

**The Society of Sigma Gamma Epsilon**  
**40<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention**  
**University of Northern Iowa**  
**October 19-21, 2007**

**National President's Report**  
**Richard L. Ford**

It has been my great pleasure and honor to serve you as National President for the past two and half years. I was elected by the student delegates at the last convention, held at Florida Atlantic University in April 2005. By delivering this report and presiding over this convention, I will fulfill my final duties and complete my term. Overall, I would say that the health of the Society is very good, especially at the local chapter level. There are approximately 90 active chapters of SGE across the country. Each, in some way, recognizes and encourages academic excellence in the geosciences, promotes the professional development of its members, and provides valuable service to their department, university, and community. Our discipline is well served by Sigma Gamma Epsilon (SGE). At the national level, SGE also has seen some recent notable successes, such as the steady increase in participation in our poster session at the Annual Meeting of the Geological Society of America (GSA). Yet challenges remain and we definitely have room for improvement; this is why we have national conventions. I would now like to summarize some of our major successes and challenges of the past two years, in hopes that they will inform the decisions you make at this convention, which in turn will direct the Society for the next two years.

**Chapter Growth**

Our regional vice presidents have been “on the road” during the past two years conducting department evaluations and new-chapter installations. Their individual reports will provide some of the details, but let me summarize here. Five new chapters have been established since the 39<sup>th</sup> biennial convention:

1. Eta Xi chapter at St. Lawrence University, Canton, NY (March 31, 2006)  
(Department visit and installation conducted by Cindy Carney, Northeastern VP)
2. Eta Omicron Chapter at the University of Minnesota Duluth (May 5, 2006)  
(Department visit by Rick Ford, National President; installation by John Hogan, Central VP)
3. Eta Pi Chapter at the University of Wisconsin – Parkside, Kenosha, WI (May 8, 2006)  
(Department visit by John Hogan; installation by Rick Ford)
4. Eta Rho Chapter at the State University of New York at Geneseo (April 25, 2007)  
(Department visit and installation conducted by Cindy Carney)
5. Eta Sigma Chapter at Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN (Oct. 4, 2007)  
(Department visit and installation conducted by Michael Gibson, Southeastern VP)

I had the great pleasure to conduct the department visit at Minnesota Duluth in December 2005, where I experienced an impressive lake-effect snowstorm, and to install the new chapter at Wisconsin–Parkside in May 2006, where I was treated to a field trip to observe Scottish glacial geomorphology (i.e. a round of golf) after the ceremony.

Eta Sigma, our newest chapter, is number 183 on the Society's all-time chapter list. The number of active chapters at this time is approximately 90, a very healthy number indeed, distributed by province as follows:

Northeastern Province	37 active chapters
Southeastern Province	26
Central Province	15
Western Province	12

Several previously inactive chapters have reactivated since the last convention, including the Iota (Michigan), Rho (Indiana U.), Alpha Zeta (Oregon State), Beta Zeta (North Dakota), and Epsilon Gamma (IUPU Fort Wayne) chapters. We welcome them back.

As stated by Don Neal in his presidential report at our last convention, we must maintain our membership if we are to remain a viable organization in the future. I think we are largely accomplishing that goal. The real value in membership in SGE is derived from the quality of local chapter activities offered to a member. Therefore, as a student organization, ultimately it is up to YOU to make membership in SGE meaningful, worthwhile, and fun. New members and new chapters will follow.

Unfortunately, the chapter growth over the past couple of years has increased the backlog in printing and distributing charters for new chapters. Some chapters as old as nine years have yet to receive their charter. Hopefully, this backlog can be cleared in short order.

### **Initiatives from the Last Convention**

Hopefully you have all had a chance to review the minutes from the last convention which are published in *The Compass* (v.79, no. 3, p.73-88). Let me summarize the steps taken by the National Council over the past two years to implement the initiatives approved by the student delegates to the last convention. First, the delegates approved a constitutional amendment which lowered the credit-hour requirements for membership. The idea was to allow students to join SGE earlier in their program of study, ideally as second-semester sophomores. The online version of our constitution was updated shortly after the convention and a new hard copy version was distributed to members earlier this semester as vol. 79, no. 4, of *The Compass*. The other members of the National Council and I are interested to hear from you as to how this change is working out.

A second major result of the last convention was the addition of the voice and perspective of a prominent female geoscientist, Mary Anning (1799–1847), to the Society's Ritual. Members of the Ritual and Insignia Committee drafted language to be included in a revised ritual, which the delegates approved. Dr. Mankin, our National Secretary-Treasurer, recently informed all chapters (letter dated September 14, 2007) that a new version of the Ritual has been prepared for perusal and correction by the Ritual and Insignia Committee. An approved version will be distributed as soon as it is printed after the convention.

Lastly, the delegates to the 39<sup>th</sup> convention expressed a strong desire for the National Council to continue and expand its efforts to increase the visibility of Sigma Gamma Epsilon within the broader geoscience community. The Chapter Affairs Committee made several recommendations along these lines: (i) establish a message board on The Society's website for inter-chapter communications, and (ii) host a reception for members and alumni at the GSA annual meetings. Shortly after the convention, a members' forum (hosted by Yahoo! Groups) was activated on our website. The forum was quite active for several weeks following the convention and obviously facilitated inter-chapter communications, but it is now largely unused. The inaugural

SGE reception, held in conjunction with the 2005 GSA Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, was attended by approximately 20 students. Approximately 25 students attended the second annual reception at GSA/Philadelphia in 2006. These were both fun events and provided an opportunity for inter-chapter networking. We will be hosting a reception at the upcoming GSA meeting in Denver (October 29, 5 to 7 pm, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Capital Ballroom 3). I hope to see several of you there and please encourage other SGE members and advisors to attend.

Shortly after the last convention, Dr. Mankin received an inquiry from the American Geological Institute (AGI) concerning the possibility of SGE becoming a member organization. The National Council was in agreement that this would be a benefit to the members of SGE. I will leave it to him to fill you in on the details of his negotiations as part of his report to the convention. We will be asking the delegates of this convention to approve this association, contingent upon successful negotiations between the two organizations.

### **SGE Poster Session at GSA**

In my opinion, one of SGE's greatest successes at the national level has been the steady growth in participation in our poster session, held each year as part of the annual meeting of GSA. This event serves to highlight student research in the geosciences and call attention to SGE as a student organization that promotes research and the professional development of its members.

Thirty-three (33) high-quality posters were presented at our session in 2005 at the Salt Lake City meeting. Last year (2006), at the Philadelphia meeting, 44 posters were presented, also of very high quality. In each of those years approximately 15 posters were authored by SGE members and therefore judged by members of the National Council for our two "best poster" awards:

#### **Austin A. Sartin Award:**

2005 – Paul Roberts, Gamma Kappa Chapter (Albion College)

2006 – Sean Porse and Joseph Bell, Eta Nu Chapter (James Madison University)

#### **National Council Award:**

2005 – Elliot Jagniecki, Epsilon Kappa Chapter (Central Michigan University)

2006 – Lindy Straathof, Epsilon Kappa Chapter (Central Michigan University)

This year (2007) we decided to limit participation in our poster session to undergraduates (faculty and graduate students may be co-authors) and the response was overwhelming. Fifty-five (55) posters are scheduled to be presented at the upcoming GSA meeting in Denver (Technical Session 118, Monday, October 29, 1:30–5:00 pm). Please stop by our session and show your support for these young researchers and fellow members of SGE. If this growth continues, we may have to ask GSA for two poster sessions at subsequent meetings.

### ***The Compass***

The delegates at the last convention spent a significant amount of time discussing the status of *The Compass*. Then-president Don Neal commented in his report that not only were we behind schedule in terms of the publication date on each issue, but the content of the issues left much to be desired. Seven issues of *The Compass* (vol. 78, no. 2 through vol. 79, no. 4) have been published since the last convention in April 2005. In my opinion, the general content has been improved. In fact, I think the two issues (vol. 78, nos. 2 and 3) sponsored by the Gamma Zeta Chapter at Kent State University are two of the best issues published in many years. These issues show us what can be achieved when a chapter and its home department make the effort to highlight the student

research taking place there by sponsoring an issue. Volume 79, no. 1, another strong issue, contains a series of articles on the theme of geologists as university presidents. Dr. Dan Merriam, former National President and former National Editor, served as guest editor for this issue. Our Society owes him a hearty “thank you”.

In terms of publication date, unfortunately, we have fallen even further behind. As a quarterly journal, 9 or 10 issues should have been published during the past two and half years. The most recent issue (vol. 79, no. 4), which you received earlier this semester (Fall 2007), is dated Fall 2005. This is a serious problem and one of the challenges that I mentioned earlier. We need to strive for more timely publication of reviewed manuscripts. In addition, it is really up to you, the student members, to submit materials for publication. All successful scientific journals have a steady flow of incoming manuscripts to be reviewed. Dr. Don Neal, our National Editor, will discuss these issues in more detail in his report to the convention. [Note: Volume 80, no. 1, dated Fall 2006, was distributed about the time of the convention, October 2007.]

### **Issues to Be Addressed by the 40<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention**

Let me summarize the major issues that I perceive you will have to wrestle with as delegates and alternates to this convention. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list and the National Council fully expects to hear from you about issues and concerns that were not on any of our radar screens.

1. Should SGE become a member society of AGI?
2. Do we need to increase initiation fees and/or annual dues at this time?
3. How can we improve the status of *The Compass*?
4. Who will serve on the National Council during the next biennium?
5. Which chapter will host our next convention? If we continue to follow the province rotation established by student delegates at previous conventions, the next convention should be held within the Northeastern Province in the spring of 2010.

### **Acknowledgments**

The work of SGE at the national level is very much a team effort and you have benefitted from having a group of national officers dedicated to promoting the basic ideals of Sigma Gamma Epsilon. Your national vice presidents carry most of the load with respect to evaluating petitions for new chapters and judging the student research at our GSA poster session; they are:

- Dr. Cindy Carney, formerly of Wright State University – Northeastern Province
- Dr. Michael Gibson, University of Tennessee at Martin – Southeastern Province
- Dr. John Hogan, University of Missouri, Rolla – Central Province
- Dr. Rip Langford, University of Texas at El Paso – Western Province

Dr. Gibson was nominated by the National Council last fall to fill the vacancy created when Dr. Michael Slattery (Texas Christian University) resigned his position on the National Council. Thanks go to Dr. Slattery for his years of service to SGE and to Dr. Gibson for stepping in on short notice. We put Michael to work immediately with the campus visit to Middle Tennessee State University.

Dr. Don Neal, East Carolina University, has served for the past two years in the dual capacity as National Editor and Past President. Don has been especially helpful to me as I learned the ropes associated with the presidency; thank you Don.

With this convention, Dr. Charlie Mankin, Director of the Oklahoma Geological Survey and National Secretary-Treasurer of SGE, and Ms. Betty Bellis, manager of SGE's national office, have completed a remarkable and unprecedented forty (40) years of service (1967-2007) to Sigma Gamma Epsilon. This feat is even more remarkable considering the fact that Charlie was first approached by the National Council in 1967 to take over the office on a "temporary" basis. The Society would not be what it is today without the dedication and sustained effort of these two exceptional individuals. There is simply no way that we can say thank you enough, but we will try. Our Society also owes a debt of gratitude to the Oklahoma Geological Survey, which has generously provided the office space for our national operations for the past 40 years.

I would like to give a special thanks to the Gamma Sigma Chapter and the Department of Earth Sciences here at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) for being our host for the next few days, especially Bree McClenning (Chapter President), Dr. Jim Walters (Department Chair and Chapter Advisor), and Lori Jerke (Department Secretary). This is my fourth national convention, so I understand and appreciate the time and effort necessary to organize such an event. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Siobahn Morgan here at UNI for serving as our web master. She has done a great job in maintaining our web presence and supervising continual improvements in our site.

Lastly, on behalf of all active and alumni members of Sigma Gamma Epsilon, let me say thanks to you, the delegates and alternates to this convention. Your willingness to take time out of your busy school schedule, to travel to Cedar Falls, and to conduct the business of your society is truly commendable. I look forward to a productive and fun couple of days together.

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard L. Ford  
National President (2005-2007)  
The Society of Sigma Gamma Epsilon

October 19, 2007