A letter from the chair

It has been a while since I last communicated with you, but let me assure you that you have not been forgotten. The last two years have been busy years. As you will see from our list of faculty in this newsletter, we have gone through some considerable changes. Professors Mead Allison, Suzanne LeClair, and Franco Marcantonio have all departed, but we have spent a good deal of time and effort in finding highly qualified and exciting young educators and researchers to build the department up to its current level, both in numbers and in quality of faculty. Professors Mead Allison, Suzanne LeClair, and Franco Marcantonio have all departed, but we have spent a good deal of time and effort in finding highly qualified and exciting young educators and researchers to build the department up to its current level, both in numbers and in quality of faculty. Dr. Karen Johannesson, a geochemist who specializes in groundwater joined the faculty in 2007 as an Associate Professor and was promoted to full Professor as of July 1, 2009. Dr. Brad Rosenheim, an isotope geochemist who specializes in paleoceanography, joined the faculty in January 2008 as an Assistant Professor. Dr. Nicole Gasparini, a geomorphologist who specializes in landscape evolution joined us in January 2008 as an Assistant Professor. Dr. Gerhard Piringer, an environmental engineer, joined us in 2007 as Professor of Practice with duties primarily in teaching courses in our environmental program. Most recently, Dr. Kyle Straub, a sedimentologist who specializes in experimental sedimentology, joined us in January of this year. These additions to the faculty will help to ensure that our current students and future students get the best education possible from our department.

Another major change that has taken place in the past two years is that we have moved from our old familiar home in Dinwiddie Hall to a much improved facility in the former Civil Engineering Building in Blessey Hall. Blessey Hall now houses the department office, most of the faculty offices, the rock lab, and a hydraulics lab that our new professor, Kyle Straub, is working to renovate. Research and teaching labs are now in the adjacent building, formerly known as the Mechanical Services Building, but now called the Science and Engineering Laboratory Complex. The rock garden has moved to the courtyard between Blessey Hall and Stanley Thomas Hall, and provides a pleasant place to eat lunch, have department barbeques, and, as many of you have experienced from last year, a place to have our annual alumni reception during Homecoming week. To see for yourself, plan to attend the 2009 annual homecoming reception which will be on Friday evening, October 9.

Although it has been hard work to recover from the effects of Hurricane Katrina and the resulting reorganization of Tulane, things are looking better for the future. The number of undergraduate majors is increasing as are the number of graduate students. We have hopes to continue to grow the size of the faculty, but are limited this year because of the current economic situation. The new School of Science and Engineering, of which we are a part, is much more responsive to the needs and obligations of faculty teaching and doing research in science than was the old structure.

As always, we are anxious to hear from you. Visit our web page at http://tulane.edu/sse/eens/. On that page you will find up to date information on our programs and a link to a page dedicated to alumni matters. On the alumni page you can update your mailing address and email address, send us your comments, and find the donations page (the same one included on the last page of this newsletter).
Speaking of donations, I know it is difficult in these tough economic times, but the department can always use any support you can provide. This year we are beginning an effort to establish an endowed fund that will provide support of student field experiences (see later section of this newsletter). So think of us when it comes time to make a donation for tax purposes. Again, if you lose the form, you can always find it on our web page.

So, drop us a line, come visit us when you are in New Orleans, and send us a donation if you can. You will always be part of the family as far as we are concerned.

Stephen A. Nelson (Chair)

Campaign to Create and Endowed Fund for Earth & Environmental Sciences Field Studies

As you all know, field studies are an important part of our science. Yet because of our location in south Louisiana, it is difficult to offer our students opportunities to see and experience a wide diversity of geological environments. You all remember the field trips that we do offer and remember the value these field trips provided in enhancing your education. We do still offer field trips in such courses as mineralogy, petrology, sed/strat, and geomorphology, and many of these do take advantage of our setting in the Mississippi River delta, but we would like to expand our offerings for field opportunities. Currently field trips are supported by your contributions to the Tulane Geology Fund. Once the funds from the Tulane Geology Fund are expended, they are only replaced by your kind contributions. Thus, we wish to establish an endowed account that would provide income on an annual basis.

We would like to see such an account with a principle of several hundred thousand dollars that would provide funding for class related field trips, annual departmental field trips to spectacular geologic area, scholarships for students needing help with field camp, and scholarships to help our students go on the Grand Canyon Colloquium River trip. A substantial amount is required before the endowment can be set up, but any amount you can contribute will certainly help.

Upcoming Events

Monday, June 8, 2009 - AAPG Convention and Exhibition
Hyatt Regency Convention Center, Denver, CO Private cocktail reception - 5:30 pm in room Granite C

Friday, October 9, 2009
Geology Homecoming Party

December snow at Tulane
The Rock Garden

2009 Department Graduates

Geology
Erica Helton
Kate Keelen
Johanna (Josie) Nevitt
Tabitha Watson

Environmental Science
Jennifer Raney
B. Tierney Walsh

Department Award Winners

The R. A. Steinmayer Award
-- Johanna (Josie) Nevitt

The Harold E. Vokes Award
--Tabitha E. Watson

The Stuart S. Bamforth Prize for Excellence in Environmental Studies
--B. Tierney Walsh

The 2009 Chairman’s Award
--Johanna (Josie) Nevitt
--B. Tierney Walsh

"My goal for majoring in Geology was to gain as much knowledge about the world as possible - the whats, the whys and the whens. Now I’m well on my way. EENS also gave me a lot of excuses to go outside and to travel."

- 2009 graduate,
Kate Keelen
FACULTY NEWS

Nancye Dawers

It is hard to believe that I have been at Tulane now for 9 years – time flies! I am teaching courses such as physical geology, structural geology and subsurface geology. In terms of research, I continue to work in the Basin & Range, eastern California shear zone and along the Baton Rouge fault. Recently I was appointed to the editorial board of Geology, which I’ll serve on through 2011. This September I’ll be co-convening a GSA field forum on the neotectonics of northern Owens Valley, California. This area has been important to my research since my PhD work and I can’t seem to pull myself away from it. There is still remarkable interest in this area as a prime locality for work on fault growth and interaction. Moreover, recent recognition that a significant portion of North American-Pacific plate motion is distributed through young evolving fault systems in eastern California makes this area of interest to many geologists and geophysicists. If you are not familiar with GSA field forums, they are essentially small topical meetings in which much of the discussion occurs in the field. GSA’s field forums date back only about a decade; 1 or 2 are held per year. Watch for the summary report in GSA Today and a special issue of GSA’s new journal Lithosphere.

Hopefully word is getting out that AAPG & SEPM are returning to New Orleans in 2010 for the first time since Katrina. (Some of you may recall that a recent annual convention was scheduled for New Orleans, but plans were scrapped shortly after Katrina.) I’m serving as the vice chair of the 2010 organizing committee and have already been working on this with the conference chair, Tom Hudson (Chevron) and the technical program chair, Paul Post, (Minerals Management Service). The meeting is scheduled for April 11-15, 2010. The department is of course planning an alumni event during the meeting. It would be great to see a good alumni turnout……

George Flowers

I have been busy developing the Environmental Science major in cooperation with Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. The major seeks to prepare students to work as environmental scientists in industry, consulting firms, and governmental agencies. Although the major is small at present, we hope to increase the size as students finish the program and succeed after graduation. I continue overseeing the Coordinated Instrumentation Facility, which seeks to increase the outside user base for scientific instrumentation. In addition, I’m working on a project with Leonard Thien of Cell and Molecular Biology on the evolution of Catahoula Lake in LaSalle Parish, Louisiana. The lake undergoes dramatic variations in water level on a seasonal basis, ranging from 12+ feet deep in the spring to a small river running through the basin in the fall. Water level in the lake is controlled significantly by the stage of Black River, which runs into the Red River and ultimately empties into the Mississippi River.

Nicole Gasparini

I joined the Department in January 2008. My first year was a whirlwind and included teaching two different courses – Geomorphology and Major World River Systems - each for my first time. Both courses included a field trip. During the fall of 2008, my students in the Major World River Systems course, along with Profs Flowers and Rosenheim, visited the old river control structure which regulates water flow between the Mississippi River and the Atchafalaya River. Having the Mississippi in Tulane’s front yard allowed students to easily put in perspective some of the challenges of controlling large rivers.

I have also started to grow my research group. I currently have one graduate student and am advising two undergraduate students on their honors’ theses. Last summer I traveled to two Hawaiian Islands with one undergraduate advisee who is currently finishing her research and writing her thesis. This summer, I will again travel to Hawaii with another undergraduate student and my graduate student. We are exploring the effects of climate on river erosion. My research is part of a larger project with faculty members Brad Rosenheim and Alex Kolker. Our joint project is exploring the effects of land-use change on erosion and off-shore deposition.

Karen H. Johannesson

My research interests broadly encompasses environmental geochemistry and biogeochemistry with specific emphasis in trace element speciation, chemical hydrogeology, biogeochemical cycling of trace elements in the environment, and chemical limnology.

The majority of my research efforts are focused on the study of trace element speciation in natural waters, including formation of metal/metalloid aqueous complexes with inorganic and organic ligands, redox speciation, studies of surface complexation of
metals/metalloids to mineral/organic matter surfaces, and manner in which these processes effect trace element cycles. I combine field, analytical, and experimental approaches in order to develop geochemical models that can improve our understanding of the biogeochemical processes that control trace element cycles in the near-surface environment.

I am particularly interested in the biogeochemistry of the rare earth elements (REE), actinides, and oxyanion-forming trace elements such as arsenic, selenium, chromium, and tungsten in the environment. My chemical hydrogeologic research centers on the “evolution” of groundwater compositions along groundwater flow paths and the roles that biogeochemical and microbial processes play in trace element speciation and mobility along flow paths in aquifer systems.

My laboratory includes two glove boxes for controlled atmosphere experiments, two class 100 laminar flow benches for manipulation of trace element samples, ultra-pure water system (Millipore Element), a pH-Stat for experiments where pH titration and/or fixed pH is required, centrifuge, a number of pH, Eh, ion-selective electrode meters, two spectrophotometers (one being field portable). In addition I have access to both class 100 and class 1000 clean spaces, and I’m a major user of Tulane University’s magnetic sector (i.e., high resolution) inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometer.

**Ronald Parsley**

I am in my 43rd year in the Department and still get up in the morning looking forward to another day. The department is the strongest it has ever been and all of you alums would be proud of the product we now produce. This last year I occupied my new office/lab in Science-Engineering Laboratories Building 214. I have a little less space than I had in Dinwiddie but it is better air-conditioned, has better light, better hood and overall is far more efficient. In many respects this was the first year, post Katrina, that things seemed to be back to some semblance of normality.

My classes in Invertebrate Paleontology, Dinosaurs and our first Grand Canyon course post Katrina all had unusually good students. Academic travel was especially interesting. The Grand Canyon trip had few students but the trip itself was excellent. The weather was great and boat trip was a really great experience. In mid-summer I went to Prague to do some research and then went on to Moscow for ten days as a guest of the Paleontological Institute to give a paper on Chinese eocrinoids and to open some new avenues in my research. Then back to Prague for more research.

While I was in Prague, my wife Shirley completed a 2200 mile bike trip from New Orleans to Georgian Bay in Ontario. We got back to New Orleans about the same time. In October I went to the GSA in Houston to give a paper on other aspects of the Chinese eocrinoids which I have been working on for the last six years. This work seems to be winding down and my attention has shifted back to Prague and Moscow.

We did not do a lot of vacation travel this year but over both New Years for 2008 we were in New York visiting my older son (Rod) and his family. Three grand kids are enough to keep one drained of energy and keep you focused. Rod manages a hedge fund in mid-town Manhattan. I did sneak off for a day in the fossil collections in the American Museum of Natural History. My younger son (Andy) and his wife have two fine daughters. Andy is now a high school principal in Baltimore. We still ride our bikes a lot and try to stay fit. I hope that if any of you are ever on campus that you will at least stick your head in the door and say “hi”!!

**Stephen A. Nelson**

As chair of the department for the last few tumultuous years, I have spent a lot of time recruiting new faculty members and moving the department to its current new facilities in the Blessey Hall – Science and Engineering lab complex. This and teaching my normal courses in Mineralogy, Petrology, Volcanology, The Earth, and Natural Disasters, has not left a lot of time to conduct research. Still, I have spent a lot time educating hundreds of people, both from the Tulane Community and from outside, on the geological aspects of the Katrina Disaster.

Since November 2, 2005, I have conducted about 200 field trips to the levee breach sites in New Orleans and have given numerous talks on the same topic to groups at LSU, University of Tennessee, the New Orleans Geological Society, the Baton Rouge Geological Society, the Association of Environmental and Engineering Geologists, and many public and private secondary schools here in New Orleans.

Much of the information I present can be found on the web at [www.tulane.edu/~sanelson/Katrina](http://www.tulane.edu/~sanelson/Katrina)

Despite being nearly 4 years out of the disaster, there is still, unfortunately, much to see. So, if you are visiting New Orleans or know of groups that are coming here, and want to better understand
the disaster, send me an email or give me a call and we can probably arrange a field trip.

When not performing the administrative and teaching duties and leading field trips, I spend time with my family. My oldest Bryce, just finished his freshman year here at Tulane, while my other sons, Brett and Branton continue to work their way through high school and middle school. My wife, Karen, is still working for Shell. Our best times are the annual family vacations to such places as Hawaii, Southern Utah, and San Antonio, most of which, not surprisingly, involve some exploration of the geology.

Gerhard Piringer

I joined the department as a Professor of Practice in fall of 2007. As a Professor of Practice, my focus is on teaching undergraduate-level courses. One course on air pollution fundamentals and modeling introduces advanced undergraduates to state-of-the-art air dispersion modeling, which is a highly marketable skill for employment in the field of environmental consulting. Another course on sustainable urban infrastructure is popular not only with environmental science students, but also with students of various other backgrounds, notably architecture students. A favorite feature are the course’s field trips, including a tour of the Louisiana Superdome.

The course on environmental analysis targets junior-and senior-level students. It is a laboratory-centered, hands-on course with a focus on water quality and soil analysis. Last fall, I developed a “service learning” component for the course which involves analyzing the soil of New Orleans community gardens for their heavy metal content. At one site, soil lead levels were found to exceed EPA screening levels, while metals levels at another site were found to be lower than these thresholds. One participating student wrote “…This was one of the most fulfilling, challenging and interesting projects I’ve ever been a part of…” Besides teaching, I have been collaborating with chemical engineers in research on remediation of polluted groundwater with novel nano-sized engineered iron particles.

Brad E Rosenheim

I joined the faculty in January, 2008. During the past year, I inhabited a renovated laboratory and installed an isotope ratio mass spectrometer. This instrument will be used to measure stable isotope ratios of hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and sulfur.

In the spring of 2008, we sampled the Mississippi River during a high water event of a magnitude seen only every 10 years. Water samples and sediment cores were taken from unconstrained areas of the Bird’s Foot Delta in order to measure sedimentation rates and fluxes of different sources of carbon. Sampling was conducted with Dr. Alex Kolker (LUMCON, adjunct professor in EENS) and funded by NSF.

In the summer, I sampled sediment on the island of Lana’i in the Hawaiian Island chain. Lana’i is a dry yet steep tropical island that represents an end member in tropical carbon cycling. I will use these samples as well as coral samples to ascertain the role of humans and climate change on sedimentation and carbon cycling on Lana’i. This research is being carried out with Dr. Nicole Gasparini (EENS) and Dr. Alex Kolker. Between these research excursions, I attended Dr. Ron Parsley’s Grand Canyon Colloquium trip which was a geologist’s dream. The group of students was small in this post-katrina inaugural trip however it is expected that despite a slowed economy and increased associated costs, the colloquium will attract more students simply by word of mouth.

I welcomed two graduate students, Kimberly Roe and Jessica Adamic, to my research group in the fall semester of 2008. Kim is interested in applying a ramped pyrolysis radiocarbon dating method to various sediment systems to study carbon cycling, and Jess is interested in measuring stable isotopes and radiocarbon of corals and sediments to ascertain past ocean circulation and its role in climate change.

Kyle Straub

I joined the Department in January 2009. During my first semester at Tulane, I’ve been busy planning renovations for the hydraulics laboratory in 100 Blessey Hall. Following these renovations I will be constructing several large experimental basins in my laboratory to study issues related to sediment transport and stratigraphy in deltaic and deep marine environments. I’m also using 3D seismic volumes from the Mississippi delta top to study its Quaternary history of sedimentation and subsidence. This research is being carried out as part of a larger study sponsored by the National Center for Earth-surface Dynamics on the sustainability of the lower Mississippi River Delta.

I’m looking forward to teaching courses in the next academic year, starting off with Sedimentology and Stratigraphy in the fall term.
行为的地球气候系统由于全球变暖。Shiyong 研究了 Holocene 记录和海平面在密西西比 Delta 之外的两地（具体为西南路易斯安那州的 chenier 平原）的海平面变化，并将其与三角洲沉积物装载对地壳沉降的影响的数值模拟相结合。在接下来的几年内，我们期待能够更好地理解密西西比河的长剖面以及更远的内陆地区，如田纳西州孟菲斯的沉降原因和未来预测。

最后，Zhixiong 已经建立了一个新的光释年代测定实验室，这种方法允许对细粒石英颗粒进行年龄测量。这给我们一个机会研究过去的几百万年中下密西西比河谷的演变。他的发现有许多意义，包括发现过去的冰河-间冰期海平面变化是主控 Mississippi 河长剖面的。这种超洪水的淡水释放中断了北大西洋洋流，导致了一种目前被认为是温暖期的气候变化。

除了这些，我非常喜欢新奥尔良的生活，能够在户外博物馆，也就是花园区，居住，我一生中都住在最老的建筑里！

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In Memorium…..taken from the Times Picayune, New Orleans, written by John Pope

Hubert Skinner, expert on fossils and stamps
Died, Tuesday, March 03, 2009

Hubert Skinner, a Tulane University geology professor who achieved renown as an authority on U.S. postage, died Thursday at Tulane Medical Center. He was 79. Dr. Skinner, a Tulane faculty member for 43 years before retiring in 1996, was a micropaleontologist, a person who studies microscopic fossils. Friends said his painstaking attention to tiny details served him well in the decades he spent amassing an award-winning stamp collection with a conservative value of $1.5 million, said Edgar Jatho, a longtime friend and stamp enthusiast. "There's a great deal of similarity" between the two pursuits, said former geology department Chairwoman Emily Vokes, also a friend.

Dr. Skinner, a native of Tulsa, Okla., earned his bachelor's, masters and doctoral degrees at the University of Oklahoma. Texaco hired him in 1952 and sent him to New Orleans. Because he wanted to teach, Vokes said, he joined Tulane's geology faculty. "He loved the historical aspects of the science," said Stephen Nelson, chairman of Tulane's Earth and Environmental Sciences department. "He was probably one of the world's experts on the history of geology."

This passion for details carried over to his stamp collecting, said Dwayne Littauer, a former president of the Crescent City Stamp Club of New Orleans. Dr. Skinner was especially knowledgeable about 19th century stamps in general and Confederate stamps in particular. During his decades of collecting, Dr. Skinner regularly sold stamps, Jatho said, including a 1904 issue that fetched $124,000. At his death, Jatho said, Dr. Skinner owned a 1-cent un perforated 1851 stamp bearing a likeness of Benjamin Franklin. It is believed to be worth between $375,000 and $400,000.

Dr. Skinner received several awards from the American Philatelic Society, including the Jim and Corita Cryer Award for his years of research. Survivors include three daughters, Susan Ann Skinner and Sharon Burgess, both of Nashville, Tenn., and Kathryn Aleman of Harahan; a brother, Stanley Skinner of Tucson, Ariz.; and eight grandchildren.

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Mr. Thomas M. Westbrook, Metairie, LA
Mr. Kenneth M. Mallon, Houston, TX

DONATIONS 2008
Mrs. Julia H. Triplehorn, Fairbanks, AK
Mr. Thomas M. Westbrook, Metairie, LA
Mr. Kenneth M. Mallon, Houston, TX
2008 – 2009 Seminars

September 19, 2008 - Dr. Sadredin Moosavi, Tulane, "Profiling Beach Erosion at Grand Isle, LA - The Gustav Effect"
September 26, 2008 - Dr. Michael D. Miner, Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences, University of New Orleans, "Coastal Evolution and Sediment Dynamics along Mississippi River Delta Plain Barrier Shorelines."
October 3, 2008 - Dr. Brian J. Roberts, LUMCON, "Ecosystem Metabolism and Nutrient Cycling Along the Aquatic Continuum from Headwater Streams to the Ocean."
October 10, 2008 - Dr. Stephen A Nelson, Tulane, "The Geology of the Katrina Disaster in New Orleans."
October 31, 2008 - Dr. Darrell Henry, LSU, "Tourmaline: Can It Record Geologic Information Like a DVD?"
November 7, 2008 - Dr. David Burdige, Professor of Chemical Oceanography, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, "Carbonate dissolution in shallow water sediments: local, regional and (possible) global impacts."
November 14, 2008 - Dr. Karl W. Wegmann, North Carolina State University, "Great Earthquakes, Rock Uplift and Seismic Coupling above the Hellenic Subduction Zone – Crete, Greece."
November 21, 2008 - Dr. Elizabeth Heise, University of Texas at Brownsville, presents, "Sand Dune Erosion and Revegetation on South Padre Island, Texas."
December 5, 2008 – Dr. Ervin Otvos, "Quaternary sea-level, climate changes, Holocene barrier island and Mississippi Delta development, Northeastern Gulf of Mexico Coastal Plain. Tectonics-based contrasts with the Western Gulf"
December 12, 2008 - Dr. Hans Renssen, Free University, Amsterdam, presents, "The 8.2 ka event in climate model simulations: sensitivity to various perturbation scenarios and the global impact." January 16, 2009 - Dr. Yongxiang (Frank) Li, Tulane, "Freshwater outburst, rapid sea-level rise and abrupt climate change, 8,200 years ago."
February 6, 2009 - Dr. Jianwu Tang, Tulane, "Sr2+/Ca2+ and 44Ca/40Ca fractionation during inorganic calcite formation - experimental study."
February 13, 2009 - Dr. Peter Swart, Department of Marine Geology and Geophysics, University of Miami, "Alternate Explanations for synchronous variations in the carbon isotopic composition of platform derived sediments."
February 20, 2009 - Dr. Glenn Milne, University of Ottawa, "Searching for eustasy in deglacial sea-level histories."
February 27, 2009 - Dr. Eugene Domack, J. W. Johnson Family Professorship of Environmental Studies, Hamilton College, New York, presents, "Neoproterozoic Tillites and Carbonates, Odd Couple of the Otavi Platform, Namibia."
March 6, 2009 - Dr. Chunyan Li, LSU, "Flushing of bays and lakes in LA Coastal Region: Modeling and Observations."
March 13, 2009 - Dr. Gary Kinsland and Dr. Christoph Borst, University of Louisiana, "Visualization and Interpretation of LIDAR Data of the Surface of the Prairie Complex Near Lafayette, LA in an Interactive, 'Immersive,' 3D Envr."
March 20, 2009 - Dr. Iris Totten, Kansas State University, "Using virtual learning environments to teach geology."
April 3, 2009 - Dr. Bob Morton, USGS, "Paleo Tsunami and Storm Deposits - Implications for extreme-wave hazard assessments."
April 17, 2009 - Dr. Sidney Hemming, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, Columbia University, "Towards developing a paleo-hydrological record of the last glacial cycle in the Mono Basin, CA."
April 24, 2009 - Mr. Jeffrey Nittrouer, University of Texas at Austin, "Backwater control on sediment transport and channel morphology in the lowermost Mississippi River."
April 30, 2009 - Dr. Kelly Kilbourne, McDaniel College, "Paleoclimate proxy perspective on multidecadal variability in the Caribbean since 1751 A.D.
May 1, 2009 - Dr. Johan Schijf, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, "Multiple approaches to characterizing metal sorption on the surface of the marine macroalga Ulva lactuca."
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Thank you in advance for your generosity and continued support of Tulane EENS!
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