# Introductory Geoscience Enrollment in the United States

Academic Year 2004-2005



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# Summary

The American Geological Institute conducted a survey to determine the number of students enrolled in introductory geoscience courses during the 2004-2005 academic year. For this survey, 312 departments reported enrollment of 191,778 students in three categories of courses: physical geoscience-type courses, environmental geoscience, and classes on the geoscience of National Parks or public lands.

The 2004-2005 estimated total enrollment in introductory geoscience courses is 403,200. This estimate represents the upper bound of the population, as non-responding departments would probably have a higher rate of zero enrollments with the expected bias towards a non-response for departments without introductory courses. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that the national enrollment for undergraduate students in both 2-year and 4-year degree-granting schools for the 2004-2005 academic year is 14.8 million. Taken in this context, the estimated total enrollment in introductory geoscience courses represents 2.7% of the undergraduate population.

The total estimated enrollment for introductory geoscience courses is slightly higher in this report than in the 2003-2004 report. The 2004-2005 estimates shows a 3% increase for the enrollment in Physical Geology courses, and an 18% increase for the enrollment in Environmental Geology courses, but an 18% decrease for the enrollment in National Parks/Public Lands courses.

# Introduction

Introductory geoscience courses in higher education are a major source of public exposure for the geosciences and anecdotally are cited as an important source for recruiting geoscience majors. The number of geoscience majors has been decreasing since a peak in the 1980s, and because of this decrease in the number of majors, some geoscience departments have been under pressure by their institutions to increase the number of students taking introductory geoscience courses. This increase in introductory geoscience courses, however, has not translated into an increasing number of majors for most of these departments.

The American Geological Institute (AGI) first surveyed introductory geoscience course enrollments for the 2003-2004 academic year in order to establish a baseline for introductory geoscience courses. Some of the dynamics sought include: total enrollment numbers, average course enrollments, and the student load at different types of degree-granting institutions. This report for the 2004-2005 academic year represents the second survey, and provides a preliminary elucidation of trends in enrollment statistics for these courses.

The survey was sent in October 2005 to 676 active geoscience departments that offer courses and/or degrees at the undergraduate level. Of these, 312 departments completed the survey for a response rate of 46%. A total of 297 departments reported that they offer some type of introductory geoscience courses, and 15 departments reported that they offer no such courses. Of the schools that responded for 2004-2005, 50% of them had responded to last year's survey. The data from these departments that responded across both years of surveying have allowed for a more precise forecasting model than the linear extrapolation model used in the 2003-2004 report.

The survey asked each department to report the number of students enrolled during the 2004-2005 school year in courses that qualified as one of the following three categories (but not limited to specific titles):

- Physical Geology/Geography; Geophysics, Introductory Oceanography, Meteorology, and/or Space Science
- Environmental Geology/Geography/Society and Earth
- Geology of National Parks/Public Lands

These categories were chosen because they represent the major subject lines for textbook publishers and are a first approximation of the breadth of introductory courses offered in the geosciences. Textbook publishers estimate the number of new units sold each year in these categories: 275,000 introductory physical geoscience textbooks, 50,000 environmental geoscience textbooks, and 12,000 books on parks and public lands. In total, the textbook publishers estimate 337,000 textbooks are sold annually for introductory geoscience courses. These numbers are considered reasonably accurate estimates of total enrollments in introductory geoscience courses offerings.

# **Total Population**

For the 2004-2005 study, 676 surveys were sent to geoscience departments and 46% of these departments responded. Of these departments, half of them also provided information on introductory enrollment for the 2003-2004 academic year. The 297 departments that responded this year taught a total 191,778 students, with 78% of these students enrolled in Physical Geology courses, 20% enrolled in Environmental Geoscience courses, and 2% enrolled in National Parks and Geoscience of Public Lands courses.

Table 1 shows the introductory enrollment for geoscience departments for the last two academic years as well as the estimated total enrollments from regressions based on the reported numbers. There is an overall increase of 5% in the estimated total enrollment in all introductory geoscience courses for 2004-2005 than the projection from last year's report. This increase may in part be due to a more precise model than the linear estimate made in the 2003-2004 report. The 2004-2005 estimated total enrollment in introductory geoscience courses is 403,200. This estimate represents the upper bound of the population, as non-responding departments would probably have a higher rate of zero enrollments with the expected bias towards a non-response for departments without introductory courses. A complete list of responding departments is available at the end of this report.

Course Area	<b>Reported Enrollments</b>		<b>Estimated Total</b>		Percent change
	2003-2004	2004-2005	2003-2004	2004-2005	•••••••
Physical Geoscience	111,021	149,226	312,000	321,000	+ 3%
Environmental Geoscience	22,568	39,140	63,000	74,000	+ 17%
National Parks/Public Lands	3,591	3,352	10,000	8,200	- 18%
	137,180	191,718	385,000	403,200	+ 5%

 Table 1. Reported Introductory Geoscience Course Enrollments and Estimated Total Enrollments

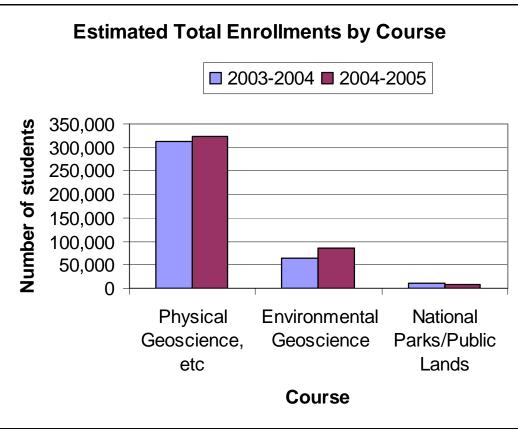
Textbook publishers estimate that 275,000 new units of Physical Geology course textbooks were sold during the 2004-2005. AGI's estimate of total enrollments in Physical Geoscience courses represents a 17% premium over this number. This disparity likely represents those textbooks that were reused and the use of self-published or "niche" materials in some courses. There is a similar disparity between the textbook publishers' figures and the AGI estimate for Environmental Geology courses and National Parks/Public Lands courses.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at the U.S. Department of Education estimates the national enrollment in post-secondary institutions for 2004-2005 to be 17.1 million students. This enrollment level includes both undergraduate and graduate students in all degree-granting post-secondary institutions. NCES reports that the national enrollment for undergraduate students for 2004-2005 is 14.8 million. This figure represents the undergraduate population at 2-year and 4-year degree-granting institutions. Taken in this context, the estimated

total enrollment in introductory geoscience courses represents 2.7% of the undergraduate population.

# **Changes in Enrollment Demographics from 2003-2004**

The total estimated enrollment for introductory geoscience courses is slightly higher in this report than in the 2003-2004 report. There was a 50% repeat response rate that was used as the basis for the 2004-2005 total introductory geoscience enrollment estimate of 403,200 students. For departments responding to both surveys, they show a 3% increase for the enrollment in Physical Geology courses, and an 18% increase for the enrollment in Environmental Geology courses, but an 18% decrease for the enrollment in National Parks/Public Lands courses. The changes between 2003-2004 and this year's survey are shown in Figure 1.



## Figure 1. Estimated Total Enrollments by Course

# Where are the students taught?

The responding departments represent a wide range of geoscience programs in both 2-year and 4-year institutions. Table 2 shows the reported enrollment by introductory course type and academic institution type. Institutions responding to the survey fall into four general categories: non-degree granting programs, 2-Year degree granting programs, Non-PhD granting programs, and Ph.D. granting programs. In these categories, degree granting status is related to geoscience

department not to the institution as whole. Table 3 shows the total enrollments for different program categories and the percent of students enrolled in each type of introductory course.

	Physical Geoscience	Environmental Geoscience	National Parks/Public Lands	Total Departments
Ph.D. Granting	46,438	15,101	1,917	73
Non-PhD. Granting	73,270	19,832	1,302	176
2-Year Degree Granting	25,909	3,758	133	49
Non-degree Granting	3,669	449	0	14

Table 2. Reported Enrollments by Subject and Program Profile, 2004-2005

Table 3. Percentage of studen	ts taught by Program	n Type and Course.	2004-2005
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			Percent of Total Enrollment in Category			
Institution Type	% of Departments	Total Introductory Geoscience Enrollments	Physical Geoscience	Environmental Geoscience	National Parks/Public Lands	
Ph.D. Granting	23	63,456	73.2	23.8	3.0	
Non-PhD. Granting	56	94,404	77.6	21.0	1.4	
2-Year Degree Granting	16	29,800	86.9	12.6	0.4	
Non-degree Granting	5	4,118	89.1	10.9	0.0	

There are 14 non degree-granting programs that teach introductory courses to over 4,000 students. These institutions are almost equally divided between 2-year and 4-year schools and are educating 2% of the total report introductory geoscience enrollment. The average enrollment load for these 14 institutions is 294 students in the 2004-2005 academic year. None of these institutions report teaching a National Parks/Public Lands course.

There are 49 degree granting 2-year programs that responded to the survey that teach a total of 29,800 students. These 2-year institutions represent 16% of the total responding programs and educate 15% of the total reported enrollment for introductory geoscience courses. The average enrollment load for these institutions is 608 students. These institutions are playing an increasingly important role in teaching introductory geoscience courses, especially in teaching introductory physical geoscience courses.

There are 176 Non-PhD. granting programs that responded to the survey. This category includes not only traditional 4-year colleges but also programs that grant Masters degrees. Non-PhD. granting programs make up more than half of the responding schools and had a total reported enrollment of 94,404 students in introductory geoscience courses in 2004-2005. These 94,404 students represent 49% of the total reported enrollment for this academic year. For these 176 programs, the average enrollment load is 536 students for the year. These departments are

responsible for teaching nearly half of the total population of students enrolled in National Parks/Public Lands courses.

There are 73 Ph.D. granting departments that responded to the survey that teach a total of 63,456 students in the 2004-2005 academic year. These programs represent 33% of the total reported introductory geoscience course enrollment for this academic year. The average enrollment load for these schools is 869 students for the year. These programs are responsible for educating more than half the total enrollment in National Parks/Public Lands courses.

Table 4 shows the number of departments offering each type of introductory geoscience course and the average course size. This table also shows the largest and smallest enrollment for each of the introductory geoscience courses. These numbers are not significantly different than the class sizes reported in the 2003-2004 baseline report.

	Physical Geoscience	Environmental Geoscience	National Parks/Public Lands
Departments Offering	294	204	55
Average Enrollment	508	192	61
Largest Enrollment	3962	2045	720

### Table 4 Reported Average, Maximum and Minimum Enrollments by Course, 2004-2005

#### **Responding Departments:**

Adirondack Community College, Science Division Adrian College, Dept of Earth Sciences Albion College, Dept of Geological Sciences Alfred University, Dept of Geology Amarillo College, Dept of Physical Science American River College, Dept of Earth Science Angelo State University, Dept of Physics (Geology) Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Dept of Natural Science (Geology) Appalachian State University, Dept of Geology Arizona Western College, Dept of Geology Arkansas Tech University, Dept of Physical Sciences-Geology Ashland University, Dept of Chemistry/Geology/Physics Auburn University, Dept of Geology & Geography Augustana College, Dept of Geology Austin Peay State University, Dept of Geology & Geography Ball State University, Dept of Geology Bates College, Dept of Geology Baylor University, Dept of Geology Beloit College, R.D. Salisbury Dept of Geology Bemidji State University, Center for Environmental, Earth, & Space Studies Bloomsburg University, Dept of Geography and Geosciences Boston University, Dept of Earth Sciences Bowdoin College, Dept of Geology Bowling Green State University, Dept of Geology Brooklyn College (CUNY), Dept of Geology Broome Community College, Dept of Engineering Science/Physics/Physical Sciences Bryn Mawr College, Dept of Geology Bucknell University, Dept of Geology California Institute of Technology, Div of Geological & **Planetary Sciences** California Lutheran University, Dept of Geology California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, Dept of **Geological Sciences** California State University, Bakersfield, Department of Physics and Geology California State University, Chico, Dept of Geological and **Environmental Sciences** California State University, Dominguez Hills, Earth Sciences California State University, Fresno, Dept of Earth & Environmental Sciences California State University, Fullerton, Dept of Geological Sciences California State University, Hayward, Dept of Geological Sciences California State University, Long Beach, Dept of Geological Sciences California State University, Los Angeles, Dept of Geological Sciences California State University, Northridge, Dept of Geological Sciences California State University, Stanislaus, Dept of Geology California University of Pennsylvania, Dept of Earth Sciences Carleton College, Dept of Geology Casper College, Geology Dept Castleton State College, Dept of Natural Sciences (Geology) Central Methodist University, Division of Science Central Michigan University, Dept of Geology Central Missouri State University, Dept of Earth Science Central Oregon Community College, Dept of Science Central Washington University, Dept of Geological Sciences Cerritos College, Earth Science Department Chadron State College, Dept of Geosciences

City College of San Francisco, Dept of Earth Sciences Clarion University, Dept of Anthropology, Geography & Earth Science Clatsop Community College, Dept of Geology Clemson University, Bob Campbell Geology Museum Cleveland State University, Dept of Biological, Geological, & Environmental Sciences Colby College, Dept of Geology Colgate University, Dept of Geology College of Charleston, Dept of Geology & Environmental Geosciences College of Southern Idaho, Dept of Physical Science College of Staten Island, Engineering Science & Physics College of the Desert, Div of Science & Mathematics College of the Redwoods, Dept of Science (Earth Science) College of the Siskiyous, Div of Natural & Applied Sciences College of William & Mary, Dept of Geology Colorado College, Geology Dept Colorado School of Mines, Dept of Geology & Geological Engineering Colorado School of Mines, Dept of Geophysics Colorado School of Mines, Dept of Mining Engineering Colorado State University, Dept of Geosciences Columbia College, Dept of Science & Mathematics Columbia University, Dept of Earth & Environmental Sciences Columbus State University, Dept of Chemistry & Geology Community College of Baltimore County, Catonsville campus, Div of Mathematics, Science & Engineering Community College of Rhode Island, Dept of Physics (Geology & Oceanography Div) Cornell College, Dept of Geology Cowley County Community College, Dept of Natural Sciences (Geology) Crafton Hills College, Geology Dept Cypress College, Physical Sciences Dept Dartmouth College, Dept of Earth Sciences De Anza College, Physical Science & Mathematics Div Del Mar College, Dept of Natural Sciences Delta College, Dept of Geology Denison University, Department of Geosciences Dickinson College, Dept of Geology Earlham College, Geosciences Dept East Carolina University, Dept of Geology Eastern Illinois University, Dept of Geology/Geography Eastern Kentucky University, Dept of Earth Sciences Eastern Oregon University, Science Dept Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Dept of Geosciences Elizabethtown College, Dept of Physics Emory University-Oxford College, Dept of Geology Fairleigh Dickinson University, Dept of Chemistry & Geology Florida Atlantic University, Dept of Geography & Geology Florida International University, Dept of Earth Sciences Florida State University, Dept of Meteorology Fort Lewis College, Geosciences Dept Franklin and Marshall College, Dept of Earth and Environment Fresno City College, Earth/Physical Science Dept Gainesville College, Division of Natural Science Georgia Institute of Technology, School of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences Georgia Perimeter College, Geology Dept, Clarkston Campus Georgia Southern University, Dept of Geology and Geography

Georgia Southwestern State University, Dept of Geology & Physics Glenville State College, Div of Science & Mathematics Grand Valley State University, Dept of Geology Green River Community College, Dept of Geology Greenfield Community College, Dept of Earth Science Gustavus Adolphus College, Dept of Geology Hanover College, Dept of Geology Hobart & William Smith Colleges, Dept of Geoscience Hofstra University, Geology Department Hope College, Dept of Geological & Environmental Sciences Hudson Valley Community College, Physics Dept Hunter College (CUNY), Dept of Geography Idaho State University, Dept of Geosciences Illinois State University, Dept of Geography-Geology Indiana University / Purdue University, Fort Wayne, Dept of Geosciences Indiana University / Purdue University, Indianapolis, Dept of Geology Indiana University, Bloomington, Dept of Geological Sciences Iowa State University of Science & Technology, Dept of Geological & Atmospheric Sciences Jacksonville University, Dept of Biology & Marine Science Kansas State University, Dept of Geology Kent State University, Stark Campus, Dept of Geology La Salle University, Dept of Geology & Environmental Science Lafayette College, Dept of Geology & Environmental Geosciences Lake Superior State University, Geology/Physics Lehigh University, Dept of Earth & Environmental Sciences Lehman College (CUNY), Environmental, Geographic, and Geological Sciences Lewis-Clark State College, Earth Sciences Lincoln Land Community College, Div of Biological and Physical Sciences Loma Linda University, Dept of Natural Sciences, Geology Program Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus, Dept of Earth & **Environmental Sciences** Los Angeles City College, Chemistry & Geophysical Sciences Department Los Angeles Harbor College, Dept of Earth Science Los Angeles Valley College, Dept of Earth Science and Anthropology Louisiana State University, Dept of Geology & Geophysics Louisiana State University, Dept of Oceanography & Coastal Sciences Louisiana Tech University, Geosciences Program Lower Columbia College, Dept of Earth Sciences Macalester College, Geology Dept Mansfield University, Dept of Geography & Geology Marin Community College, Geology Dept Marshall University, Dept of Geology Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dept of Earth, Atmospheric, & Planetary Sciences Miami University, Dept of Geology Michigan Technological University, Dept of Geological & Mining Engineering & Sciences Midwestern State University, Dept of Geosciences Millsaps College, Dept of Geology Mississippi State University, Dept of Geosciences Montana State University, Billings, Dept of Biological & Physical Sciences Montana State University, Dept of Earth Sciences Montana Tech of the University of Montana, Dept of Geological Engineering Montclair State University, Dept of Earth & Environmental Studies

Moravian College, Dept of Physics & Earth Science Morehead State University, Dept of Physical Sciences Mount San Antonio College, Dept of Earth Sciences and Astronomy Mount Union College, Dept of Geology Murray State University, Dept of Geosciences New Jersey City University, Dept of Geoscience/Geography New Mexico Highlands University, Environmental Geology Program New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Dept of Earth & Environmental Science New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Dept of Mineral Engineering New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, Dept of **Geological Sciences** North Dakota State University, Dept of Geosciences Northeastern Illinois University, Dept of Earth Science Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, Dept of Physical Science Northeastern State University, Dept of Geology Northern Arizona University, Department of Geography, Planning, and Recreation Northern Illinois University, Dept of Geology and Environmental Geosciences Northern Kentucky University, Dept of Physics and Geology Northland College, Dept of Geoscience Oberlin College, Dept of Geology Ohio Wesleyan University, Dept of Geology & Geography Okaloosa-Walton Community College, Science Dept Oklahoma State University, School of Geology Olivet Nazarene University, Dept of Physical Sciences Orange Coast College, Div of Mathematics & Science Orange County Community College, Dept of Science & Engineering Pacific Lutheran University, Dept of Geosciences Palomar College, Dept of Earth Sciences Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Department of Geosciences Plymouth State College, Natural Science Dept Prescott College, Dept of Environmental Studies Principia College, Dept of Geology Radford University, Dept of Geology Randolph-Macon College, Environmental Studies Program Rider University, Dept of Geological & Marine Sciences Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Dept of Geological Sciences Saint Norbert College, Geology Dept Saint Petersburg Junior College, Dept of Natural Science Salem State College, Geological Sciences Dept San Jose City College, Dept of Physical Science San Jose State University, Dept of Geology Seattle Central Community College, Div of Science & Mathematics Shawnee State University, Dept of Natural Sciences Shorter College, Division of Natural Sciences Skidmore College, Dept of Geosciences Slippery Rock University, Dept of Geography, Geology, and the Environment Smith College, Dept of Geology South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, Dept of Geology & Geological Engineering Southern Arkansas University, Dept of Physical Sciences (Geology) Southern Connecticut State University, Dept of Earth Sciences Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Geology

Montgomery County Community College, Dept of Science

Southern Methodist University, Dept of Geological Sciences Southern Oregon University, Dept of Geology

Southern Utah University, Department of Physical Science Southwestern Oregon Community College, Dept of Geology SUNY College at Brockport, Dept of the Earth Sciences SUNY, Buffalo, Dept of Geology SUNY, Fredonia, Dept of Geosciences SUNY, Geneseo, Dept of Geological Sciences SUNY, Oneonta, Dept of Earth Sciences SUNY, Potsdam, Dept of Geology SUNY, Stony Brook, Dept of Geosciences Susquehanna University, Dept of Earth & Environmental Science Tarleton State University, Dept of Chemistry, Geosciences, and Environmental Science Temple University, Dept of Geology Tennessee Technological University, Dept of Earth Sciences Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, Geosciences Program Texas A&M University, Dept of Geography Texas A&M University, Dept of Geology & Geophysics Texas A&M University, Dept of Soil & Crop Sciences Texas Christian University, Dept of Geology The Johns Hopkins University, The Morton K. Blaustein Dept of Earth & Planetary Sciences Thiel College, Dept of Environmental Science Towson University, Dept of Physics, Astronomy & Geosciences Trinity University, Dept of Geosciences Tufts University, Dept of Geology Union College, Geology Dept University of Alabama, Dept of Geological Sciences University of Arizona, Dept of Geography & Regional Development University of Arizona, Dept of Geosciences University of Arizona, Dept of Hydrology & Water Resources University of Arizona, Dept of Planetary Sciences University of Arizona, Dept of Soil, Water & Environmental Science University of Arkansas, Little Rock, Dept of Earth Science University of California, Davis, Dept of Geology University of California, Davis, Dept of Land, Air & Water Resources University of Chicago, Dept of Geophysical Sciences University of Delaware, College of Marine Studies, Oceanography Program University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Dept of Geology University of Houston Downtown, Dept of Natural Sciences University of Idaho, Dept of Geological Sciences University of Iowa, Dept of Geoscience University of Kansas, Dept of Geology University of Kentucky, Dept of Earth and Environmental Sciences University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Department of Geology University of Louisiana, Monroe, Dept of Geosciences University of Louisville, Dept of Geography & Geosciences University of Mary Washington, Dept of Environmental Science & Geology University of Massachusetts, Dept of Geosciences University of Miami, Dept of Geological Sciences University of Minnesota, Duluth, Dept of Geological Sciences University of Mississippi, Dept of Geology & Geological Engineering University of Missouri, Columbia, Dept of Soil, Environmental & Atmospheric Sciences University of Montana, Dept of Geology University of Montana, Western, Dept of Environmental Sciences University of Montevallo, Dept of Geology

University of Nebraska, Kearney, Dept of Geography & Earth Science University of New Hampshire, Dept of Earth Sciences University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Dept of Geological Sciences University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Dept of Earth Sciences University of Northern Colorado, Dept of Earth Sciences University of Northern Iowa, Dept of Earth Science University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Dept of Geology & Planetary Science University of Pittsburgh, Dept of Geology & Planetary Science University of Puget Sound, Dept of Geology University of Rhode Island, Graduate School of Oceanography University of Saint Thomas, Dept of Geology University of South Alabama, Dept of Marine Sciences University of South Carolina, Marine Science Program University of South Florida, Saint Petersburg, Dept of Marine Science University of Southern Indiana, Dept of Geology University of Southern Maine, Dept of Geosciences University of Texas, Permian Basin, Dept of Geology University of the South, Dept of Forestry & Geology University of Tulsa, Dept of Geosciences University of Washington, Dept of Earth & Space Sciences University of Washington, School of Oceanography University of West Alabama, Div of Natural Sciences & Mathematics University of West Florida, Dept of Environmental Studies University of Wisconsin, Madison, Dept of Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences University of Wisconsin, Madison, Dept of Soil Science University of Wisconsin, Parkside, Dept of Geology University of Wisconsin, Platteville, Dept of Geosciences University of Wisconsin, River Falls, Dept of Plant & Earth Science University of Wyoming, Dept of Geology and Geophysics Ventura College, Geosciences Dept Washington State University, Dept of Geology Washington University, Dept of Earth & Planetary Sciences Wayne State University, Geology Dept Weber State University, Dept of Geosciences West Chester University, Dept of Geology & Astronomy West Texas A&M University, Dept of Life, Earth & Environmental Science Western Carolina University, Dept of Geosciences & Natural **Resources Management** Western Illinois University, Dept of Geology Western Kentucky University, Dept of Geography & Geology Western New Mexico University, Dept of Natural Sciences Western Oregon University, Earth and Physical Sciences Dept Western State College of Colorado, Dept of Geology Western Washington University, Dept of Geology William Paterson College, Dept of Environmental Science & Geography Williams College, Dept of Geosciences Wittenberg University, Dept of Geology Yakima Valley College, Dept of Geology Yavapai College, Geology Dept.

Youngstown State University, Dept of Geological & Environmental Sciences