

Spring 2022 EESB Meeting Minutes
April 1, 2022

Meeting called to order by EESB Chair, Lee Phillips, at 9:05 am

Members participation: Rob Decker, Richard Denne, Rhawn Denniston (secretary), Melissa Evans, Alexandra Geraets, Lee Phillips (chair), Todd Ririe, Noah Stern, Amy Sullivan, Jim Eagan, Aaron Suzuki: *all participants attending via Zoom* (Liz Maas absent)

Faculty and staff participating: David Peate (EES department chair), Kate Tierney Cramer (faculty liaison)

Visitors: Adam Blind (UI Center for Advancement)

Action Items from October 2021 Meeting: Secretary, Rhawn Denniston, did not review Action Items.

Summary of Action Items from April 2022 Meeting

1. Amy Sullivan will send Aaron Liesch contact information to the Nominations Committee
2. Lee Phillips will write a Spring newsletter article reminding alumni that self-nominations to the board are welcomed. The newsletter deadline is May 1.
3. Amy Sullivan and Jim Eagan plan to attend GSA in Denver October 9-12, an event that can be used to further alumni outreach at the convention.
4. Todd Ririe will prepare “boiler plate” information for the EESB weekly newsletter on mentoring

OPENING REMARKS

EESB chair, **Lee Phillips**, welcomed all participants and guests and asked for reflections on board-related events during the fall meeting or since. Todd Ririe noted a lack of questions for speaker Ron Blakey after his seminar last October and wondered if this was a consequence of so many in attendance via Zoom. **Lee** also asked board members how each would like to get the most out of serving the EESB. Past president **Amy Sullivan** encouraged the board to advance any ideas they have, first by discussing them with Lee and department chair, David Peate. Amy noted that while she is leaving the board, she is looking forward to working on the distinguished alumni award and with Tiffany Adrain (and a student) on developing professional biographies of past chair persons. **Todd Ririe**, chair of the mentoring committee, commented that of people who have left board, most agree to continue mentoring. He also argues that the board should always be aware of the needs of the department, in part because the department’s strong alumni association has helped EES when dealing with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) in the past. **Melissa Evans** mentioned that her connection to the board is rooted in a desire to honor the faculty and students who meant so much to her. **Aaron Suzuki** expressed his interest in helping current and future students have the same meaningful experience that he did and asks what the department needs from us as alumni/board members. **Richard Denne** agreed with Aaron and pointed out the

tension in working with alumni at his institution (TCU), making clear that the board should not try to dictate to the department but should instead work to advance the department's self-defined goals. **Rhawn Denniston** expressed a willingness to again host the get-together the night before the October's board meeting.

FUND RAISING

Adam Blind provided an update on fund-raising. The UI remains in the silent phase of a university-wide campaign and is currently finishing setting priorities and refining messaging. EES is ahead of the game in terms of identifying needs, solidifying message, and raising money. The public portion of the campaign officially starts in 1.5 years, with a goal TBD. Across the university, fund raising is up. Even if giving stopped today, the UI would set a record for money raised in a year. Total productivity for EES is \$1,114,000 with gifts of \$2,497,326 in just short of 3 fiscal years of work. **Lee Phillips** noted that this includes many small as well as large donations. As a result of departmental efforts, a fund is now established to support student participation in field courses and is available to accept donations. **Adam** continued that during One Day for Iowa, EES was in the top quartile of all departments at UI for percent of alumni making donations and in the top 15% by total dollars (total of \$12k). Other top programs were athletics, the business school, engineering, the law school, and the marching band. **Lee** pointed out that these numbers exclude matching gifts. **David Peate** noted that this represents a substantial improvement: over the last few years, One Day for Iowa yielded only \$4-5k for EES in total and argues that having a field course fund as the main target for One Day for Iowa helped stimulate giving owing to fond memories of field course experiences held by alums. A new scholarship (\$6-7k/year) established by Aaron and Joyce Liesch will be awarded to the top third year geoscience student.

Todd Ririe asked about the support to the UI from State of Iowa, to which **Adam** responded that state funding has been flat for several years, which is considered a win in the current political climate. **Adam** also stated that student enrollment for next year will show a significant increase over recent years. **Todd** noted that Cal Poly is currently seeing the largest growth of California state schools owing to their attention to, and advertising of, hands-on experiences, which meshes well with EES offerings (field courses, etc.). **Adam** stated that due to the impending "Birth Dearth", which will be particularly apparent in the upper Midwest and which should hit in 2026 (18 years after the Global Financial Crisis), the UI is focusing recruiting efforts on out-of-state students (particularly California, Denver, and Texas). **David** pointed out that the UI is already a destination for writing and space physics, and a goal of EES (and CLAS/UI) is (or perhaps could be) to make Iowa a destination for the study of the environment. Ashton Prairie restoration site (within the Iowa City limits) is a good selling point for the Environmental Sciences program; 17 groundwater monitoring wells are installed and instrumented and these are being included in an increasingly wide array of classes. **Adam** noted that the UI is hosting an event (2nd annual BioBlitz) in June at Ashton Prairie and is targeting state legislators. **David** pointed out that recruiting of international students is struggling. ESL language faculty have been cut by half due to very low numbers of international students.

CALL TO BOARD SERVICE

Lee Phillips reached out to several alumni, received varying degrees of interest of serving on EESB. He asked the board to help identify names and to consider reaching out to distinguished alumni awardees to assess their interests in serving on EESB. **Todd Ririe** noted that Liz Maas constructed a GoogleDocs sheet with the list of these names but that many retirees state they are

busier now than they were while working, so what about younger alums? **Kate Tierney Cramer** asked about age requirements. Is it acceptable to approach alums who graduated five years ago? If so, she is considering asking Nick Johnson. **Todd** was enthusiastic about having such recent graduates on the board, arguing they are well suited to relate to the current students. **Lee** noted that the board has a need to maintain/expand/ensure diversity among all criteria including employment, age, gender, ethnicity, etc. **Amy Sullivan** reminded the board that the by-laws allow the EESB membership to be as large as 15 members. She intends to brainstorm ideas for other board members at a June get-together in Colorado, as there could be a large pool of interested alums in the Rocky Mountain region. **Aaron Suzuki** asked about the graduates from late 90s-early 00s. **Noah Stern** suggested that the board could solicit departmental faculty for the names of alumni to contact. **Lee** volunteered to write a note for the next biennial newsletter asking for participation on the board (**David Peate** will check with Emily Finzel for the submission deadline). **Kate** also noted that many recent alumni receive the weekly email newsletter, and thus this would be a good method for advertising to younger alums. **Todd** agreed, saying we need to make clear that the board isn't just for older alums (and/or big donors). **Lee** said the nominations committee will provide a slate of nominees by June, and that if any board member would like to reach out to someone, contact Liz, Amy, or Lee for the script. **Amy** pointed out that board members should not be those who will be considered for the distinguished alumni award, but we can ask previous winners to serve.

Lee provided an overview of committee membership. As board president, Lee serves (as an *ex officio* member) on all committees, and the nomination committee is the only one meeting on a regular basis. Overall, there is good representation on committees although he noted we need a fundraising committee chair (**Noah** then self-nominated for fund-raising committee). We also need a chair-elect for the EESB. **Amy** noted that it is important to have a chair-elect in case something happens to Lee, even for short period of time. The by-laws were written to be flexible, and thus this person doesn't necessarily have to become full time chair in 2.5 more years. Amy is happy to chat with anyone who might be interested and notes you the schedule can be adapted as needed.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

The Alumni Outreach committee is staffed by Rob Decker (chair), Jim Eagan, Aaron Suzuki and is charged with organizing and maintaining systems for regular communication among faculty, students, and alumni and plan alumni day (and also the distinguished alumni award).

The Fund Raising committee is staffed by Liz Maas (chair), Richard Denne, Liz Mass, Noah Stern (the next chair) and is charged with assisting in the development of funds for research, teaching, etc. **Rhawn Denniston** noted that he is not currently assigned to a committee and volunteered for this one.

The Mentoring committee is staffed by Todd Ririe (chair), Jim Eagan, Melissa Evans, Liz Maas, Noah Stern, and Aaron Suzuki, and is charged with facilitating mentoring of students by alumni.

The Nominating committee is staffed by Liz Maas (chair), Melissa Evans, and Todd Ririe, and is charged with identifying new board members and ensuring a minimum number of board members. **Noah Stern** suggests that the board consider including something about maintaining diversity. **Amy Sullivan** notes that it's easy to update the bylaws.

DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Department chair, **David Peate**, provided an update on the department. EES has received funding for a planetary geoscience position through a space physics proposal. After five on-

campus interviews, an offer has been made. Most applicants specialized in planetary petrology/geochemistry/mineralogy, and as such this person could teach some of the courses currently offered by Mark Reagan who retires at end of this year. As for any future hires, the CLAS is suffering through a budget crisis and so is cutting back on new hires; there will be only 5-6 this year. CLAS solicited an (anomalously short) 1-page proposal from each department interested in new faculty, received 51 applications, and winnowed this number down to 19, from whom they requested a more detailed proposal. EES made the cut (and thus has a 6/19 chance of success). The department seeks an environmental geophysicist in order to strengthen the environmental sciences program. A decision should be announced in another few weeks. New hires are critical as Mark Reagan is retiring at the end of the year, and Tom Foster is retiring in a few years. The UI is concerned about how CLAS manages resources and will provide more resources once CLAS makes changes. The university is asking questions such as: are faculty fully deployed in departments? In those departments with very low enrollments, where faculty are hardly teaching, why are they still asking for visiting positions? Raul Curto, CLAS associate dean for last 20 years, made different deals with different departments, and the university administration is trying now to even things out. There is also concern regarding overlap of curricular offerings between different departments, for example between Communications Studies, Rhetoric, Journalism. Rumors are swirling that the university wants to think about integrating environmental/sustainability offerings across departments but nothing concrete is yet known.

Lee Phillips asks if there has been any interest in faculty lines related to carbon sequestration: **Kate Tierney Cramer** notes that the department is having a hard time meeting basic teaching obligations and thus they want to bolster their capacity to meet basic obligations to students. Carbon sequestration is being addressed by Iowa Geological Survey, who just hired a new staff member to work on this question. **Richard Denne** noted that applicants for graduate programs at TCU have dropped 80% in last several years and numbers of undergrads are falling too. This trend is driven by oil and gas jobs. **Todd Ririe** points out that enrollment is tied to students' understanding of salary. **Aaron Suzuki** asks what else beyond salary is motivating Gen Z students. Diversity, equity, inclusion? Social Justice? **Kate** noted that faculty are working on these questions and are now including acknowledgements (history of peoples, exploitation, use), which are well received by students. **Aaron** asked what drove the addition of these issues, to which **Kate** replied that social equity is in her upbringing and she is made particularly aware of social ideas/ideologies thanks to close interactions with students in the field.

The overspill paleontology collections, as well as mineralogy/petrology materials and field equipment, will soon be moved from Oakdale to a space on Sand Road. The department hopes to hire undergraduate interns to help with the move. Costs will be \$30k (less than feared) and EES is asking the UI for this money. Demolishing (and get rid of deferred maintenance of Oakdale) should free up equivalent funds. **Jonathon Adrain** and **Tiffany Adrain** are writing an NSF grant for new storage cabinets although there already exists heavy duty shelving in the new space. Boxes of PhD theses (many unbound) are also currently housed at Oakdale. **Tiffany** is working with the library to have them scanned (if not already) and made accessible online.

In terms of the number of majors, there is not much change from last fall. Geoscience majors are bit low, as is the case with geoscience numbers across the Big 10; numbers of Environmental Science majors are rising. Now that Covid is receding (at least in the eyes of the UI), **Kate** is offering fieldtrips again, and the hope is that this will yield more majors. She reports students saying "I didn't know you could study this!" She is heading to the St Francois Mountains (eastern Missouri) soon to examine igneous rocks, lead mines, and environmental impacts of lead mines.

It's a four-day trip that costs only \$40; students need only a hand lens and sleeping bag. The National Parks fieldtrip to the Colorado Plateau is full and being joined by a few young alumni.

ALUMNI OUTREACH

Lee Phillips noted that the 2022 DAA recipient is Dana Koplin. This year's GSA meeting is in Denver from Oct 9-12 and the AAPG meeting is in Houston. It would be helpful to have alumni outreach efforts at these meetings. **Rob Decker** asked if there are records of outreach efforts/approaches in the past? What's the ideal size of the alumni outreach committee? Rob will set up a quarterly meeting. **Amy Sullivan** noted that Steve Shutter was the last outreach chair and Rob and Steve didn't have a chance to overlap. Amy is happy to help. **Kate Tierney Cramer** said she could start going to AAPG again to help organize something for the department, the EESB, or both.

MENTORING COMMITTEE

Todd Ririe noted that we don't have a lack of mentors but there are few students who seek a mentor. Todd's spreadsheet of student mentees is outdated asks mentors need to provide updates. Todd also notes that we need some new ideas for disseminating the news that this mentoring program is available. Grant Smith left the board but still wants to mentor students. He spoke to Ben's class and several people were interested, most of whom were in Environmental Science program. Of these, most were junior Environmental Planning majors from Geography, a department that doesn't have a mentoring program. Todd noted that based on their coursework, he realized he couldn't help them in detail although he could provide basic mentoring skills (how to look for jobs, interview prep, resume construction, etc.). **David Peate** noted that EES has raised this point with Geography. **Kate Tierney Cramer** emphasized that Planning/Policy students rarely take additional natural science or math courses, and thus EESB members and EES faculty shouldn't apologize for not being able to mentor them as well as we'd like. She also noted that the Environmental Science Club is up and running again; they network well and is perpetually looking for advice. **David** asked if Todd can provide a few sentences to be added to weekly newsletter to advertise mentoring possibilities. **Todd** reiterated from the last EESB meeting his desire to develop a one hour-long speed mentoring program and requests help with logistics. (The Society of Mining Engineers) does this 2-3x/year.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FINAL COMMENTS

Todd Ririe asked Rhawn Denniston about geology enrollments and related issues at Cornell College. **Rhawn** noted that Cornell geology enrollments are low, and also argued that these students need substantial mentoring, perhaps more than students a decade or two ago; the Cornell geology faculty are starting to do so as early as introductory classes. He also noted his experience that except for student headed directly to graduate school, many geology (and environmental science) majors are reticent to take supporting math and sciences courses. Lee thanked everyone for their hard work and asked committee chairs for short summaries of their work.