

Like geology itself, perhaps an earth science department can be studied through the dictum that “the past is the key to the present.” It also leads to a view of the future because the present is the future’s past. Let’s start with some facts about the present. In reflecting on the successes and strengths of the Department of Geology & Geophysics at UW-Madison, I focus on our people – faculty, current students, staff, and alumni – because therein is our strength, but I discuss as well our physical facilities and financial resources.

The Department of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is comprised of 21 faculty, 24 academic technical and administrative staff, 68 graduate students, 4 postdocs, 2 visiting scholars, 56 undergraduate majors, and 2500 alumni. We are a research-intensive department with a synergistic commitment to graduate education. We are committed strongly to our undergraduate majors and to non-science students who take our introductory courses, and we are committed strongly to outreach particularly through an active Geology Museum. We are proud of the number of our undergraduates who go on to receive the Ph.D., the number of our Ph.D.’s who serve on faculties at colleges and universities in the U.S. and internationally, and the number of alumni who have illustrious careers in government and industry. We are proud of the awards won by our faculty, the dedication and loyalty of our staff, and we are proud to award annually the honor of distinguished alumni to one or more of our graduates.

We are housed attractively in Weeks Hall, which was completed initially in 1974 with two major additions completed in 1981 and 2004. The Geology Library is part of the building. Major laboratory capabilities include an electron microprobe, mass spectrometers for stable and radiogenic isotopes, ion microprobe, SEM, fluid inclusion geothermometry, and rock physics equipment. Field capabilities exist for geophysics, GPS, and hydrogeology. Finally, the department enjoys state-of-the-art lecture halls, seminar rooms, and computer system. All these activities are supported capably and enthusiastically by academic and technical staff. Except for a partial building grant from the NSF for Phase 1, all the construction has been from private money. Phases 1 and 2 were made possible through the generosity of Lewis G. Weeks; phase 3 was a mix of funding from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, the College of Letters and Science, the Albert and Alice Weeks Bequest, and individual gifts from alumni, friends, faculty, and staff. In terms of critical events, clearly the substantial endowment from the Weeks family in the early 1970’s through the early 1990’s is an important source of the department’s current position of strength. Our Board of Visitors, which was formed in the early 1990’s, provides on-going support for mentoring students, organizing reunion symposia, and fund raising. The ability to leverage internal university funds for startup packages for new faculty and federal funds for equipment, to hire post-docs, to endow professorships, and to offer more attractive financial support packages for graduate students all come from the flexibility of private funds.

An important strength of the department is that faculty research broadly covers most of the central subdisciplines of the earth sciences --- hydrogeology and surficial geology (Anderson, Bahr, Mickelson); geophysics and structural geology (Allen, DeMets, Goodwin, Thurber, Tikoff, Wang); mineralogy, petrology, geochemistry and geomicrobiology (Brown, Johnson, Roden, Sahai, Singer, Valley, Xu); sedimentology, paleontology, and paleoceanography/paleoclimate (Byers, Carroll, Geary, Kelly, Simo). The median age is 47, there are 16 men and 5 women, and we have no targeted minority faculty. The faculty participate in many interdisciplinary activities across campus, most notably the Geological Engineering Program and the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, and in turn, affiliate faculty from other campus departments, the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, and the U.S. Geological Survey contribute to the teaching and graduate education mission of the department. Emeritus faculty – Bentley, Bowser, Christensen, Clark, Clay, Craddock, Dott, Maher, Medaris, and Pray – stay connected with departmental activities through social and/or continuing scholarly activities. Nearly two-thirds of the faculty were hired since 1986. One of the great strengths of our department, which is recognized by not only members of the department but outsiders as well, is the congenial and collegial atmosphere. GeoClub, which consists principally of graduate students but undergraduates as well, organizes many social events and an orientation field trip each year. We are a happy department and with apologies to Tolstoy, I do not believe happy departments are all alike. I believe each happy department becomes happy in its own way. Among faculty one practice, which engenders harmony, is a democratic decision-making process in which assistant professors participate fully. Faculty and shared governance, which is a Wisconsin tradition, extends beyond the majority rule principle in that most decisions are really by consensus. A new chair is elected every three years.

I will close with the most difficult issue that confronts our department, which is the importance of (obsession with?) national rankings such as the 1993 NRC report and the annual US News survey. Our success is relative; we cannot ignore the fact that we rank around 20<sup>th</sup> among geoscience departments nationally. While our ranking does not pose a threat to our existence, it is uncomfortable because a number of departments in our college rank in the top 10. In practical terms we are concerned that it might affect our ability to recruit and retain the best faculty and graduate students. Internal discomfort can arise because differences of opinion and ideology are exposed, which can threaten harmony, when facing important questions. In which subdisciplines do we choose to recruit faculty? How should department resources be deployed among faculty and programs? Can these decisions be made within a consensus framework? We are in a period of dynamic change internally with several new faculty and externally with new funding opportunities such as Earthscope. It's great to be a Badger. On Wisconsin!