is pending the Texas Cooperative Extension's move to West Campus.

The CBE has approved the college's plan to renovate the east end of O&M's second floor to add an undergraduate teaching lab and reduce the size of the standard classroom to seat 49. Recent experience in assigning ATMO, GEOG, and OCNG courses to spaces in O&M and Teague points up the need for a classroom of this size. Construction will be summer 2008.

The Dean's office renovations will begin shortly. Some College of Geosciences personnel have already relocated, and by the end of this month, everyone will have moved to new offices for the duration of the construction period. Completion of this project is end of August.

#### *College Personnel Office Relocations effective end of through end of August*

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Temporary Office</u>
Barron	213D
Cifuentes	403AA
Kjerfve	207
Reap	B05B
Rodriguez	213D
Rosser	702B
Russell	803G
Slovacek	702C
Tchakerian	803E
Toon	208
Weatherford	803G
College mail box	209

All telephone numbers for all will remain the same. The College's business/financial offices will not be displaced.