



Department of Geology and Geophysics

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Dear Alumni and Friends:

We are pleased to send out the latest edition of the **Outcrop** with news of lots of exciting department activities and achievements in 2007. Due to the creative editorial leadership of John Valley and Mary Diman, this edition is streamlined and greener, printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper. The paperless (i.e. pdf) version will also be posted on the web at <http://www.geology.wisc.edu/outcrop/>.

This year's cover story by Clark Johnson (pages 24-25) describes the exciting new research initiatives getting under way as part of the Wisconsin Astrobiology Research Consortium. The research grant that was awarded to this group by NASA last year is the largest single grant in department history and we expect that the results of the five year project will be truly out of this world as the title suggests. Another exciting new development is the recently completed Halliburton Geoscience Visualization Lab (page 26), which is a major enhancement to research and teaching in a variety of areas. You can also read about the emerging interdisciplinary field of medical mineralogy and geochemistry (page 27), in which Nita Sahai and her research group are pioneers. Alumna and BOV member Maitri Venkat-Ramani shares her perspective on the interdisciplinary project being led by Herb Wang to assist residents of New Orleans in efforts to restore a wetland in the area devastated by Hurricane Katrina (page 28).

As you know, the BOV officially launched the Student Field Experience Campaign last fall. We are delighted to report a strong response to this campaign from many alumni and friends, including a major gift from Marta Weeks in memory of her father-in-law Lewis (page 3). 2007 trips supported by the Student Field Experiences Fund included ones to the Canary Islands, Dinosaur National Monument, and the Keweenaw Peninsula (pages 11-14).

2007 was another year of transitions. In the fall we welcomed new assistant professors Anders Carlson and Shanan Peters (page 30). Also in the fall, we said goodbye to two exceptional staff members. Our department administrator, Teresa Egan, moved to the UW Waisman Center in September where she is now the Associate Director, and our receptionist/"Jill-of-all-trades" Karen Mullins retired in December. We are fortunate to have found two excellent new colleagues, Michelle Szabo and Jansi Prabakaran, to fill the big holes left by those departures.

Thanks to all of you who sent in news – reading about alumni activities is one of my favorite parts of the **Outcrop**

Best regards,

Jean Bahr
Professor and Department Chair