

## Successful academic transfer, job-ready skills lacking

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Snow College has a longstanding reputation for producing geology majors that are well prepared for transfer. The strengths of our little geology program (I am a one person department) include recruiting good students and major's courses that are rigorous and focus on fieldwork. In addition, maintaining good relationships with four-year institutions assures that my students succeed after transfer.

As with many geology programs, most of my majors are recruited from general education courses. There I find many bright students who "see the light" and "convert" to geology. So, I begin with very capable students. Interestingly, many of these students are young women. (It has made me a true believer in role models.)

Every geology course taught at Snow College requires field trips. In addition, majors are expected to take at a one-credit field course each semester. In this course majors learn early on how to interpret structure, landforms, sedimentology, stratigraphy, paleontology and mineralogy in the field. It helps that Snow College is located in the transition zone between the Colorado Plateau and Basin and Range. We are within 150 miles of a number of national parks. This allows for fantastic field experiences within minutes or hours. When my students transfer they take with them much more field experience than most junior geology majors.

At two-year colleges we often live in fear of being seen as less demanding than our four-year partners. As a result, my Physical and Historical Geology courses goes well beyond the standard curriculum in depth and rigor. All reports from my students indicate that they feel well prepared as a result of these courses, their field courses and good advising while at Snow.

So, for over 25 years, I have had a good record of preparing students for transfer as geology majors to four-year institutions throughout the state. Reports from faculty at transfer institutions indicate that Snow College students are among their best.

Relationships with transfer institutions are of course an important aspect of successful transfer. The state of Utah requires that all departments meet yearly to deal with articulation issues so that transfer among state institutions is seamless. These meetings help us to build trust and respect among institutions. In addition to these meetings, many schools make an effort to run joint field trips. These joint field trips benefit both the four-year programs (they can recruit) and the two-year schools as well. I have found that joint field trips forge relationships that make transfer for my students easier in so many ways.

While proud of the success of my geology majors, I feel that there is a student population that has not been served. The student I am thinking of is not typically motivated by academics alone. This student is motivated to learn what can help he or she prepare for a job. This student may not have a high school transcript that includes much math or science. But, this student may have the potential to be a great geologist.

Could courses that involve real geological problems be the solution? Snow College thinks so. The college has just created a new Natural Resources program that has a two-track degree. One degree will prepare students to be job ready after two years. The other will allow them to transfer to a university. Both degrees will include work-related experiences in all courses. Internships will be provided for all students as well. The program is meant to operate as a consulting firm, bidding on jobs available from various government agencies in the area. Our courses will be fluid and adapt to whatever work the director has found for us to do.

There is room in this program to allow students to focus on geology. I need to learn where to look for geology related jobs to incorporate into courses and provide internships for my students. I want to learn more about what jobs are out there for geology majors with a two-year degree. I want to learn what job-related skills employers are expecting. With this component added to our already successful transfer program, I believe we can produce geology majors who are uniquely prepared for success in the classroom and on the job. I also believe that we can increase enrollments by appealing to students who would otherwise not consider majoring in geology.