

National Council of The Society of  
*Sigma Gamma Epsilon*



NATIONAL HONORARY SOCIETY in the EARTH SCIENCES

Dr. Michael A. Gibson  
Dept. of Agriculture, Geosciences, & Natural Resources  
256 Brehm Hall  
University of Tennessee at Martin  
Martin, TN 38238

National Vice President  
Southeastern Province  
Phone: (731)-881-7435  
Fax: (731)-881-7434  
E-mail: mgibson@utm.edu

February 9, 2013

TO: Active Chapters of Sigma Gamma Epsilon

FROM: Dr. Michael A. Gibson  
Vice President, Southeastern Province

RE: Site Visit to Columbus State University

I visited the Earth and Planetary Sciences program at Columbus State University on January 7-8, 2013. Dr. David Schwimmer and the CSU faculty gave me a tour of their department, campus, and the CSU library. The geology student representative for the SGE petition, Mr. Donald Osborne, met with me along with several of the CSU geology majors. Throughout the day, I met with most of their faculty, viewed their facilities (spread out in two buildings), their library, and sat through Dr. Schwimmer's vertebrate paleontology course. I also met with the head of the CSU Honors program. Many of the students from the original 2012 petition had graduated and several from the current class would be graduating at the end of the current semester, but numerous new students were eligible for membership. In anticipation of a favorable vote from the national membership, the CSU students are organizing their first slate of officers and preparing for an initiation ceremony.

The CSU Department of Earth and Space Sciences is a multi-disciplinary department encompassing an impressive array of earth and planetary sciences. It has a diverse array of 15 full-time tenure-track faculty, eight of which teach earth science and astronomy (the remainder teach physics and anthropology). The department averages approximately 40 undergraduate geology majors. The program offers bachelor's degree concentrations in geology, environmental science, astrophysics and planetary geology, and earth and space science secondary education. The Department also offers an Associate Science degree in Engineering Science, and a Master of Science in Environmental Science.

The multidisciplinary nature of the Department is one of its strengths. The Department is well equipped with a well stocked petrographic microscope laboratory and thin-section preparation lab, computer facilities, and extensive teaching and research collections.

The CSU department has an established record of commitment to excellence in Earth science teaching, research and public service commensurate with the expectations of SGE. Research by faculty and students is focused in the southeast and there is ample evidence of consistent and quality student and faculty research. CSU students figure prominently in the University's Honors Program with several students having published as undergraduates. The department has a strong record of placing their graduates into graduate schools and into the workforce through private consulting firms and state agencies. The department and its students have developed a strong K-12 outreach program as well. Student research at CSU is highly encouraged and the research topics reflect a wide range of interests including environmental issues, structural geology and vertebrate paleontology.

The students at CSU have a strong geology club that meets regularly and is active in outreach programs. I witnessed firsthand the connectedness of the students to one another and to their faculty. The group is cohesive and supportive of one another. Each year a significant number of new geoscience majors enter the program, which should ensure an active and consistent new chapter. The faculty and chair of the department expressed unanimous and enthusiastic support of the student petition for an SGE chapter. They are connected to their students and clearly dedicated to their success.

I fully support the CSU petition to establish a chapter of Sigma Gamma Epsilon at Columbus State University.

Sincerely,



Dr. Michael A. Gibson

National Vice President

Southeastern Province

Sigma Gamma Epsilon