

## Accepting the Challenge

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Because our department does not offer any type of program in the geosciences it's up to each faculty member to introduce students to the geoscience classes we offer. As I am the only full-time geoscience instructor, that job falls on me. I begin what I call my "PR push" with my Earth Science Club. We advertise widely across campus and there's no where you can go without running into one of our posters, we participate in all college-wide events aimed at students, have fundraisers and do work for charity. This introduces students to the fact that a) we offer geoscience classes and b) we can have fun. Sounds simple but it's very effective. Our club membership and attendance at our meeting grows every year. This past year we were the largest, most well attended club on campus.

But getting their attention does not always mean getting them into and keeping them in class. That's where my curriculum and teaching style comes into the picture. I believe in hands-on, active learning and it starts from the first day of class. They are active participants in their own learning. But to get them to do that I need to be just as much an active participant. My love of my subject and enthusiasm for the Earth and oceans is reflected in how I conduct my classes. Many students who decide to go on to become majors tell me that my love for my subject inspired them. It humbles me.

My department chair told me that our geology program was all but dead until I took over. We barely had one section of Physical Geology and one of Historical Geology. no one was teaching the Field Geology class. Now we have multiple sections of Physical and have just hired an additional full-timer and several adjuncts to cover the multiple sections. The Field Geology class is so popular that we had to offer an additional section this year. I also developed a new course called Beaches and Coasts (a non lab science course) that is very popular.

This hasn't been without major challenges. In all of my classes, lab and non-lab students must learn to think like scientists, conduct research, collect and analyze data and write their findings in reports or make presentations. The issue is that most of my students cannot write or don't want to make the effort. I'm writing this essay after coming off a spring term and a field course that were incredibly frustrating for me. Even after giving detailed WRITTEN instructions, going over them, having endless discussions with them, outlining the papers with them, giving them sources to start them off- I got complete drivel- with the exception of my honors students and my (possible) majors. And with the exception, this term, of my Beaches and Coasts course - they had to conduct a term long study of a beach of their choosing (with my approval) and submit a PowerPoint presentation that included very specific information. A huge success and I'm very proud of them.

The challenge I've accepted is finding a way to have the same success with all my classes. While it's not my job to teach them to write, it is my job to get them to see science with new eyes and maybe make more geoscience majors.