



SRSU GSA attendees, from left to right: Asher Lichtig; Carissa Chambers; (front) Stacy Sawyer; (back) Nick Gailloreto; Sofia Caylor; Dominick Percoco; Rebecca Loos; Stephen Hilliard; Shawna Graves; and Casey Mitchell. Not pictured: Matthew Hicklen. Photo credit: Rebecca Loos.

Well before sunrise on October 26, 2013, members of the Sul Ross Geology Club embarked on an adventure to attend the Geological Society of America's 125th Annual Meeting. This year the annual meeting and exposition was held in Denver, Colorado, October 27 – 30, 2013.

Thanks to a very generous anonymous donation and extensive fundraising 11 students in total were able to attend (6 graduate students, 5 undergraduates). *Adelante Tejas*, a grant geared towards STEM education, also sponsored faculty and staff in attendance: Dr. Dave Rohr, Dr. Elizabeth Measures, Jesse Kelsch and Rebecca Loos. Half of the Geology Club travel was paid for through this sponsorship. Students spent 4 full days experiencing GSA in all of its glory. Many of these students had never been to such a professional meeting as the GSA Annual Meeting, so it was even more exciting.

One such undergraduate student Sofia Caylor commented on her experiences at GSA, "My GSA experience was great! I went with the goals to learn about the many different fields within Geology; find projects that are similar to my current research project to determine the best modeling methods; to begin looking at Master's degree programs; and to network. I achieved these goals through attending oral presentations sessions, poster presentations, and through speaking with representatives at the many booths [in the Exhibit Hall]. My highlights included: talking with other students and professors who presented on research projects that related to mine; meeting potential Master's advisors; and learning about the different methods of utilizing geothermal energy. I now have a clearer picture of what I need to accomplish before entering a Master's program. It was very helpful!"

Shawna Graves, another undergraduate experiencing GSA for the first time said, "The long drive from Alpine to Denver was well worth it. My most important take away was the exposure to the world of research presentations. The sessions were my introduction to many kinds of projects and provided me with a sense of the many processes involved. Another gratifying result was to walk away feeling that the variety of programs helped to narrow down my own field of interest. This was very exciting, because the science of geology is so broad that it can be daunting to choose one area over another in which to specialize."

“I was very fortunate to get the chance to network with these people, talk to grad schools from all over the country, and see some interesting new technology. The sessions and talks were so informative, and I feel like I really came away with some great ideas for research and future careers,” said undergraduate Carissa Chambers.

Undergraduates were not the only first time GSA attendees. A few graduate students had their first GSA experience as well. Stephen Hilliard, Jr., had this to say, “My personal experience at GSA was amazing! Many of the poster presentations were eye-opening and made me realize just how much research is going on at this moment. I will definitely present a poster at next year’s GSA. I was able to meet many of the researchers and students simply by volunteering my time at GSA. However, my best highlight was sitting in on four blocks of technical sessions of distinctly different categories to get inspiration for what I would like to pursue for a thesis project. I am proud to say that I found what interests me the most and have finally found a project to pursue.”

Secondary Advisor to the Geology Club, and graduate student, Rebecca Loos said, “This was my first time to attend the GSA Annual Meeting. I was able to meet many professionals from various organizations. People from all across the country are lining up to lead field trips and to come give presentations at Sul Ross. I will also be working with other professionals to strengthen and increase the opportunities provided to the Geology Club. We will be working together to get the students involved in internships and research experiences, and to provide them with scholarships to increase their educational possibilities.”

Overall, this was a huge success that could not have occurred without the help of the anonymous donors and help from the community. The Sul Ross Geology Club thanks you.

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