

National Council of The Society of
Sigma Gamma Epsilon
NATIONAL HONORARY SOCIETY in the EARTH SCIENCES



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TO: Active Chapters of *Sigma Gamma Epsilon*
Members of the National Council

24 September 2010

FROM: Dr. Erika R. Elswick
President

RE: Site visit to the *University of Wisconsin Whitewater*, Whitewater, WI

In response to a petition (dated December 11, 2009) from eight students interested in forming a new chapter of Sigma Gamma Epsilon (SGE), I visited the Department of Geography and Geology at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater on September 17. Dr. Prajukti (Juk) Bhattacharyya gave me a tour of the department facilities within the new Science Center, Upham Hall on campus that is less than 5 years old. Dr. Bhattacharyya has agreed to be the chapter's first faculty advisor, and I received a tour of her lab by a number of students working with her and heard about their research projects. I was then introduced to Dr. Rex Hanger the coordinator of the Geology program, and a lifetime member of SGE to discuss the support of the department. I also met several of his students who enthusiastically described their projects and gave me a tour of his laboratory. I also met with members of the Chemistry Department and their analytical facilities. These facilities have been made available on numerous occasions for the geology students to complete their analyses. Following the tour we joined the students and department faculty for lunch. At their request I gave a short presentation on SGE as well as an overview for the students on applying to graduate programs, and what typically is expected during the process. This was followed by an informal discussion prompted by their questions.

Following lunch I had the opportunity to meet informally with the department faculty and the College Dean, Dr. Mary Pinkerton, and department chair Dr. Carol Rosen. At this time we discussed the department's extensive support of the application, and the strengths of the student's existing Geology Club, and how many of the club's activities already meshed well with SGE goals, and how the activities of the established group and the close-knit atmosphere of the department would help perpetuate an active chapter. Dean Pinkerton was very supportive and welcomed the progress on the Department's application. Following the meeting, I toured the University's Nature Preserve and Teaching Lab two blocks from Upham Hall. Based on my site visit and my review of the petition, points discussed below, I whole heartedly endorse their petition and recommend the membership approve the formation of a new chapter of *Sigma Gamma Epsilon* at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater.

The Department of Geography and Geology offers six majors in general geography; geology; international/regional, physical/environmental, quantitative/technical and urban/suburban geography with an emphasis on preparation for further study at the graduate level. The department also offers minors in geography, geology, elementary education, environmental studies and urban area development. The department is staffed by 11 full time Professors and 2 Lecturers.

Undergraduate research is strongly encouraged, and many students are actively involved with funded research initiatives which have resulted in student co-authored publications. Twenty three courses are offered in the department for Geology majors and many of the courses taught under Geography, particularly the soils, physical geography and GIS complement the Geology major.

The Department of Geography and Geology shares the Science Center with the Departments of Physics, Biology, Math, and Chemistry, and the Department benefits from the close association with these allied sciences with several collaborative projects.

The Geology student body averages 35 in number, and draws primarily from the south-central Wisconsin region. The University of Wisconsin Whitewater has a strong service learning mission and a strong tradition in educational excellence. The Department of Geography and Geology is part of that mission. The establishment of the *Sigma Gamma Epsilon* chapter at UW Whitewater would be a great addition to the existing chapter of *Gamma Theta Upsilon*, the national geography honor society. The students petitioning for the University of Wisconsin Whitewater are a very enthusiastic and scholastic group, and are quite representative of the department student body as a whole. I hope you will enthusiastically approve the instillation of their *SGE* chapter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erika R. Elswick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "E".

Erika R. Elswick, PhD
SGE President