

# GCSSEPM NEWS



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Summer 2008

## The President's Column

### Back In Business

In 1981, the year I took my first job in the oil industry, with Esso Resources Calgary, oil hit \$90 per barrel. Oil slowly tumbled to a meager \$11 per barrel in 1998, the year I finally left ARCO, at one time the 7th largest oil company long-since absorbed by BP, to join academia. Student enrollments in geology were at an all-time low, hiring was limited, layoffs were the rule.

Geology departments took a major hit during this long price collapse. Many of the geology students graduating in the mid-eighties faced limited job prospects and rushed back to re-

train as environmental geologists, reflecting the rather short-lived increase in federal funding for environmental cleanups. Geology departments began hiring environmental geoscientists and calling themselves "Earth and Environmental Science Departments", eschewing older designations. In 1991, when I worked at ARCO Alaska, I was surprised at how many of my colleagues, some with PhD's in Geology, were completing part-time environmental MS Degrees, in anticipation of imminent layoffs. Unfortunately, the expected

vast increase in funding for environmental science never appeared. Enrollments continued to be flat or declining, and in response, several universities shrunk their geology departments, which were consequently subsumed into physics, or geography, or worse, disappeared altogether. Funding for geoscience research by the National Science Foundation (NSF), especially in applied areas relevant to the oil industry, has disappeared. Even the Department of Energy is no longer funding petroleum research, focusing almost exclusively on nuclear energy and on CO2 sequestration. For a while there it looked like geology was in danger of extinction!

In 1998 we had a mere seven students taking Sophomore Mineralogy, at UT Dallas, where I taught until 2005. If you went to school in the late seventies you might remember Mineralogy as the classic "weeder" course used to cull students in high enrollment years. Given that we needed at least 10 students for an undergraduate course to 'make' it was a nerve-racking time to be a geology professor, heavily scrutinized by senior administrators looking for departments to squeeze during a time in which there were severe academic budget cuts. SEPM dropped both "Paleontology and Mineralogy" from their

### Highlights

The GCSSEPM News is published three times a year by the Gulf Coast Section Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists. Your comments and suggestions are welcome. Contact Lana Ann Czerniakowski, GCSSEPM Secretary at (281) 293-1620 or lana.czerniakowski@conocophillips.com, or contact your local business representative.

Visit the GCSSEPM Website at [www.gcssepm.org](http://www.gcssepm.org) for Section and Foundation News and Information.

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### Election of 2009 Section Officers

The following candidates have been nominated for Section offices:

#### President-Elect:

John Holbrook  
Charlotte Jolley

#### Vice President:

Richard E. Kilby

#### Treasurer:

Johanna Moutoux

Biographical sketches of the candidates are included in a ballot insert in this newsletter. Please take a moment to read the biographical sketches and vote for your candidate of choice.

Your ballot must be received on or before August 19, 2008 to be counted. **Election results will be announced in the fall newsletter as well as posted on the website at [www.gcssepm.org](http://www.gcssepm.org).**

The GCSSEPM is grateful to all these candidates for their willingness to support our organization with their time and talents.

name and are now the "Society for Sedimentary Geology".

Last year, at the University of Houston, we had over 76 students in mineralogy and at the graduate level they are practically knocking down the door to get in. We have numerous companies tripping over themselves in the grab for new hires. The UH Geoscience department is currently searching for five new faculty members. UT Austin and Texas A & M are seeking even larger

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## The Director's Chair

Not too long ago, I attended a very nice alumni association function with a lot of friends, a lot of people I didn't know, and several people from the university school of geoscience. It seems that several years ago, in deference to the usual monetary problems that all schools face, the powers-that-be decided that the school would now going to be run like a business. The person in charge of geoscience is not a chairman or a dean but more or less a business manager.

Let me add, however, he is a very nice person whom I respect and he is doing the best he can under the circumstances. I appreciate their problems and am very sympathetic. I understand what was done and why it was done. But this phrase, run it like a business, has been in my mind ever since and I admit that the phrase grates on my nerves every time I hear it. I think yes, let us run everything like Enron or Bear Stearns or better yet, a hedge fund.

For more years than I want to admit, at election time I have heard the phrase of reforming government to make it more efficient by "cutting the fat out" and running it like a business; and now, like it

or not, this has spread to the universities. The answer to all our problems is to run (you name it) like a business. Now what does this phrase mean?

As I recall, the idea of companies is that people who are willing to take a risk have a chance to make a profit. More recently, a new mantra has been added: maintain stock holder equity; this apparently means that risk to capital should be eliminated and (unfortunately) this has resulted in employees being at risk.

So my first question is, what is the purpose of government? I realize that this may be controversial but I think we all agree that government should provide services. Now if we run government like a business, does that mean we want government to operate at a profit? And if it does, who are the stockholders who will get the dividends? Us? (yeah, sure.) Does this mean the President should get \$25 million a year (or more) plus stock options like all CEO's get? And instead of a congress, perhaps we should vote for a board of trustees.

My second question is, what is the purpose of a university? I assume it is

(was?) to educate, not turn a profit. If we run a school like a business, who are the stock holders? Professors or students? If it is the tax payers; do we get dividends on the profit? [yeah, sure]

Maybe we are having a problem in semantics. I think what is really meant is that we want to run government and universities more efficiently and that they must be break even, as they can not continue to operate at a loss. (Although our government has been succeeding in do so for some time.) If we are not willing or can not afford to fund our universities, let us simply be honest about it. Saying that we will run them like corporations is not the answer.

It is not too early to remember that the GCAGS-GCSSEPM convention this year will be something special because of the Geological Society of America association, and that our December meeting will be about deep water fields. We hope that you will be able to attend both functions.

Dr. Norman C. Rosen  
Executive Director  
GCSSEPM Foundation

### ***Coming in December...***

## **Answering the Challenges of Production from Deep-water Reservoirs: Analogues and Case Histories to Aid a New Generation**

**28th Annual GCSSEPM Foundation  
Bob F. Perkins Research Conference**

**DECEMBER 7-9, 2008 HOUSTON, TEXAS**

The aim of the 28th annual Bob F. Perkins Research Conference is to augment the available stock of deep-water reservoir analogues using a new generation of studies drawn largely from the producing fields and discoveries in those fairways that have been accessed in the last quarter of the 20th century, so as to come to the aid of the producing fields that are coming into their own during the first decade of the 21st century.

**The Call for Papers** has been answered with significant papers from industry and academia that will address these questions. All papers will be presented in poster format throughout the meeting, but the most significant works to the meeting's theme will be selected for oral presentation as well. All authors will be writing complete articles or expanded abstracts with figures at a minimum, which will be published in **CD format** in the same successful manner as the GCSSEPM has done since 1999. This means full color illustrations, longer articles, and, perhaps, some oversized illustrations.

A list of titles, authors and pre-registration information will be available at [www.gcssepm.org](http://www.gcssepm.org).

## The President's Column

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numbers of new faculty at the same time that several well known professors in our profession are leaving academia for industry. Outside of the oil-belt, many departments are still struggling.

So what's changed? Obviously, the recent high of \$108 per barrel has attracted everyone's attention, whether you work for an oil company and are seeing your company stock rise, whether you are a customer griping at the pump, or a university administrator in an oil-rich state looking for opportunities for enhancing enrollment and research. The Internet has allowed students to quickly assess career options and many have noticed annual AAPG salary surveys showing starting salaries of \$80,000 for newly minted MS students. We are also well aware of industry demographics, and the fact that most of us can see the retirement light at the end of the career tunnel with a large gap behind us that needs filling. After the dot-com debacle, students also no longer have the rosy view that some industries are safe and others volatile. I remember several of my colleagues who were downsized in the late 80's and 90's complaining about the huge salaries and fast bucks being made in the dot-com industries, but we know what happened to most of those folks! As volatile as the oil industry may seem, it is certainly no worse than any other US industry, and the work is simply more fascinating. I may be biased here, but the opportunity to take a field trip to Utah, or spend time in a dusty core lab looking at rocks always seems more exciting than spending everyday staring at a computer screen in a cubicle.

We are presently at a crossroads. While a few universities suddenly see the need for an increased focus on energy, for many others geology is completely off the radar screen. Given the projected hiring needs for industry over the next decade, all US universities combined can provide only about half the required new employees. Many of our students are from overseas, reflecting the great North American tradition that the world looks to the US for opportunity. I myself am Canadian/British. Although US immigration requires these students to commit to retuning to their home countries after we

## 2008 Doris Malkin Curtis Medal Award Recipient

This year's winner of the Doris Malkin Curtis Medal is **Dr. James M. Coleman**, Boyd Professor Emeritus at the Coastal Studies Institute, Louisiana State University. Dr. Coleman has had a long and distinguished career in research and teaching, focused both on sedimentation on the modern Mississippi Delta as well as on synthesizing the variability of coastal processes and morphologies worldwide. His seminal work on deformation and synsedimentary remobilization of offshore Mississippi sediments had profound implications for engineering offshore platforms, for which he was inducted into the National Academy of Engineers. His insights and theories on deltaic and deepwater sedimentation have had a major impact on the discovery and development of oil and gas fields and have fundamentally advanced our geologic understanding of the Gulf of Mexico and other basins. GCSSEPM are proud to be able to honor Dr. Coleman with our societies highest award.



**The award will be presented at the 2008 Annual GCAGS/GCSSEPM Meeting, to be held October 5-8 in Houston and again at the GCSSEPM Perkins Conference in Houston in December.**

have educated them, many, like me, prefer to stay. Those that do go home, ideally, become cultural ambassadors for the USA, especially if their experience was favorable. Those of us that stay keep their expertise here and add to our economy as highly qualified scientists, engineers and professors.

As GCSSEPM members, we can help support those universities that are able to provide the next generation of petroleum geologists. GCSSEPM already have several scholarships in place, although interestingly, we do not have many students applying for these. It is important to keep in touch with your alma mater and let them know that funds are available for students interested in research of benefit to industry. We must continue to lobby for either federal or industry funding for basic geology research, which is the engine that drives graduate students. The loss of DOE funding for geology is a serious blow. At the annual GSA/GCAGS/GCSSEPM meeting there will be the opportunity to visit with geology students and professors who may never have thought about a career in the petroleum industry as well as getting a flavor for what kind of research the federal agencies are funding.

If you graduated from a school that may be unaware of recent trends in our industry, let them know that the boom is back and that jobs are available. Let them know about opportunities for students, such as attending conferences at very low cost, or attending AAPG Student Expos. Perhaps you can donate funds or better yet, get your company to support a university research program, scholarship fund, or help to sponsor a field trip.

GCSSEPM also have a number of Corporate and regional representatives, as well as student representatives. Our Vice-President, Dr. John Snedden, is primarily responsible for interacting with these representatives, but if you have ideas to improve communication and outreach, as well as to how to enhance geology education across the country, we would love to hear from you. Although many of us may be Houston, we all have the potential to reach beyond our local boundaries and show the broader geological community that we are back in business.

Janok P. Bhattacharya  
Geosciences Department  
University of Houston  
4800 Calhoun Rd.,  
Houston, Texas 77204

# The GCSSEPM Welcomes New Members

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**Bevan Alwin**  
Pioneer Natural  
Resources  
Irving, TX

**Walter Ayers**  
College Station, TX

**Nina Baghai-Riding**  
Delta State University  
Cleveland, MS

**Fleur Bases**  
Lafayette, LA

**Arthur Berman**  
Labyrinth Consulting  
Services Inc  
Sugar Land, TX

**Gregory Blake**  
Murphy Exp & Prod –  
International  
Houston, TX

**Joseph Boudreaux**  
New Orleans, LA

**John Breyer**  
Texas Christian  
University  
Fort Worth, TX

**Larry Brisendine**  
Goldston Oil Corp  
Houston, TX

**Larry Brooks**  
Roanoke, TX

**James Butler**  
Houston, TX

**Marshall Carothers**  
Spring, TX

**Timothy Carr**  
West Virginia University  
Morgantown, WV

**Martin Cassidy**  
Cypress, TX

**Rolin Chen**  
Chinese Petroleum  
Corporation  
Miaoli, Taiwan

**Joseph Donoghue**  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL

**Douglas Draves**  
Lewis Energy Group  
San Antonio, TX

**Russell Dubiel**  
U.S. Geological Survey  
Denver, CO

**Michael Dumont**  
Houston, TX

**David Eby**  
Eby Petrography &  
Consulting Inc  
Denver, CO

**G. Flowers**  
Houston, TX

**Santosh Ghosh**  
Mississauga  
ON, Canada

**Susan Goldstein**  
University of Georgia  
Athens, GA

**Donpaul Henderson**  
Kerogen Resources  
Houston, TX

**Victoria Hover**  
University of Louisiana –  
Lafayette  
Lafayette, LA

**Arthur Johnson**  
Hydrate Energy Intl  
Kenner, LA

**George Kemp**  
Baton Rouge, LA

**Barry Kohl**  
Tulane University  
New Orleans, LA

**J. Kyle**  
University of Texas-  
Austin  
Austin, TX

**Paul Larson**  
The Woodlands, TX

**Robert Maby**  
Houston, TX

**Roman Matranga**  
River Bend Energy Corp  
Slidell, LA

**Robert Nail**  
Midland, TX

**Michael Neufeld**  
Santa Fe, NM

**Ciaran O'Byrne**  
Houston, TX

**Brian O'Neill**  
New Orleans, LA

**Mark Pasley**  
Apache Egypt  
Houston, TX

**Dianna Phu**  
Geoscience Earth &  
Marine Services  
Houston, TX

**Alberto Pleimling**  
Buenos Aires, Argentina

**David Pope**  
Dallas, TX

**Gary Rinehart**  
Duncanville, TX

**Michael Roberts**  
Chevron  
Sugar Land, TX

**Armin Schafhauser**  
Oxford, United Kingdom

**Stephen Schutter**  
Houston, TX

**Nolan Shaw**  
McKinney, TX

**Amy Sullivan**  
Houston, TX

**Neil Sullivan**  
Sylvan Energy LLC  
Pittsburgh, PA

**David Swenson**  
Bellaire, TX

**William Tedesco**  
Spring, TX

**Neil Turner**  
Fulshear, TX

**Harold Wanless**  
University of Miami  
Coral Gables, FL

**Peter Warwick**  
U.S. Geological Survey  
Reston, VA

**William Wescott**  
Devon Energy Corp  
Houston, TX

**Thomas Yancey**  
Texas A & M University  
College Station, TX

## Announcing 2008 Award Winners

**GCSSEPM  
Distinguished Service Award**

Robert Nail

**GCSSEPM Honorary  
Membership**

Richard Fillon

The GCSSEPM wishes to thank both awardees  
for their outstanding contributions.  
Both recipients will be honored at this year's  
GCAGS-GCSSEPM Convention.

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## Lost Members

We no longer have contact  
information for the following  
individuals. If you can  
provide information please  
contact Ramon Trevino  
at (512) 471-3362 or  
[ramon.trevino@beg.utexas.edu](mailto:ramon.trevino@beg.utexas.edu)

*Didier Arboulie  
Duncan W. McMaster  
Paul Owens  
Heather M. Rosenstein  
Garth E. Syhlonyk*

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## News from the Business, Corporate & Student Representatives

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*Editor's Note: As a continuing feature we will include news highlights from the various areas. The business representatives from each district have provided these items.*

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### ALABAMA AREA NEWS

The University of Alabama's Center for Basin Studies is online at <http://egrpttc.geo.ua.edu/>. The Center includes 17 faculty members from the U of A and other institutions, three research scientists, and 16 graduate students. At their web page, you can view research and publications for several eastern Gulf Coast basins.

The Alabama Geological Society (AGS) has a new president, **G. Daniel Irvin** of the Geological Survey of Alabama. Daniel has taken over for **Mark Steltenpohl**, who served for the past two years as president. Recently, **Jack Pashin** (Geological Survey of Alabama) and others led an AGS core workshop that focused on the Pottsville Formation in the Black Warrior Basin. This workshop provided hands on experience with core descriptions and the latest research topics related to coal and coalbed methane including carbon sequestration, structural geology, computer modeling for fracture analysis, and GIS mapping of underground mines.

More workshops are planned.

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### SAN ANTONIO AREA NEWS

The small but hard-working group of geologists in San Antonio hosted a very well-attended joint Annual Convention of AAPG and SEPM in April. The 7,530 registrants, representing 73 countries, showed an exceptionally high level of enthusiasm as they flocked to the variety of technical sessions and forums, exhibits, short courses, field trips, luncheons, and social events. The technical program, for which 449 oral and 570 poster presentations were scheduled, followed the theme "Deliver the Conventional; Pursue the Unconventional." Popular sessions, some drawing "packed house" crowds, ranged from conventional topics, such as salt tectonics, slope dynamics, deep-water depositional systems, and reservoir characterization, to topics on unconventional resources, including shale gas and oil, coalbed methane, and gas hydrates. Other sessions generating considerable interest were those on paleoclimate and modern climate change and on CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration.

Convention General Chair Gene Ames, General Vice Chair **Bonnie Weise**, and General Technical Program Co-Chairs **Tucker Hentz** and **Andrew Scott**, along with the rest of the San Antonio Coordinating Committee, are extremely grateful for the contributions from those who served on the Program, Awards, and Activities Committees,

some of whom had to communicate from other cities, such as Houston, Austin, and Dallas. Special thanks go to those overseeing the SEPM activities, including GCSSEPM President **Janok Bhattacharya**, who served as SEPM Vice Chair; **John Holbrook**, who served as SEPM Oral Sessions Chair; **Beverly DeJarnett**, who served as SEPM Poster Sessions Chair; GCSSEPM Foundation Trustee Chair **Mike Nault**, who served as SEPM Awards Chair; and **Steve Ruppel**, who served as SEPM Field Trip and Short Course Chair. GCSSEPM members collectively played a huge role in the convention, not only serving on committees, but also as session chairs, speakers, poster presenters, judges, field trip leaders, and short course instructors.

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### UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON STUDENT NEWS

During the 2008 AAPG Convention in San Antonio, **Hernán Reijenstein** and **Sushanta Bose**, both students from UH, were awarded with SEPM distinctions for their student poster presentations. Their areas of research are seismic geomorphology of fluvial depositional systems from the Gulf of Thailand, and the analysis of modern carbonate sedimentary processes, respectively. **Hernán Reijenstein** is the U of H student representative for GCSSEPM.

**Gulf Coast Section – Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists**  
**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL**

PLEASE USE THIS FORM FOR MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION, MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL AND ADDRESS CORRECTIONS AND CHANGES

**Check appropriate box(es):**    **APPLICATION**    **RENEWAL**    **ADDRESS OR E-MAIL CHANGE**

**Membership dues for the year 2008 are now due.** If the date shown on the name line of your mailing label is not **08** or later, please remit dues with this form as soon as possible in order to remain a member of the GCSSEPM and continue to receive this Newsletter. By doing so now, you save your society the expense of sending you a separate dues notice. You can also renew online at [www.gcssepm.org](http://www.gcssepm.org).

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Are you a member or associate member of National SEPM?    Yes    No

We are considering offering a digital newsletter format. To help in planning, could you please select your preferred method of receiving the GCSSEPM Newsletter:

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