

Information Letter #13

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: 15 February 2008

Dr. Elsa Murano Named President of Texas A&M University

On 3 January 2008, Dr. Elsa Murano was named the 23rd president of Texas A&M University by the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents. Since that time, President Murano has put her administrative team in place. On 25 January, the Board of Regents formally approved her plan for executive leadership, which added new senior-level positions and expanded the roles and responsibilities of some current positions. All changes were effective 1 February.

President Murano's new leadership team will be headed by two executive vice presidents. The Executive Vice President for Academics and Provost position will be responsible for all academic matters, including budgetary oversight for all activities affecting teaching and research and related activities. A nation-wide search is being conducted to select the best person to lead this effort. Dr. Jerry R. Strawser will continue to serve as Interim Executive Vice President and Provost while the search is being conducted.

Dr. H. Russell Cross, who served as Deputy Vice Chancellor and Associate Dean of Agriculture and Life Sciences, is the new Executive Vice President for Operations. Dr. Cross has management oversight of facilities and operations, governmental affairs, marketing and communications, and development.

Other appointments approved by the Board of Regents are:

- Vice President for Governmental Affairs – Courtney K. Trolinger, previously Assistant Vice Chancellor for External Relations in Agriculture and Life Sciences. Michael G. O'Quinn, who was Vice President for Governmental Affairs, now serves as Vice President for Institutional and Federal Affairs.
- Vice President for Development and Strategic Outreach – Chad E. Wootton, previously Senior Director of Development for the Texas A&M Foundation. Dr. Robert L. Walker, who was Vice President for Development and Strategic Outreach, is now Senior Executive for Development.
- Vice President for Marketing and Communications – Jason D. Cook, previously Director of Communications for Agriculture and Life Sciences. Steven B. Moore, who was Chief Marketing Officer and Vice President for Communications, is now Chief Marketing Officer.
- Senior Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer – Terry A. Pankratz, previously Associate Vice President for Finance and Controller, will serve as Interim Senior Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer while a search begins immediately to fill the position. K. Sue Redman, who was Senior Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, now serves the University as a Special Assistant to the President.
- Vice President for Student Affairs – Dr. Dean Bresciani.
- Vice President for Facilities – Dr. Charles A. Sippial, Sr.
- Vice President for Diversity and Associate Provost – Dr. Tito Guerrero, III.
- Vice President and Associate Provost for Information Technology – Dr. Pierce E. Cantrell.

- Interim Vice President for Research – Dr. James A. Calvin. A previously announced search is underway to fill the position of Vice President for Research on a permanent basis.
- Vice President and Chief Executive Officer for Texas A&M University at Galveston – Dr. R. Bowen Loftin.
- Dean and Chief Executive Officer for Texas A&M University at Qatar – Dr. Mark Weichold.
- Special Advisor to the President – R. C. Slocum.

As can be expected, there are likely to be a number of evolving priorities for the new administration and subsequent changes made at the University level. At this time, we do not anticipate changes that will affect the College to a great degree. Some may present challenges; however, we intend to work with this new administration to embrace challenges as they arise and continue to strive to meet the key goals of Vision 2020.

Friends and Colleagues Mourn the Death of Ralph Rayburn

The Geosciences community lost a dedicated professional and a good friend on 31 January when Ralph Rayburn, Sea Grant's Extension Program leader, died suddenly of an apparent heart attack. Ralph was 60. Our sympathies are extended to his wife, Elaine, and daughter, Rachel. More information is available on the Sea Grant website at <http://texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu/>.

Gerald North Honored by the American Meteorological Society

Congratulations go to Dr. Gerald North, ATMO Distinguished Professor, who was presented the Jule G. Charney Award at the American Meteorological Society's annual meeting 20-24 January in New Orleans. Jerry was cited for his "groundbreaking research on climate models, atmospheric statistics, and satellite mission development." The Jule G. Charney Award is given to individuals in recognition of highly significant research or development achievement in the atmospheric or hydrologic sciences. The award was established in 1969 during the 50th anniversary of the Society and was originally called the "Second Half-Century Award." In 1982, it was renamed in honor of Jule Charney, who played a major role in establishing the theoretical framework on which numerical weather prediction is based.

New Endowed Chair Honors Bill Bryant

Twenty-three former students of Dr. Bill Bryant have pledged a total of \$1 million to establish an endowed chair in his name in OCNG. *The William R. Bryant Oceanography Chair for Teaching, Research and Mentoring Excellence* was announced at a dinner held in Bill's honor on 1 February. Family members, former students, friends and colleagues surprised Bill with the dinner and the chair. Bill is the first faculty member at Texas A&M University to receive all three of the Association of Former Students' highest University-level awards – the Distinguished Achievement Award in Research in 1982, the Distinguished Achievement Award in Teaching in 2001, and the Distinguished Achievement Award in Mentoring in 2007. He is an accomplished and dedicated educator and scientist who has profoundly impacted the lives and careers of his students. Bill is to be congratulated on this chair created by his former students in testament to his legacy. But we still look forward to his future accomplishments.

Search Announced for New Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Dr. Vatche P. Tchakerian is stepping down as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs effective 31 August, 2008. Vatche was appointed to this position in 2004, after having served as acting associate dean 2002-2004. We would like to thank him for serving in this position for the past 6 years and commend him on a job well done.

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Geosciences is responsible for the administration of the undergraduate and graduate instructional programs of the College, which includes ensuring the academic integrity of degree programs and monitoring the academic progress of students. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs is a liaison on academic matters for the College with various University offices such as the Office of Graduate Studies, Office of Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs, Office of Admissions and Records, and the Honors Program.

The primary duties of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs are to monitor all courses and degree programs; evaluate and make decisions regarding student probation, registration blocks, re-admission, "Q" drops, no grade drops, etc.; counsel students on academic progress and career goals; hear student complaints; assure that students are informed of University rules and policies, and handle academic appeals. Other duties include overseeing student recruitment and retention activities and handling inquiries from prospective students.

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs coordinates the College Honors Program and the Aggie Access Program for at risk students. He/she is responsible for affirmative action, discrimination and harassment policies, complaints and

processes for the College. This person coordinates cross-departmental interdisciplinary course offerings and degree programs, and coordinates the Association of Former Students Distinguished Achievement Awards.

Additional duties include reviewing class enrollments to ensure compliance with University regulations; reviewing departmental course schedules before submission to the Registrar; adjudicating conflicts in classroom requests; reviewing and submitting the Faculty Teaching Load Compliance Report for the College; approving annual catalog revisions; representing the College at regularly scheduled conferences for newly admitted freshmen, transfer and graduate students, and providing training and assistance to departmental undergraduate and graduate advisors.

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs serves on the following University committees: University Academic Operations (AOC) Committee (meets twice/month); Graduate Operations Committee (meets monthly); Deans Only of AOC (meets twice/month); University Studies Oversight Committee (meets monthly), and University Curriculum Committee (meets monthly). Additionally, he/she serves on the College Executive Committee (meets monthly), chairs the Undergraduate Instruction Committee (meets monthly), chairs the Graduate Instruction Committee (meets monthly), and organizes both the Undergraduate and Graduate Student Councils (each meets monthly).

The decision has been made to fill the position of Associate Dean for Academic Affairs internally. Nominations, including self-nominations, with an up-to-date long-form cv should be submitted to Michelle Beal electronically. The target date for beginning the final phase of the review of applications is 7 April 2008, but the search will remain open until the position has been filled. It is anticipated that the appointment of the next Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Geosciences will commence the new position on 1 June to allow substantial overlap with Dr. Tchakerian for 1-3 months.

Call for Nominations Deadline Extended

Due to the addition of one additional open chair, one more open professorship, and to allow for faculty self nominations, the submission deadline for nominations for the College of Geosciences' vacant endowed chairs and professorships has been extended to 18 February 2008.

Two professors volunteered to step down from their current endowed positions to make these honorary appointments available to other excellent faculty. Dr. Gerald North, ATMO Distinguished Professor and current holder of the Harold J Haynes Chair, and Dr. Andreas Kronenberg, Professor and Head of GEPL and current holder of the Ray C. Fish Professorship, have each asked not to be considered for reappointment. They are to be commended for their commitment to supporting the work and accomplishments of their colleagues. As a result, the College now has a total of up to 5 endowed chairs and 7 professorships open for consideration and appointment.

Nomination packets for open chairs and professorships should be routed through your respective Department Head but may also be sent directly to the Dean's Office. In the latter case, the Dean's Office will confer with the Department Head. Packets need to include:

- Nomination letter from and ideally an endorsement by the Head of Department.
- Nominee statement of anticipated activities.
- Full CV for the nominee.
- Names of at least three nationally prominent scientists in the area of expertise of the nominee (external to TAMU).

Nomination packets should be submitted to Michele Beal in the Dean's Office and must be received no later than 5 p.m. on 18 February 2008.

New Geography Department Site Launched

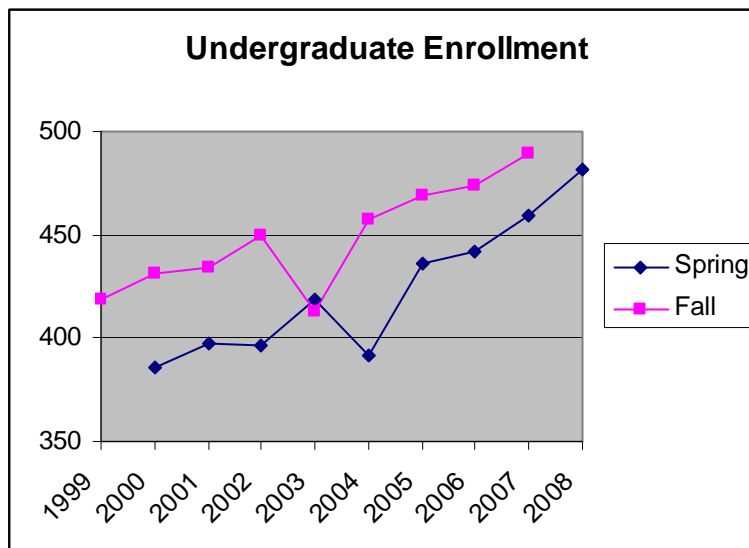
The new website for GEOG has been launched under the new domain name, geography.tamu.edu, which was chosen because it is easier for people to hear and remember than the previous name. The site incorporates the new Texas A&M logo and style specifications, and is the first full departmental site created in the content management system Joomla. The site and profiles were prepared by College staff members with the assistance of GEOG faculty member Reuben Rose-Redwood and graduate student Injeong Jo.

The home page of the site includes photographs that are chosen at random each time the site is opened. More photos are needed to keep the site fresh and appealing. Please send great relevant photos to the College's web developer, Jennifer Rumford at jrumford@tamu.edu. To make it easier for faculty and graduate students to keep their own profiles updated, a Profile Database was created that allows each user to copy and paste information into it and publish with the push of a button. Work on the GEOG site began on 17 December and was completed on 30 January.

The next departmental website scheduled for an upgrade is OCNG. The project is already underway and anticipated release of the new site is 1 April 2008.

Undergraduate Enrollment Update

Undergraduate enrollment figures for all colleges were recently released. The undergraduate enrollment in the College of Geosciences has been rising steadily over the past nine years from ca. 400 to 490 majors, most recently with a 5% increase from spring 2007 to spring 2008. This is good news.



Environmental Programs in Geosciences Update

The Environmental Programs in Geosciences continue to grow and change in constructive ways. There has been steady growth of ENGS and ENST majors since the programs were started in 2002. Fall semester Environmental Programs were home to 86 majors. New faculty appointments in the College have allowed us to embrace this sustained student growth by improving the organization of the degree programs and reviewing their academic rationale and content.

In 2007, an executive committee was formed for the programs. The committee's work has been guided by two aims – to improve the student learning experience and to generate a wide engagement of faculty in the degree programs. In September, ENGS advisors drawn from the four departments met to coordinate advising and share ideas on best practice. The advisors will meet every semester.

In December, there was an open meeting which more than 30 faculty attended. Interim Director Dr. Andrew Millington gave an overview of the programs and reviewed the ENGS program in particular. Dr. Sarah Bednarz reviewed the ENST program. Three working groups have been formed – Dr. Andrew Dessler is organizing a group looking into the Climate Change theme, Dr. John Nielsen-Gammon is leading a group examining the water theme, and Dr. Wendy Jepson has been coordinating discussions over the future of the Introduction to Geosciences course. Other groups are discussing the coastal and human interactions, the suite of technical electives offered to ENGS students, and the capstone course GEOS 405. Deliberations are being guided, in part, by student input in the form of the consensus report on the ENGS and ENST degrees by graduating seniors, organized by Dr. Andrew Klein as part of the GEOS 405 course that he teaches.

Two new GEOS courses have recently been launched – GEOS 289 Climate Change (lead instructor – Dr. Andrew Dessler) and GEOS 489/689 International Polar Year (lead instructor – Dr. Chuck Kennicutt). The interest, enthusiasm and hard work of faculty have been infectious, and active participation in the degrees has risen from 12 to 26 faculty. To advise on future developments, the Environmental Programs invited Dr. Bruce Coull, Dean Emeritus of the School of Environment, University of South Carolina and immediate Past-President of the Council of Environmental Deans and Directors, to visit the College 6-8 February. For additional information, visit the Environmental Programs web site at <http://enst.tamu.edu/>.

Facilities Report

Reinvestment:

- Radiogenic Isotope Geosciences Laboratory (Halbouty 329-333). The contractor remains ahead of schedule. Lab furnishings are on order for delivery to coincide with the end of major construction (late February). The new chilled water pump installation did not go as planned over the Christmas break but is now in place.
- Perchloric Hood (Halbouty 332). Punch list items remain to be addressed before the hood can be used.
- O&M 4th floor. Construction in Room 409, to be renovated for graduate student offices, has been delayed.
- O&M 702. The principals discussed renovation needs in December. An architect has been contracted by Physical Plant to develop plans for the suite, which will house two professors, a senior researcher, two post-docs, and half a dozen graduate students. Construction is hoped to begin before summer.
- O&M 707. Minor punch list items remain. Occupants began moving in over the Holidays. As a bonus from Physical Plant, the construction supervisor ordered the painting of the main hall.
- O&M 12th floor. After much delay, this project has finally been approved by Physical Plant. The placement of the new exhaust chase chimneys has been resolved, and they will be installed where originally planned. A start date should be announced soon.
- Faculty and researchers are reminded that lab operation throughout the eastern half of the building (all floors) will be affected for a short period during the spring semester when the east chase is renovated. During this period, all hoods that vent to the east chase will be shut down. Hood operators will be consulted to determine the best possible timing of this shut down. The west exhaust chase will not be affected.
- O&M 714-716. This lab suite will receive utility upgrades and minor renovation. Work is expected to begin this semester.

Non-Reinvestment:

- Halbouty sidewalk. This project will soon be scheduled for final review.
- Halbouty 368A and 370. Upon completion of the refrigeration units, the cold room did not perform as required. Adjustments are in progress.
- Halbouty 327. Plans for this space are under discussion with possible uses to include a geochemical prep lab, offices, and/or instructional space. This room is a priority agenda item for G&G's Space Committee.
- Sea Grant Building, 727 Graham Road. Floor plans are under review for renovation, and scheduling and cost estimates are expected shortly.
- O&M restrooms 107 and 108 continue to be in renovation. The illness of a key worker has delayed their completion.
- O&M 206-209. Physical Plant has contracted with an architect to develop plans for the renovation of the east end of the second floor in O&M for new teaching labs and a new classroom. Construction will begin after Spring semester finals and will end before Fall classes start. O&M's lecture hall, Room 112, will not be used for instruction this summer, owing to the noise overhead.

The Quest to Improve College IT Services

In early 2006, the College of Geosciences IT team devised a plan to improve common information technology services to better support education and research. Since then, the five major milestones have been:

1. Design a new system architecture with high availability and performance.
2. Consolidate common IT services to eliminate waste.
3. Build a new data center to fix server room overheating problems.
4. Set up a new IT Service Center to help customers solve technology problems and submit new requirements.
5. Realign the IT organization and processes to better serve customer needs.

Further, the College of Geosciences new 1,000 ft² Data Center in O&M B04 is competing with several TAMU high-priority projects and is therefore progressing slower than anticipated. Nevertheless, progress is steady. Completed tasks include: furniture removal and demolition; mechanical design; center layout; addition of two new power panels, power for B04A and card swipe system; temporary air duct rerouting to B04A; estimates for HVAC and uninterruptable power; and temporary placement of College sever racks to B04A. The final cost estimate is due soon, and construction should begin within the next 45 to 90 days. When completed, the data center will support up to 22 server racks with a dedicated chill water plant, modular cooling system, enterprise level battery backup, remote environmental monitoring, and high-speed network (gigabit Ethernet).

TAMU Releases New Zimbra E-Mail Service

Zimbra, the Texas A&M University's new "state-of-the-art webmail technology" offers "faster and more reliable e-mail" service. According to CIS, TAMU decided to completely renovate Neo from the ground up in response to customer complaints of sluggish performance. Zimbra, which was acquired by Yahoo last year, is easy to navigate and comes bundled with numerous features and options. In addition to e-mail (with filtering), address book, task manager, and text chat, Zimbra offers an intuitive calendaring system capable of sharing events with TAMU employees, external guests, or the entire world if desired. Zimbra also includes a handy address book and calendar import/export feature, which helps ease the migration to the new system. Zimbra's interface offers four attractive themes and three layouts: Advanced (Ajax), which looks similar to Microsoft's web Outlook Web Access; Standard HTML; and Mobile, for those wishing to access e-mail via cell phone, PDA or smart phone web browser.

Despite Zimbra's many functions and features, the College has experienced some early disappointments related to the Neo transition. For example, a handful of College customers stopped receiving e-mail after 2 February due to Neo alias issues. Furthermore, many were less than thrilled to discover that their address book contacts were missing in Zimbra.

It is too early to celebrate the Neo revolution, but at first glance Zimbra appears to be a step in the right direction. We are in good company, as Georgia Tech, UCLA, Ohio State, Raytheon, Mozilla, H&R Block, Century 21 are among several universities and companies using Zimbra. Time will tell if Zimbra is right for Texas A&M University. For more information about Zimbra, navigate to <http://cis.tamu.edu/email/tamuemail.php>.