

Howe Report

LSU

Department of
Geology & Geophysics

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Dear supporters of LSU G&G:

A year ago, we were in a very different world! It's kind of dizzying to think of all the events, in particular the global COVID-19 pandemic, political unrest, a rocky election, and a deep freeze where many of us live. Through it all the Department has been teaching students, doing research as we can, and serving our community. I thought I would recap some of the big news stories of the past year in the department:

The COVID-19 pandemic played havoc with our research. Many of our faculty had to cancel or postpone planned major field or lab work, labs were closed, classrooms closed. Many of our students were unable to collect data for their theses, and everybody was frantically thrown online just as the department was starting to develop online programs. Getting teaching done came to dominate everybody's life this past year, especially during last spring. Since then, we were able to return to limited operations, which have been increasing bit by bit. Our Field Camp ran last summer under a careful COVID protocol so our seniors could graduate, but the juniors had to wait for this summer. Big thanks to our intrepid Field Camp director Dr. Amy Luther for pulling off one of the few in-person field camps in the US in 2020!

We had a couple of bright lights of faculty awards and honors: Dr. Patricia Persaud became a Radcliffe Fellow (we think the first ever from LSU) and quite recently won a prestigious NSF CAREER award. Dr. Barb Dutrow, who had her own mineral named after her last year (dutrowite), this year is slated to become President of the Geological Society of America. She follows in the footsteps of Richard Russell.

During the lockdown we made some changes to our undergraduate curriculum to make it more user friendly. We introduced two new courses for sophomores "Research in Geosciences" to bring them into the research enterprise right away in their careers, and "Earth System Science" to teach them about the interconnected cycles of the Earth. We also streamlined the prerequisites for department courses to make it easier for traditional and non-traditional students alike to graduate in four years. Students choosing our major even as sophomores should now have no trouble graduating on time.

The big news in the coming year of course is the Department Centennial. In 1922 a brilliant young scientist from Stanford, Dr. Henry Howe accepted LSU's offer to form a Department of Geology. Some of us remember the 50th anniversary celebration in 1972. Still more remember the 75th anniversary in 1997. We plan to make the 100th department anniversary a truly memorable event that showcases

the history, present, and future of geology and geophysics at LSU. Our launch party will be at the Fall meeting of the American Geophysical Union in New Orleans during the week of December 13-17, 2021. Our planning committee is being formed very soon, and if you're interested in serving, volunteering, or have ideas please let us know.

As I write this, vaccinations on campus have begun in earnest. I really think that we'll soon be dusting off the microscopes and getting the field boots out of the closet once again. The Department is doing some thinking about the future and we want to invite you to be a part of the discussion, stay tuned! In the meantime, I hope you have all weathered the past year as well as the Department has, and we look forward to the coming summer and fall with great optimism.

Cheers,

Jon

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