

**The Society of Sigma Gamma Epsilon**  
**41<sup>st</sup> Biennial Convention**  
**Indiana University**  
**March 26-28, 2010**

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

Geology students at the University of Kansas first organized Sigma Gamma Epsilon (SGE) as a professional fraternity devoted to the Earth Sciences back in 1915. SGE quickly grew into a national organization and, as a student-run society, it became necessary for representatives from the various college chapters to periodically come together to conduct business and set policy. You are about to continue that important tradition and duty by participating in the Society's 41<sup>st</sup> Biennial Convention. Remember, the decisions you make at this convention will serve to direct the Society for the next two and half years.

For the past five years it has been my great pleasure and honor to serve you as National President. I was elected by the student delegates at the 39th Biennial Convention in 2005 and reelected to a second term at our last convention in 2007. My term is almost over and my final duties are to deliver this "state of the Society" report and to preside over this convention. Overall, I would say that the health of the Society is very good, especially at the local chapter level. There are more than 70 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. At the national level, SGE has seen both notable successes, such as the steady increase in participation in our poster session at the Annual Meeting of the Geological Society of America (GSA), and serious challenges, such as the current status of *The Compass* (more about these issues later in the report). I would now like to summarize the major developments of the past two years, starting with the recent transfer of the national office from the Oklahoma Geological Survey to the Department of Earth Science at the University of Northern Iowa.

**New National Secretary-Treasurer**

For the past 42 years, Dr. Charles ("Charlie") Mankin, National Secretary-Treasurer, and Ms. Betty Bellis, Secretary to the National Council, have been the glue that has held our society together. Student members, faculty advisors, and even national presidents have come and gone over the years, but Charlie and Betty were always there. Charlie recently retired from the Oklahoma Geological Survey, where he had served as Director and State Geologist; Betty retired from the Survey in June 2009. With these major changes in their lives, Charlie and Betty decided it was time to appoint a new National Secretary-Treasurer and turn over the day-to-day operations of SGE's National Office. They have completed an unprecedented forty-two (42) years of service (1967-2009) 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. Our Society also owes a debt of gratitude to the Oklahoma Geological Survey, which had generously provided the office space for our national operations for the past 30 years or so – Betty ran the national office out of her home for about the first ten years of Charlie's tenure as National Secretary-Treasurer. **If you have not already done so, I strongly encourage each active chapter of SGE to send Charlie and Betty a note or card expressing a hearty thank-you and best wishes for their retirement years together.**

Last Spring I consulted with current and former members of the National Council to identify a candidate to take over as National Secretary-Treasurer. There was a strong consensus of opinion that Dr. James (“Jim”) Walters (University of Northern Iowa) would be the best person for the job, by virtue of his dedication to SGE and his extensive experience as a national officer (regional vice president and National President) and as a long-time chapter advisor. Jim was also named an Honorary Member of SGE by the delegates to the last convention. Fortunately for SGE, Jim agreed to serve and to host the National Office within the Department of Earth Science at UNI. By a unanimous vote of the National Council, he was appointed the new National Secretary-Treasurer, effective September 1, 2009. Jim and I made a trip to Norman, OK, last June to begin the transition process. We still have much to do, but with your help and support the Society will move forward. Jim has already made great progress in organizing the new national office and hiring a new administrative assistant; I will let him fill you in on the details.

### **Chapter Growth**

Your regional vice presidents and other national officers have been “on the road” during the past two and half years conducting department evaluations and new-chapter installations. Their individual reports will provide some of the details, but let me summarize here. Five (5) new chapters have been established since the 40<sup>th</sup> biennial convention in the Fall of 2007:

1. Eta Tau Chapter at the University of Dayton (Dayton, OH) – April 18, 2008.  
Department visit and installation conducted by Dr. Erika Elswick, Northeastern VP.
2. Eta Upsilon Chapter at the University of the Pacific (Stockton, CA) – May 1, 2009.  
Department visit by Dr. Rick Ford, National President; installation conducted by Dr. Frank Corsetti, Advisor, Omega Chapter (USC).
3. Eta Phi Chapter at the University of Northern Illinois (DeKalb, IL) – April 10, 2009.  
Department visit by Dr. Jim Walters, Advisor, Gamma Sigma Chapter (UNI); installation conducted by Dr. John Hogan, Central VP.
4. Eta Chi Chapter at SUNY, The College at Brockport (Brockport, NY) – May 11, 2009.  
Department visit and installation conducted by Dr. Erika Elswick.
5. Eta Psi Chapter at Keene State College (Keene, NH) – November 13, 2009.  
Department visit and installation conducted by Dr. Erika Elswick.

I had the great pleasure of conducting the department visit at the University of the Pacific in April 2008. As part of the visit I was treated to a tour of the special collections area of the university library. There, I was able to read some of John Muir’s original field notebooks, including some of his sketches related to the glacial history of the Sierra Nevada range.

Eta Psi (Keene State), our newest chapter, is number 188 on the Society’s all-time chapter list. The number of active chapters at this time is approximately 74, a very healthy number indeed, distributed by province as follows:

Northeastern Province	32 active chapters
Southeastern Province	18
Central Province	16
Western Province	8

Several previously inactive chapters have reactivated since the last convention, including the Sigma (Ohio State), Upsilon (West Virginia), Beta Pi (Cornell College, IA), Delta Alpha (Wm. & Mary), Delta Eta (South Alabama), Zeta Rho (SUNY Oneonta), and Zeta Tau (Wisconsin–Eau Claire) chapters. We welcome them back.

## **Initiatives from the Last Convention**

Unfortunately, the minutes from the last convention have not yet been published in *The Compass*, so let me summarize the steps taken by the National Council over the past two years to implement the major initiatives approved by the student delegates to the last convention. First, the delegates approved an updated version of the Society's initiation ritual. Delegates to the 39<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention (2005) voted to add the voice and perspective of a prominent female geoscientist, Mary Anning (1799-1847), to the ritual. Final edits were made and approved at the last convention (2007). Ms Betty Bellis oversaw the printing of the new ritual, dated July 2008, and its was distributed to chapters in time for fall initiations in 2008.

The delegates at the last two conventions spent a significant amount of time discussing the status of *The Compass*. At the time of the last convention (October 2007), volume 80, no.1, dated Fall 2006, has just been received by the student members. The delegates suggested that the Society undertake an ambitious publication schedule (up to 6 issues per year) in an attempt to "catch up" on the publication date. Unfortunately, we have fallen even further behind. Only three (3) issues (vol. 80, numbers 2, 3 & 4) have been published and distributed since the last convention. As a quarterly journal, 9 or 10 issues should have been published during the past two and half years. The most recent issue (vol. 80, no. 4), which you received earlier this semester (Spring 2010), is dated Summer 2007. In this age of instant communication, this is a serious problem and one of the challenges that I mentioned earlier. Dr. Don Neal, your National Editor, is very frustrated by this situation and let me state that he has done all that he could to try to improve it. The problems have been beyond his power to correct. It is not clear that our current finances can support more frequent publication.

## **SGE Poster Session at GSA**

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. In 2007 we decided to limit participation in our poster session to undergraduates (faculty and graduate students may be co-authors) and the response has been overwhelming. Fifty-five (55) posters were presented at GSA/Denver (2007), 30 at GSA/Houston (2008), and a record 62 posters at GSA/Portland (2009)! If this growth continues, we may have to ask GSA for two poster sessions at future meetings. 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:**

2007 – Lauren Chrapowitzky, Eta Xi Chapter (St. Lawrence)

2008 – Rafferty J. Sweeney, Eta Xi Chapter (St. Lawrence)

2009 – Justin M. Von Bargen, Sigma Chapter (Ohio State)

### **National Council Awards:**

2007 – Brent Reynolds, Epsilon Kappa Chapter (Central Michigan)

Lisa C. DeGrazia, Eta Nu Chapter (James Madison)

2008 – Sandy Marrufo & Sarah Quinonez, Alpha Lambda Chapter (UTEP)

Tiffany E. Neumann, Zeta Beta Chapter (West Chester)

2009 – Jennifer M. Shepeck, Gamma Sigma Chapter (Northern Iowa)

Kirby Gimson, Zeta Beta Chapter (West Chester)

## Issues to Be Addressed by the 41<sup>st</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. A number of these issues can probably be lumped together as potential “belt-tightening” measures. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list and the National Council fully expects to hear from you, the student delegates, about issues and concerns that were not on any of our radar screens.

1. Do we need to increase initiation fees and/or annual dues at this time?
2. Can changes be made in the way we establish new chapters that would speed up the process and save the Society money?
3. Should the Society add another regional vice president to help with establishing new chapters and judging posters at GSA?
4. How can we improve the status of *The Compass*? Should it become an online journal? Should it fade away into the history of the Society? These are difficult questions.
5. Who will serve on the National Council during the next biennium?
6. Which chapter will host our next convention in 2012? Should we plan a more modest business meeting in 2012 in conjunction with the GSA meeting? This could save the Society money as it prepares for its Centennial Celebration and Convention in 2015.
7. Should we establish a Centennial Celebration Committee to begin planning and fund-raising for 2015?

## Acknowledgments

The work of SGE at the national level is very much a team effort and you have benefitted from having a group of volunteer 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. Erika Elswick, Indiana University – Northeastern Province
- Dr. Michael Gibson, University of Tennessee at Martin – Southeastern Province
- Dr. John Hogan, Missouri University of Science & Technology – Central Province
- Dr. Rip Langford, University of Texas at El Paso – Western Province

Erika Elswick is the “new kid on the block” having been elected by the delegates to the last convention. She has already provided substantial service to SGE in conducting the site visits and installations for three (3) new chapters. She is also the faculty advisor for our host chapter for this convention. Thank you Erika.

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

Although she is not listed as an official member of the National Council, we all owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Siobahn Morgan (University of Northern Iowa) for establishing and maintaining the Society’s website.

For most of my time as president I had the great fortune to work with Charlie Mankin and Betty Bellis on behalf of SGE and its student members. This was a rewarding experience for me and I now count them among my friends and special colleagues. Now that they have been promoted to “Honorary Historians” of the Society, I hope our paths will continue to cross in the future. Thank you Charlie and Betty for all your hard work and support these past five years.

I would like to give a special thanks to the Rho Chapter and the Department of Geological Sciences here at the Indiana University for being our host for the next few days. This is my fifth

national convention, so I understand and appreciate the time and effort necessary to organize such an event.

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 Bloomington, 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 (2005-2010)  
The Society of Sigma Gamma Epsilon

March 1, 2010