Dear New Geology Major:

Welcome to the Geology Department at Sacramento State. We are very proud of the quality of our program, the performance of our students and the accomplishments of our alumni. In this letter I want to provide some information about the major, our department, and our expectations of students.

Geology is a challenging and rewarding major that trains students to be careful observers of nature, critical and analytical scientific thinkers, and clear scientific writers. The field of geology integrates aspects of field work, chemistry, biology, physics and math – perhaps more so than any other scientific discipline.

Sac State Geology students typically go on to become professional geologists or enter graduate school, although some choose to go on to non-geology related professions. Regardless of the path they choose, geology students tend to be responsible stewards of Earth resources, and they consistently report great satisfaction with their choice of major.

Departmental Goals

The faculty of the Sacramento State Geology Department is committed to these goals:

- Providing a challenging academic curriculum in an environment that students find supportive and encouraging,
- Offering excellent academic advising,
- Providing opportunities for meaningful undergraduate research,
- Maintaining informal student-faculty interactions and strong sense of community.

Degree Programs

We offer two degree options in Geology: The Bachelor of Science (B.S.) and the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) The B.S. Degree Program is designed to be the best possible preparation for advanced work in geology, be it in graduate school or as a professional geologist. Students pursuing a B.S. degree in Geology are strongly encouraged to take a second semester of Chemistry and a second semester of Calculus, although these are not required.

The B.A. degree program requires less field work and fewer electives. It is typically taken by students who are going into earth science teaching in high school or who are dual-track majors combining geology with biological sciences, chemistry, physics, or engineering.

Academic Advisors

Academic advisors are typically assigned by the Department Chair when a student becomes a Geology major. You should work out a course schedule for each semester with your advisor. This will help you prevent mistakes such as trying to take a course out of sequence or in a semester the course is not offered. Students who do not know who their advisor is, or who want to change advisors, should talk to the Department Chair.
Books
Students should plan to buy all required textbooks for courses. The textbook for one course is often a valuable reference for subsequent courses.

You are also encouraged to buy Compton’s Manual of Field Geology and read as much of it as they can understand. It will be required for Geology 111A&B, Geology 110B and Geology 188. A paperback dictionary of geologic terms is another good investment.

Workload
Being a Geology Major is a full-time job. Geology classes are demanding. Mastery of course work cannot be achieved by half-hearted efforts. Successful Geology students will typically spend 20 to 30 hours studying each week, if they are taking a full course load. Students who must work a substantial number of hours should work with the department chair or their academic advisor to arrange a reduced course load each semester.

Field Work
All Geology majors take Geology 111A&B (Field Methods and Mapping), and Geology 110B (Structural Geology Field). Students pursuing the B.S. degree are also required to take Geology 188 (Advanced Field Geology), which is a 5-week summer field course. In addition, students are encouraged to go on other field trips offered by the Geology Club or professional societies.

Geology Club
Students should watch the Geology Club bulletin board and the department email listserv for announcements of club activities such as trips, speakers and parties. The Geology Club is run by students, and provides an opportunity to meet Geology majors and learn first-hand about the department. Students should subscribe to the department listserv because many announcements and employment opportunities are posted via e-mail.

Writing Skills
The Geology Department requires that written reports be well organized with content presented clearly and concisely. When writing for Geology courses students are expected to use proper English, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. All students should take required writing courses as early as possible.

An excellent general writing reference is Strunk and White, 1979, Elements of Style, available in paperback in the University Bookstore.

All Sacramento State students are required to pass the Writing Proficiency Exam. Take this exam as early as possible.

Welcome
You are joining an exceptional department and will be studying an engaging and socially relevant science with excellent career opportunities. Welcome!

Sincerely,

Dave Evans
Department Chair