

Providing Career Resources and Opportunities for 2-Year College Students to Bolster the Future Geoscience Workforce

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Two-year colleges play a very important role in preparing and recruiting students for programs at four-year institutions. From AGI's Status of the Geoscience Workforce Report (2011), data from 2008 indicate that nearly 50% of students who received a Bachelor's degree attended a community college, and 20% of those students received an Associate's degree. In addition, 36-46% of Master's degree recipients and 16-32% of Doctorates attended community college. The high percentage of students that received a Master's degree after starting their academic pathway at a two-year institution is particularly important for the geosciences because the Master's degree is considered the professional degree in the workforce. This implies that a large portion of our professional geoscientists in business sectors outside of academia attended community colleges. With a total of 1,690 two-year colleges in the U.S. and 285 institutions with geoscience faculty, there is an opportunity to vastly impact the future geoscience workforce.

The American Geosciences Institute has several efforts that support the student-to-professional transition into the geoscience workforce. The first is the development of the GeoConnection Recruitment Packets specifically tailored for the community college audience. These packets were previously designed and distributed to approximately 25 four-year institutions with information about geoscience careers and opportunities. Packets also included 5 free student memberships to participating geoscience professional societies to facilitate student involvement within the professional geoscience community. AGI is currently restructuring and updating the packets to cater toward community college students in order to foster their academic and professional development.

In an effort to help fill the geoscience workforce supply gap, AGI is piloting the Geoscience Careers Roadshow. We will be visiting several two- and four-year institutions to present information about geoscience careers to students. The presentations will demonstrate the breadth of workplaces and professions available to students with geoscience degrees, as well as guide them to the necessary resources in order to start their professional careers. To sustain these efforts, we will train select faculty at each institution to present this information and disseminate resources to subsequent geoscience student cohorts. These presentations will serve as a catalyst for discussion between faculty and students about career opportunities in the geosciences, thus aiding recruitment and retention efforts in our discipline.

Lastly, to further promote geoscience careers, AGI will continue to host multiple Geoscience Careers Student Networking Luncheons at different professional societies' annual meetings. Over the past few years, this event has been hugely successful at connecting an average of 50 professionals from different business sectors outside of academia with over 200 geoscience students from two- and four-year institutions. The Networking Luncheons have taken place at the American Geophysical Union's annual meetings from 2009-2011, as well as for the first time at the Geological Society of America's annual meeting in 2011. They provide great opportunities for geoscientists at all levels of their professional career to practice their networking skills and build their professional portfolio.

AGI is working to integrate two-year college students into these programs to enhance their academic and professional development. We hope to obtain valuable feedback from participants at this workshop in order to refine and improve our efforts to increase the impact we have on community college students.