Letter From the Chair

Dear UCR Earth Sciences Alum,

This year was a remarkable year for the Earth Sciences Department highlighted by the successful Homecoming. I am proud to report that our department had the largest turnout out of any department which created quite the buzz among our administrators. If you missed the Homecoming festivities, please don't worry, we will be hosting another celebration for the unveiling of the new Geology Building when the renovation is complete.

The department has 3 new additions to our faculty: Dr. Elizabeth Cochran, Dr. Gordon Love, and Dr. Gareth Funning. Elizabeth joins us from UCSD as an Assistant Professor in Geophysics. Her research focuses on crustal deformation Earthquake triggering and near fault structure, specifically related to Earthquake physics. Our second new-comer is Gordon who is joining us from MIT as an Assistant Professor in Biogeochemistry. His primary research focuses on molecular organic geochemistry, particularly applied to the ancient sedimentary record, but also to microbial cultures, recent sediments and carbonaceous chondrite meteorites. Our newest faculty member is Gareth Funning from UC Berkeley. His research interests revolve around trying to understand the processes at work in deforming the lithosphere and controlling the behavior of active faults both during and between Earthquakes. We are very enthusiastic to have our three new faculty members on board.

This year we honored two of our faculty members; Dr. Douglas Morton (of course also one of the first graduates of our department!!) and Dr. James Dieterich. Both were granted the highest honor of the Department of the Interior, the Distinguished Service Award. Doug received the award for his contribution to the USGS Geological Mapping program. Jim received his award for his contribution to the USGS in rate/state theory of Earthquake nucleation. Just a few of these awards are given each year so to have two recipients in the same department is a tremendous honor. We congratulate both of them on their outstanding achievements.

Those of you who were here for Homecoming were able to see all of the renovation activities firsthand. We are finding all sorts of “treasures” as the building continues to be gussed around us, which we will save to auction off at the renovation celebration. This summer, many of us will relocate from the North wing and the inner walls will start to come down. The end design will incorporate much of what makes this department special (we retained the museum down the center of the “H”, the courtyard will stay etc.) but we will have a seismically safer building and new state of the art laboratories.

We are initiating a new graduate program in “Global and Environmental Change” this next year, since so many of our faculty currently work in this research area. As you know, as geologists, the geological perspective to Global change is critical but often ignored. We intend this program to be field oriented and that eventually students will spend a quarter at the White Mountain Research Station in Bishop doing hands on research activities ranging from mapping past glacial deposits (Precambrian and Pleistocene) to monitoring current glaciers to examining volcanic activity.

Most importantly, the department would like to send a special thank you to our three new hard Rock Sam members (donors giving $1000 or more): Gerry Weber, John Dunham and Lucy Edwards for their generous contributions to the “Earth Sciences Fund for Excellence” and the “Rock Solid Fund”. Their donations have made a incredible difference in our department. Through John Dunham’s gift in honor of Mike Murphy, we were able to give seven of our graduate students significant grants to aid in their summer field work. Lucy Edward’s donation has been used to initiate a very successful Friday noontime BBQ for all students and faculty. Gerry Weber’s donation initiated a new foundation, the Rock Solid Fund. Thanks very much to you three and the rest of you who have donated to the department. These donations make a great deal of difference.

Please keep in touch with us through email, regular mail or via the web. We now have an alumni web page where you can look to see what is up with your friends from UCR. And as always, if you are in the area be sure and stop by the department.

Cheers,
Mary Droser
Chair