U.S. Female Geoscience Enrollments Level Off

The number of women enrolled as undergraduate geoscience majors has leveled off, at least temporarily, at both graduate and undergraduate levels. Increased enrollment continues to be driven by growth in the number of men enrolling at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The shift in these gender-related trends is believed to be related to the rapid growth in the oil and gas industry with individuals seeking career opportunities to work in the field. Another possible factor influencing a resurgence in male enrollments is the matriculation of returning veterans, especially given the number of industry programs which promoted enrollment of vets into resource industry career pathways. Either way, the surge that has been seen over the last several years at the undergraduate level is now being witnessed at the graduate level as those students are making their way through the system. As will be seen in an upcoming Currents, the Ph.D. level remains the strongest for gender-equity, which also may reflect that the expanded male cohort has not made its way to the doctorate level.

The percentage of undergraduate female students in 2013-2014 was 38%, down from 40% in 2012-2013. At the graduate level, the percentage of women enrolled in the geosciences slipped to 41.3% from 42.5%.

- Christopher M. Keane