

# THE KECK GEOLOGY CONSORTIUM: HISTORY

---

WILLIAM T. FOX

Speech Given at The Twentieth Annual Symposium

The original idea for a geology consortium can be traced back to 22 years ago when Bud Wobus of Williams College submitted a proposal to the Keck Foundation for a consortium of northeastern Colleges. After Bud's initial proposal was turned down by the Keck Foundation, he met with Russ Carpenter of the development Office at Williams College and decided to expand his proposal to include ten colleges.

In 1982, the Office of Institutional Research at Franklin and Marshall College compiled a table listing the PhD's which were granted in the earth sciences to students from 867 four-year undergraduate colleges. The top ten colleges on the list, in terms of number PhD's in Geology, included Amherst, Beloit, Carlton, Colorado College, Franklin and Marshall, Pomona, Smith, Whitman, Williams and the College of Wooster. The ten colleges accounted for 490 out of the 1848 PhD's which had been granted to undergraduate colleges in the earth Sciences. In percentage terms, the top ten colleges comprised only 1.15 percent of the colleges in the study, but they accounted of 26.5 percent of the PhD's awarded in the earth sciences.

Bud Wobus presented the idea of a ten college geology consortium to Sandra Glass of the Keck Foundation. Sandra Glass suggested that representatives from the ten colleges met with her in November, 1985, at annual meeting of the Geological Society of America in Orlando, Florida. Bud was unable to attend the meeting and he asked me to take his place in Orlando.

Several different ideas for a consortium were

discussed at the Orlando meeting ranging from joint summer field projects involving students and faculty, to the purchase of expensive pieces of research equipment such as an electron microscope which would be located at one college and shared by other members of the consortium. At the end of the meeting, the representatives had not reached a consensus, so they decided to meet again in mid-December in a hotel at the Chicago airport.

At the Chicago meeting, the representatives decided to scrap the big research instrument idea, and to focus on the field projects involving students and faculty. They voted to approve a joint summer research program involving faculty and students with three projects during the first summer, followed by six field projects during the second summer. Hank Woodard of Beloit College volunteered to host a meeting at Beloit College in the spring following the summer projects, so that the students could report on the results of the summer field projects.

Several other topics were also discussed at the Chicago meeting. The ten geology departments in the consortium were spread across the United States and varied widely in their research interests and teaching styles. Therefore, it was proposed that we set up a visiting faculty program so that we could become better acquainted with the faculty and students at the other colleges. One faculty member from each college would visit two other colleges in the consortium, and write a short report on his visit which would be distributed to the other colleges in the consortium. After the visiting faculty

program was approved, all that was left to do was to pull the whole thing together and write a proposal to the Keck Foundation. I volunteered to write the grant proposal for the consortium, and to set up the visiting faculty program, and the other members of the consortium elected me to be the first Coordinator of the Keck Geology Consortium. The proposal was submitted to the Keck Foundation in July, 1986, and was funded for 24-month period from January 1, 1987, through December 31, 1988.

Three field projects were mounted during the first summer. The Bahamas project was directed by Al Curran from Smith College with Brian White from Smith College and Roger Thomas from Franklin and Marshall College. The Students used scuba gear to collect underwater samples on the surrounding reefs, and rock hammers to collect fossils from the road cuts and quarries on the island, in order to study the ecology of the coral reefs.

The Colorado Project was directed by Bud Wobus from Williams College with Shelby Boardman from Carlton College, Bruce Leffler from Colorado College, and Stan Mertzman from Franklin and Marshall College. The students mapped outcrops in the field and collected rock samples for thin-sections and X-ray analysis in the lab, in order to determine the composition of the rocks, and the times of the volcanic eruptions. I would like to pause for a moment of silence in memory of Shelby Boardman of Carlton passed away during past year.

The Montana project was directed by Ed Belt of Amherst College who was joined by John Diemer and Bob Sternberg from Franklin and Marshall College. They focused on the paleohydrology and sedimentary characteristics of the Early Paleocene strata in the western Williston Basin. Their studies ranged from paleomagnetic studies to development of computer models of stream flow.

The Student projects culminated in April with a three-day research symposium sponsored by Hank Woodard and Dick Stenstrom at Beloit College. On Friday, Hank Woodard led a field trip around the Baraboo region of central Wisconsin. On Saturday, the students presented the results of their research projects in oral presentations and poster sessions. Following the Saturday night banquet, Hank Woodard gave a talk on his recent field trip to Scotland, and on Sunday morning, he led a field trip to study the Paleozoic rocks in the Beloit area.

After the success of the first two years, the same format of a summer field research program, followed by a spring symposium where the students presented the results of their summer research, has continued for the next 18 years. In the third year, Trinity University and Washington and Lee University were added to the Consortium. In the following years, mid-winter workshops and sophomore projects were added to the program, and minority students, and students and faculty from other colleges were included in the projects. Other important changes in funding were added including support from the National Science Foundation and the Exxon Mobil Foundation.

Over the past 20 years, over 1,850 geology faculty and students have been involved in the Keck Geology Consortium. Many of the names and faces have changed, but the original concept and goals of the Keck Geology Consortium have remained the same.