Update from the Department Chair, Dr. Warner Cribb:

The beginning of a new academic year is always time for planning and implementing new strategies to both grow the Department and improve the teaching and research environments for the students and the faculty. As most of you know, the biggest such strategy the Department will implement this year is a complete move to fully renovated classrooms and laboratories on the second floor of Davis Hall. This is a huge job, not just in physically moving our offices, teaching collections and research equipment, but also in solving the problem of which classes will be taught in which classrooms, and how many students can fit in each. I’m not exactly sure how it will all work out, but I am sure that it will. We will begin moving the teaching collections and research labs in mid-November. The ‘big move’ will occur on December 12. Please have good thoughts for us (and the weather) on that day.

An important new strategy is improving communication and collaborations between the Department and our alumni. Feedback from our alumni indicates that one of the most important services we can provide to you is news from one another. At this time, we can most effectively do this through social media. MTSU Geosciences hosts a department Facebook group, which as of today has 134 members. With well over 600 living alumni, we should be able to significantly increase that number with reasonable effort. So, if you have a Facebook account, please request membership in MTSU Geosciences group today, and we will be sure to add you. An ongoing alumni initiative which I would like to improve upon this year is in the area of alumni to student mentoring. There is no way for me to overstate the value to our students of personal interactions with our alumni. If you live in Middle Tennessee or will be visiting, and if you are willing to donate time to share with our students your advice on how they can best prepare for their future careers, please let me know. I promise you that our students can find time in their schedules to accommodate your generosity. To those of you who already have made this contribution, my sincerest thanks and I hope that you will return very soon.

The Department will make no additions to its full-time faculty this academic year. We are starting the academic year with 91 undergraduate majors and 19 graduate students. Although the number of undergraduate majors is slightly down from previous years, Geosciences enrolls the highest number of graduate students of all concentrations in the MTSU professional science MS program. Also, we expect to be approved for a new natural science general education course in Physical Geography beginning next academic year, from which we hope to attract additional undergraduate majors.
Despite no significant increase in funding to MTSU from the State of Tennessee, the Department's 2016-17 operating budget outlook is good. Over the past two years we have been able to develop recurring revenue streams to support expensive, but educationally critical areas such as field trips and the purchase of new laboratory teaching equipment. Importantly, the faculty continues to be successful at acquiring external contracts and grants, through which we are able to increasingly support graduate student research and funding of graduate assistantships. **The number one financial need for the Department is in the area of undergraduate scholarships.** As many of you know, last year the Department established new scholarship funds in the names of recently retired faculty. The first scholarships were awarded for this academic year. Please consider making a one-time or recurring contribution to our undergraduate scholarship funds through our [Support MTSU Geosciences](#) web site. Quite simply, we are not able to award these scholarships without alumni contributions.

Workers are putting the final touches on our new Davis facilities. New furniture, lab desks and cabinetry are being installed throughout September and October. The top photo shows one of the two fully enclosed student study areas. These areas will give our students quiet places to study and informally meet with one another between classes. The photo at bottom is one of five new teaching labs, in which all upper division geology and physical geography lab courses will be held. The Department also will have priority scheduling in a 100 seat lecture hall for general education courses, and three classrooms seating 30 to 40 students each for upper division non-lab courses. Four discipline-specific research labs also are being readied for specialized research and analytical instrumentation.
**Student News**

Congratulations to our May 2016 graduates!

**Bachelor of Science**
- Any Moak
- Matthew Togger
- Cody Hannah
- Koedi Gray
- J P Finnegan
- Keegan Muth
- Jenny Strobel
- Jessica Bruce
- Nate Johnston

**Master of Science**
- Randall Emilaire
- Amy Gilley
- Michael Ioannou
- Justine Hart

2016-17 Student Organization Officers:

**Sigma Gamma Epsilon**
- President – Leanna Davis
- Vice President – Anna Wilson
- Secretary/Treasurer - Emily Cunningham

**AIPG**
- President – Bishop Wagener
- Vice President – Tyler Smith
- Secretary/Treasurer – Zach Blair

Final Student Summer Field Photo:

MTSU Geosciences graduate student Tyler Smith hiking in Three Sisters Wilderness Area, Oregon, in late August.
**Student Spotlight - Zach Blair (Graduate Student)**

I first enrolled in the Department of Geosciences as an undergraduate major in Spring Semester 2012. I completed the undergraduate Geology program in August, 2015. My favorite undergraduate memories are the many field trips we took, participating in SGE and AIPG activities, and attending field camp on the Colorado Plateau. My undergraduate training was valuable in that it offered to me a wide range of geology courses, through which I was able to identify my academic strengths and career interests. In Fall Semester 2015, I enrolled in the MTSU Geosciences graduate program, with a concentration in Environmental Geosystems. I am pursuing research on precipitation prediction under Dr. Racha El Kadiri, through which I hold a graduate research assistantship. I also am applying for pre-professional internships, and plan to present the results of my research at a national or international conference in Spring Semester. My professional goal is to become an environmental consultant, and to eventually own my own consulting business.

I am grateful for the many opportunities offered to me by the faculty and the many friendships I have made with fellow students. I am especially appreciative of the many departmental and university resources which I have been able to take advantage of, and which have contributed to my success. I look forward to one day being able to give back to MTSU Geosciences, and to remaining close to the Department of Geosciences as an active alumnus.

**Faculty Spotlight – Dr. Jeremy Aber**

Dr. Jeremy Aber (Assistant Professor of Physical Geography) has been with the Department for three years. He teaches courses in introductory and intermediate GIS, and the summer physical geography field course. He also is in charge of implementation of the Department’s natural science new general studies course in Physical Geography. Dr. Aber works on work a variety of research projects. One involves the use of kite- and helium blimp-based platforms for collecting aerial imagery. Dr. Aber has mastered the hardware challenge of lifting cameras into the air, and now is working with undergrad students to create a workflow for how best to process aerial imagery. Dr. Aber also is conducting research to scrape Twitter in real-time to collect geotagged tweets in the Tennessee region. Every post on the social media platform sent from Tennessee and surrounding states that is tagged with GPS data is collected into a database for later analysis. Dr. Aber has been working with an undergraduate student over the past year to create a software tool to filter this data based on keywords. Currently, the database has more than 21 million tweets and continues to grow as a record of Twitter activity in the region.
Dr. Aber is also in the final stages of writing a textbook he is co-authoring for map librarians. The book is designed to teach librarians how to work with geospatial data, both historic paper maps and modern digital data. Currently, the book is on-schedule to publish before the end of 2016. Upcoming research projects include a natural resource assessment of Russell Cave National Monument with the National Park Service, and a USDA project on soil erosion on agricultural lands. Both of these projects are collaborations with Geosciences professors Dr. Henrique Momm and Dr. Racha El Kadiri.

Aerial photograph of Great Sand Dunes National Park, taken by Dr. Aber and his students during this past summer’s Physical Geography Field Course.

**Fall Semester Colloquium Schedule (KOM 326)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 8/29 6:15pm</td>
<td>Ronald Zurawski</td>
<td>State Geologist</td>
<td>Tennessee Geological Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 9/19 6:15pm</td>
<td>Scotty Sorrells</td>
<td>Geologist</td>
<td>Department of Environment and Conservation, Division of Water Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 10/3 6:15pm</td>
<td>Bethany Hall</td>
<td>GIS Analyst</td>
<td>Rutherford County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 10/17 6:15pm</td>
<td>Jonathan Russell</td>
<td>Community Transportation Planner</td>
<td>TDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 11/7 6:15pm</td>
<td>Michael Lloyd</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
<td>ATC Group Services LLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 11/14 6:15pm</td>
<td>Thomas McComb</td>
<td>Senior Project Manager</td>
<td>Barge Waggoner Summer &amp; Cannon, Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 11/28 6:15pm</td>
<td>Graduate Students Presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Buy our bling before we move!

The Department of Geosciences is selling its surplus promotional inventory in order to reduce the amount of ‘stuff’ we have to move to Davis. These are left-over items from give-aways at the annual student appreciation ceremony. All money from the sale of these items (minus shipping) will be put into our student scholarship accounts. We have a limited number of each item, so please check with Karen.Wolfe@mtsu.edu before sending your order. If we are out of an item, we will notify you. If you prefer to make an online donation to our student scholarship fund (mtsu.edu/supportgeosciences) in the equivalent amount of your order, please be sure to also send an email to Karen which includes your name, mailing address, and the amount of your donation.

Pint Glasses - $22                 Coffee Mugs - $15               Water Bottles - $10

Name: __________________________________

Email: _________________________________

Address: ________________________________  Phone: ________________________________

City: _________________________________   State: __________   Zip Code ___________________

Pint Glasses _____ @ $22 each = _______________

Coffee Mugs ______ @ $15 each = _______________

Water Bottles _____ @ $10 each = _______________

Lunch Boxes ______ @ $10 each = _______________

Total:________________________

Makes checks payable to: MTSU Dept. of Geosciences, and in memo line write ‘scholarships’

MTSU Geosciences – Attn. Karen Wolfe
MTSU PO Box 9
Murfreesboro TN 37132
Alumni and Friends - Mentoring and Giving!

The faculty sincerely hopes that you also will consider making a one-time or recurring gift to our student scholarship fund. **Funding undergraduate student scholarships is the number one financial priority for the Department of Geosciences!! We cannot do this without your support.** As MTSU Geosciences expands its teaching and research programs, the Department attracts an increasing number of highly qualified students interested in geoscience careers. Unfortunately, the rising cost of a college education is the determining factor for many MTSU students in deciding whether or not to pursue and complete their degrees. Please consider making a one-time or recurring contribution to the scholarship funds named in the honor of retired Geosciences faculty members: Dr. Ralph Fullerton, Dr. Burt Bordine, Dr. Albert Ogden and Mr. Paul O'Farrel. Making a one-time or recurring gift to these scholarship funds is easy through our giving website: [http://www.mtsu.edu/supportgeosciences](http://www.mtsu.edu/supportgeosciences)

Thank you for your support of MTSU Geosciences!