

Preparing Our Workforce Initiative
Preparing Students at 2-Year Colleges for Geoscience Careers

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Over the past year, I have developed a program called the “Preparing Our Workforce (POW) Initiative”, which teaches students about the many different types of career opportunities that are available in the geosciences. I piloted the program by facilitating in depth and interactive discussions with geoscience students at 7 different institutions, including a 2-year college. The presentation emphasized the importance of integrating students’ interests, within and outside of geoscience, and their transferrable skills to their geoscience career goals, which led to an increased awareness of the diversity of careers in the geoscience workforce. Additionally, I presented pertinent information about geoscience workforce trends, such as enrollments, supply and demand data and salaries of geoscientists. Lastly, I discussed best practices for networking and how to land a job or internship in our field.

The pilot program proved to be a great success – we received very positive feedback from both students and faculty through our online evaluation; 100% of respondents indicated that the presentation was valuable. In addition, 89% of respondents indicated that they had “little” or “moderate” awareness of geoscience careers prior to the discussion whereas after the discussion, 100% of respondents indicated they were “very aware” or “extremely aware” of geoscience careers. AGI is now working to expand the POW Initiative on a national scale. As part of the Geoscience Online Learning Initiative (GOLI) run by AGI and AIPG, I have developed a free, online course that teaches professionals (faculty and non-academic professionals) how to facilitate a POW discussion. The course introduces the content to professionals and teaches them best practices on how to effectively engage students and how to host career discussions. Upon successful completion of this course, professionals will be able to download all the information and handouts needed for the presentation. Additionally, they will receive professionally printed materials from AGI for free to distribute to students.

One particular strength of the POW Initiative is that the presentation is highly customizable. We encourage POW discussion leaders to include their own experiences and anecdotes, which personalizes the presentation and helps them relate to the audience. This flexible structure is great for the 2-year college demographic in particular because the presentation can easily change depending on the presenter and the needs of the audience. If you are interested in participating in the POW Initiative or have any questions regarding this opportunity, contact Heather Houlton at hrh@agiweb.org. If you would like to take the online course to gain access to the information and materials to host a POW discussion yourself, you can register for free at <http://www.agiweb.org/workforce/pow.html>.