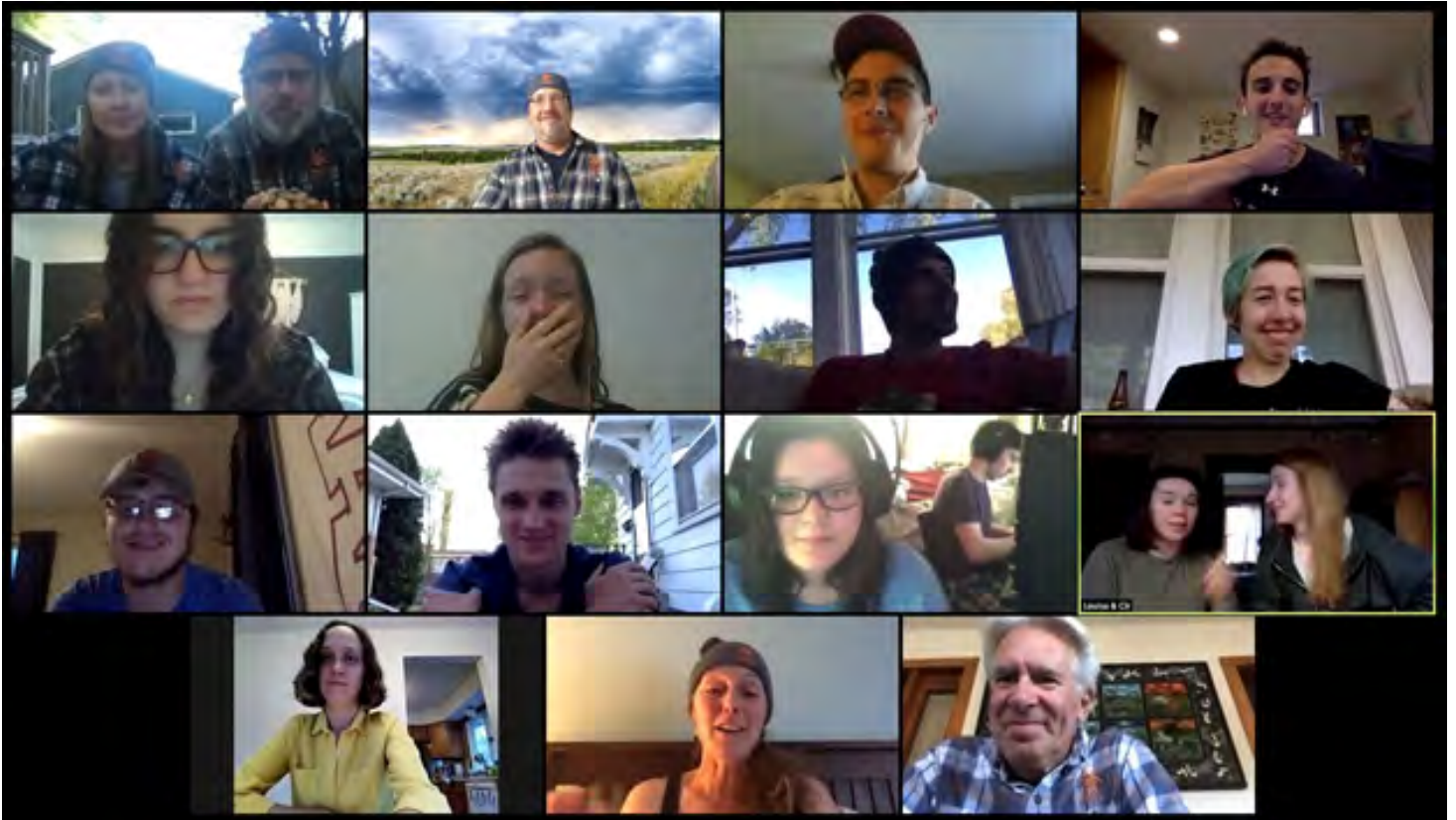




Winter 2021 Newsletter



Screenshot of our virtual dinner with our recent graduates.
Congratulations Class of 2020 - Ben, Sandro, Didi, Sintra, Anya, Matt, Jojo, Alora,
Louisa, and Clare!



From the Chair

Greetings Geology Alums!

We here in Mac Geology hope that 2021 finds you all happy and healthy. We are doing fine here on the bottom floor of Olin-Rice, although it has been lonely without our students.

Speaking of our students – to celebrate our 2020 graduates we held a *virtual* senior dinner. We all gathered on ZOOM to share a meal (students were sent gift cards to cover the cost) and celebrate the successes of our ten 2020 geology graduates!

What a year it has been...

Online classes started in March, field trips were few and far between, ZOOM meetings and ZOOM happy hours were the norm. Through it all our small department has endured, and in fact we have continued to grow despite the many challenges of the pandemic. In the past few months we have added several new majors and minors, and our graduating seniors are making optimistic plans for wonderful adventures post-graduation (field camp, grad school, etc.).

We are now gearing up for the spring semester, which in case you haven't heard, is split into two "modules" – each a seven-week long block of mostly virtual learning. It has been a real challenge to adapt our leisurely semesters to this new fast-paced reality, but we have done our best, and we have all learned a few new tricks along the way.

Despite the shutdown of our normal activities, there is news to report. For example, Kelly resurrected GeoCinema in the fall semester, and the course filled with enthusiastic students eager to take a cinematic tour of geology. Kelly will teach GeoCinema a second time in Module 5 – a new summer module designed to accommodate the needs of students who might need a course or two to stay on track for graduation. Anna continues to enrich our curriculum with her soils courses, and this year she had the opportunity to teach both introductory and advanced courses in soil science. Anna will also offer a course in Module 5 – her ever-popular Soils: Science and Sustainability. Alan graciously delayed his sabbatical for one semester so that he could teach his required course on structural geology this fall for our graduating seniors. He is now officially on a year-long sabbatical – time to focus on research relating to his recent NSF Career Grant!

Jeff has been "instrumental" in bringing various labs and analyses to our students in virtual format. He has found many creative ways to bring rocks and minerals to life from afar. Kristi continues in her role as a professor in both geology and biology, and this year marks her second year as chair of the Biology Department. She will contribute to the Module 5 cause by teaching Dinosaurs this summer, all the while continuing her work on the bone histology of the earliest dinosaurs from Argentina.

This time of global pandemic marks Ray's 14th year as chair of the Geology Department. Time flies by, and to celebrate he will bring both History and Evolution of Earth and Sedimentology and Stratigraphy to a virtual audience this spring in Modules 4 and 5.

And now the big news of 2021... Karl Wirth will be retiring at the end of this academic year, after 30+ years in the Geology Department. His final class, the feared and revered Petrology and Geochemistry (GEOL 302), will be offered this spring in Module 3. After that, you will find Karl either (1) diving somewhere off the coast of Mexico, or (2) administering grant funding for the Keck Geology Consortium from somewhere deep in the Keck Lab here on campus (the plan is for his office to move to the lab – you will still be able to find him when he is above sea level).

Thank you Karl for decades of devoted teaching and mentoring!



To give you some insight into how faculty are coping and working in this pandemic/teaching situation, Ray asked them to share some "Thoughts on Life and Pedagogy during a Pandemic."

- *Name one thing that you've enjoyed*
- *Name one thing that you've learned*
- *Name one thing you are looking forward to when things return to normal*

Alan Chapman

- Working more from home has been a gift in that I've been able to spend more time with my family. Being able to take small breaks throughout the day to play with my children or go for a walk with my partner has been great. Never have I felt like my work-life balance has been more dialed in.

- Life is an endurance event, involving amazing highs and dark lows. In 2020, this message became apparent, repeatedly, in Baader-Meinhof fashion. When I'm not wearing my professor hat I spend a fair amount of time running or cross-country skiing. A good portion of this time is spent physically and mentally suffering, which has given me the tools to accept and push through adversity. I learned that I can use these tools to accept a variety of non-exercise-related rough patches (e.g., a global pandemic) to enjoy an even-keeled life.

- I deeply miss engaging in research with my students and all of the field work, analytical work, and research meetings that this entails. Of those things, I have been most looking forward to spending time in the mountains with my research students and, in a similar vein, resuming field trips in the Upper Midwest for introductory to upper-level courses.



Anna Lindquist

- I've enjoyed revamping class to encourage more outside time. With everyone staying inside, it seemed worthwhile to add in outside activities, especially for classes without a lab.

- I've taken this as an opportunity to try a couple new teaching ideas I may not have otherwise experimented with. Some have worked out better than others, but it's been fun to try new things!

- I really miss the casual moments in the classroom. They're so much more difficult through Zoom. I'm also looking forward to having people around campus again. It's so quiet now!



Jeff Thole

- While I have certainly missed the camaraderie with students and colleagues, I have to admit, I've really enjoyed the extended windows of time at work with little to no interruptions (so why is my office still in shambles though?). If I had a choice though, I'd certainly pick the interruption-laden days and occasional ping pong/spikeball matches with anyone who will play.

- In addition to all the technology demands of this new model, I think I've learned to listen a bit more deeply. The time we have to interact with our students is limited and being able to better understand what questions are being asked is not only efficient, it makes you rethink your delivery of concepts and materials. I am hopeful that this will translate to better learning experiences for our students when things finally get back to 'normal'.

- The thing I will relish the most when we return, is the immediacy of our classroom experiences. The Zoom 'lag' is not conducive to the nuances of teaching and interacting with our students. I also SO look forward to the random encounters across campus too where you learn so much more about what is going on in people's lives and what makes them tick. Oh, and fieldwork... definitely fieldwork...





Karl Wirth

- I've really enjoyed all the conversations with colleagues about what's most important for our students to learn, about the best ways for them to learn it, about how to use new technologies, and how to best support our students through this most challenging year. It makes me very thankful to be in such a close and supportive department.

- While geological knowledge and skills are still important central to all of our courses, watching our students grapple with bigger and more immediate questions during the past year has elevated the importance of more explicit conversations about values, learning, and life.

- A classroom where students can work together to solve problems, where I can circulate among closely-spaced chairs to answer questions, and being able to pass specimens around the lab.



Kelly MacGregor

- I've really enjoyed connecting with far-flung colleagues and alumni on Zoom! Now that I'm comfortable using this technology, I appreciate the ability to talk 'face-to-face' and not on a conference call when important conversations need to happen. On the personal side, I've loved the slower pace of life - less driving kids around, fewer distractions, more time for running & skiing, lots of cooking and gardening and reading books for fun! Spending time with my two teenagers and partner has been a highlight!

- On the work side, it has been really fun to 'bring in' guest speakers from all over the country into my zoom classroom! While I DEFINITELY don't love teaching online, I've learned all kinds of great technology tools, and I'm excited to continue to use some of them post-pandemic. Personally I have learned that I love going for runs in the middle of the day, before I lose motivation and daylight! And I've learned that my dog and cat enjoy having people home all day!

- I am so so so excited to get back to teaching and advising in person! I can't wait to jump around in the front of a classroom, bring students into the field, watch small group discussions over tea, and laugh in proximity to others. I am itching to travel - for research and for fun! Eating at a restaurant and seeing music with friends sounds AMAZING!

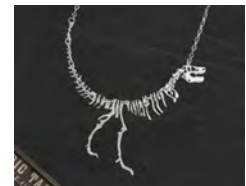


Kristi Curry Rogers

- I'm surprised to find that I haven't hated teaching in the high-speed modular format! It's been fun to strip the "essence" out of my classes, and makes each lecture feel (to me) like a TED talk. I've also really enjoyed having a chance to push a reset button on life - having time to do stupid stuff like the 30-day ab challenge, taking long walks around my neighborhood, and reading TONS of books for fun have all been important parts of my pandemic existence.

- Like everyone, I've had to embrace the technologies that allow us to teach online - I've gotten over having the perfect lighting for every zoom lecture (though I've also learned not to try to film lectures in my living room with a squirrel obsessed dog nearby - random barking and whining doesn't sound great on a voicethread!). I've also learned a ton about cooking - thank goodness for the NY Times for making me try new things this year!

- I can't wait to get back to the "normal world" - I miss seeing students and my colleagues every day, in person, and having the casual moments that make our community feel so strong. I'm missing travel, and going to concerts and restaurants, and will look forward to -someday- getting to do all of that again.



Ray Rogers

- This new reality has demanded new ideas and new approaches. Focusing in on the most essential aspects of my classes has been a real learning experience for me. My future classes will be better because of it, and with this new economy of content, I might actually end the occasional class on time.
- Obviously, I have learned how to use ZOOM and VoiceThread, and in doing so, I have learned to not give a damn what I look like or sound like on video. When this all started, capturing video was STRESSFUL! Now - whatever - just another day during the pandemic.
- I miss my students and my classrooms (even crusty old OLRI 100), and I can't wait to get back to the gig in person where my occasional jokes will pack a more powerful and yet still pleasing punch...and I really am itching to get out in the wild again on field trips and research forays. I miss the rocks and the fossils and the shared discoveries! And of course I miss making my signature chilaquiles on chilly field trip mornings.



Generous gifts over these past few months from alums and department friends help make it possible for us to take good care of our students, especially in relation to support for collaborative summer research opportunities. We thank Rollie Oberg ('60), Mary Anderson, David Southwick, Rick Erickson ('71), and Malcolm and Karen Robertson ('78) for recent gifts and continued support of the geology program. Thanks to their generosity, all majors and minors were sent facemasks (and some candy) as a holiday surprise! Here is a view of current major Alex Johanson ('23) proudly displaying his new Mac Geology mask!

Photo Memories from 2020



October 16, 2020 • [Submit an Item](#)

Photo of the Day



Students in Paleobiology (GEOL 300) had the opportunity to explore the field of conservation paleobiology with four alums during Module 1. Josh Miller '00, Rebecca Terry '01, Michelle Casey '03, and Jansen Smith '12 joined the class to share their research and on-going projects that relate to various aspects of conservation paleobiology. Submitted by Ray Rogers.



Alums Rebecca Terry ('01), Jansen Smith ('12), Josh Miller ('00), and Michelle Casey ('03) ZOOMing in with GEOL 300 for a Conservation Paleobiology workshop.

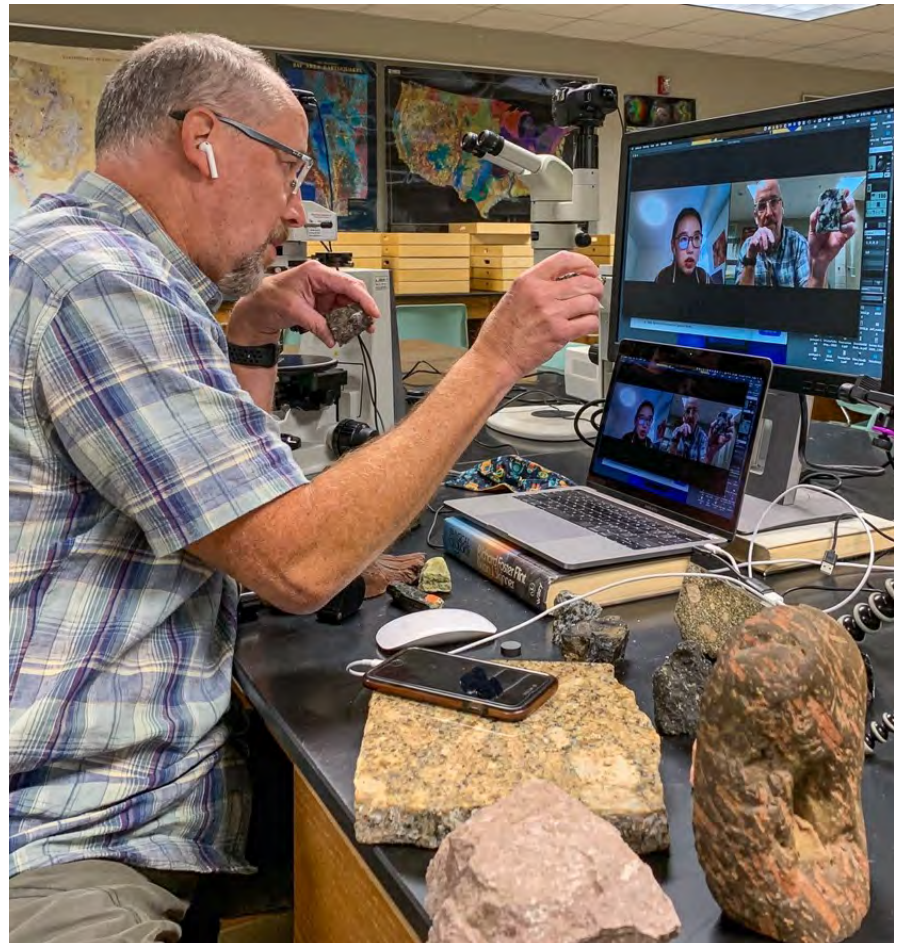


Phoebe Morris ('22), Sun Tun ('22), Justin Anderson ('23), Gwyneth John ('22), and Katherine Irving ('22) masked-up and ready to hunt fossils down by the Mississippi River. (above)

Emily Lugthart ('21) collecting data from a roadside soil profile for her senior honors thesis. (below)



Jeff teaching the igneous rocks lab in Dynamic Earth and Global Change over Zoom. (below)





Teaching Bowen's Reaction Series in GEOL 260 with M&M's during the pandemic.



Grad School Workshop with alums Ojashvi Rautela ('19, now at Caltech), Bolton Howes ('15, now at Princeton), Brooke Hunter ('17, now at Univ. Oregon), and Rachel Surprenant ('18, now at Univ. California Riverside).



Students learning optical mineralogy in GEOL 260 during COVID-19



**Until Next Time –
Stay Happy and Healthy, and Thank You!**