

Howe Report

LSU

Department of
Geology & Geophysics

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Dear supporters of LSU G&G:

New Year's Greetings from Jon Snow! I'm the new Chair of Geology and Geophysics since last September. These emails (about once a month) will bring news about the department, announcements of upcoming department events that may interest you and some personal observations from a newcomer to LSU about life here on campus. They will always have "Howe Report" in the subject line. Please feel free to pass them on to anybody with an interest in the Department. And if you have comments, reactions, advice or news for me, please don't hesitate.

Let it Sneaux: I came to LSU last September from the University of Houston, where I traversed the ranks of professorhood (Assistant, Associate, Full) since 2005. Before that I was at MIT, the French CNRS and German Max-Planck Society. I am an ocean floor volcanologist, with active research programs in every ocean. And yes I go in those submarines to collect samples. My next deep-sea expedition (off Japan) is in April. I've been very thankful to former Chairs Carol Wicks and Brooks Ellwood and to our Dean Cynthia Peterson for gradually showing me the departmental ropes.

Field Camp: The LSU Field Camp had another successful summer last year, with 10 students in 3666 taught by Dr. Amy Luther with assists from Dr. Karen Luttrell, Dr. Brooks Ellwood and Dr. Peter Clift. Highlights of the year included snow in late May(!), (Motto: "The Year Hell Froze Over"), a visit from incoming LSU Board of Supervisors Chair and Friend of the Department Mary Warner, and the usual scientifically and personally intensive field experiences for students that makes field camp the truly formational event in the life of nearly every geologist, myself included. I'm proud that our Department maintains the longest running fixed geologic field facility in the US. This summer year we plan the re-introduction of "Freshman Field Camp" after several years' hiatus.

It's the water: Dr. Gary Byerly, working with Dr. Alex Sobolev of the University of Grenoble (France) probed tiny inclusions of volcanic melt in an olivine rich volcanic rock known as komatiite. The results, published in the British journal Nature Geoscience showed that these lavas, known only from the most ancient Archean Era of Earth History, contain far more water than previously suspected. This may offer an explanation for why such (now rare) volcanic rocks occurred at that time, and why they vanished from the modern geologic record.

Ancient Mounds: The Indian Mounds on campus are old, it's one of the first things you hear about when you first arrive here. But new age dating by Dr. Brooks Ellwood and colleagues shows that the lowest level of these structures is over

11,000 years old, making them the oldest man-made structures in the world. Using Accelerator Mass Spectrometry allow for smaller, and thus purer carbon samples to be dated than before. Human occupation of North America is documented directly since around 14,000 ybp and indirectly through dna evidence to around the time of the last glacial maximum (21,000 ybp), when sea level was 410 feet lower than today.

Junior faculty: The future of our Department and their students are investigating coastal and deltaic processes in Bangladesh (Dr. Carol Wilson), the tectonic evolution of Georgia (the other one, in central Asia: Dr. Adam Forte), the interplay between tectonics and climate in Tibet (Dr. Guangsheng Zhuang), and the microseismicity and hydrology of both active plate boundaries and oil fields (Dr. Patricia Persaud).

Please pass this e-letter along to other G&G alumni who might not have received it. On that note, please remind alumni that we rely on you to keep your contact information up-to-date! You can contact Rachel May if you need to change your contact information.

I could go on but that's enough for now. More next time!

Cheers,
Jon

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