



Department of Geology & Geography 2025-2026 Newsletter

Greetings from the Chair

Greetings Alumni! I hope this newsletter finds you all well. As we begin the new academic year, I'm extremely proud of our accomplishments this past year and I look forward to another outstanding year ahead. Our department continues to provide high-quality learning experiences for our students thanks to the dedication of our faculty and staff.

The department has a tradition of providing impactful learning opportunities for our students. In addition to their outstanding teaching in the classroom, our faculty continue to be committed to providing learning experiences outside the classroom. This past year our students have benefited from faculty-led field trips, internships both locally and nationally, and collaborative research projects that often led to presentations at local and national conferences. All of which has helped prepare our students for future careers or success in graduate school. We are proud to highlight the accomplishments of our faculty, staff, and students in this newsletter.

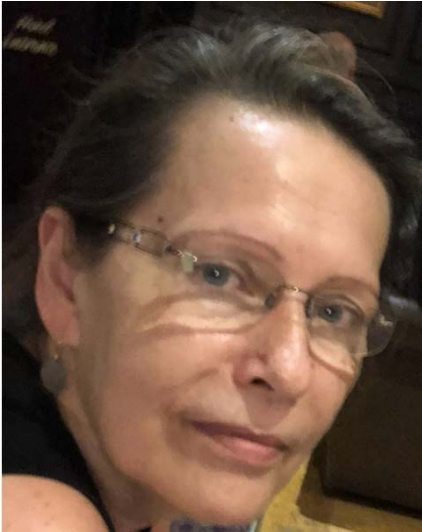


We would like to invite you to come back to Charleston and visit the department. Homecoming is the weekend of October 11–12 this year. I hope that you can make it back to campus for a visit. Fall is a great time to visit Charleston and EIU. If you can't make it for homecoming, please stop by the department the next time you are back in Charleston. It is always great to catch up with our former students and hear about your experiences after EIU. The Department of Geology and Geography has a great history and very promising future. I want to thank all of you for your support of the department. Donations from our alumni allow us to continue to support student research and field opportunities. The experiences enhance their education and prepare them to be professional in the field of Geology and Geography. Please stay in touch with us and let us know if there is anything we can do for you.

Hope to see you soon!

Jim

Greetings from the Dean



The Department of Geology and Geography had another very successful year, and this newsletter describes the fantastic work done by faculty, staff, and students! I am always honored to congratulate “GEO” (as I call them) on their achievements and continued great work!

Barbara Bonnekessen, Dean
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Spotlight On: Cruisin' the Mother Road: 2025 Summer Field Experience

This past summer, students from the department had the opportunity to travel Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica, CA as part of the first ever GTU Summer Field Experience. Led by Dr. Viertel and Dr. Davis, students traveled "The Main Street of America" for 3 weeks. The trip took students from "Pier to Pier," beginning at Navy Pier on Lake Michigan and ending at Santa Monica Pier at the Pacific. The historic highway provided the perfect classroom to experience the geography, history, culture, and economy of the region.

During the trip, students were able to learn about the history of the American highway system and the impact that intestates had on communities that had developed along Route 66. Staying in period motels and eating in local establishments, they also had the opportunity to talk to locals about efforts to preserve historical sites along the Mother Road and new initiatives that were underway as part of the 100-year anniversary of the road that will occur in 2026.

Roadside attractions, classic architecture and diners, and important historical museums and sites were all a part of each day's itinerary. From seeing classic Muffler Men such as the Gemini Giant in Wilmington, IL to standing on the corner in Winslow, AZ, the student got to experience roadside America. Another highlight of the trip was our visit to two national parks. The Painted Desert/Petrified Forest NP and the Grand Canyon NP provided an inspirational field laboratory to study the physical geography of southwest.

The Route 66 experience was more than a field trip. It was an opportunity for our faculty and students to connect as they explored a part of America's past and present. Students gained a better appreciation for the different landscapes, cultures, and stories that shape this part of the United States. We couldn't have done this trip without the assistance of all of you. Much of the trip was funded using money donated to the department by alumni. We appreciate your support for the department and hope to continue to offer these summer field experiences for years to come.



Photos from the Route 66 Summer Field Experience, 2025.

Recent Graduates

Fall 2024

Carson Davenport (GEG)
Colin Houser (GEL)

Spring 2025

Sam Huckstep (GEG)
Joshua Lee (GEG)
Evie Rudibaugh (GEG)
Miller Dunlop (GEG)
Nathan Foster (GEG & GEL)

Summer 2025

Lyssa Nave (GEG)
Lydia Howard (GEL)
Jasper Tyner (GEL)

Student Award Winners, Spring 2025

Geography Awards

- Vincent P. & Pamela R. Gutowski Award for Excellence in Geography – **Lyssa Nave**
- Errett & Mazie Warner Geography Presidential Award – **Gabriel Eickberg**
- Grace Markwell Meier Scholarship in Geography – **Nik James**
- Robert Buzzard Memorial Scholarship in Geography – **Joshua Lee**
- Ruby M. Harris Award – **Ethan Schobernd**
- Belayet Khan Geography Award – **Ellen Wang**
- Dalias Price Award – **Lyssa Nave, Sam Huckstep, and Ethan Schobernd**
- Walter H. & Dortha V. McDonald Scholarship – **Miller Dunlop**
- Richard Wise-Lester Stoner Undergraduate Scholarship in Geography – **Aaron Garvey**
- Annie Weller Memorial Scholarship in Geography – **Evie Rudibaugh**
- John George Wozencraft Jr. Memorial Award in Geography – **Ben Whitney**
- Troyt York Memorial Scholarship in Geography – **Emily Davis**
- Geography Alumni Award – **Wrenna Clausen**

Geology Awards

- Errett & Mazie Warner Geology Presidential Award – **Lydia Howard, Jasper Tyner, and Nathan Foster**
- Dewey H. Amos Scholarship – **Sean Price**
- Bob & Mary Jorstad Scholarship – **Adrianna Gambill**
- John George Wozencraft Jr. Memorial Award in Geology – **Lucas Dahl**
- Jon & Diana Giffin Geologist Scholarship – **Max Bruggman**
- John Popp Field Geology Scholarship – **Lydia Howard**
- Geology Alumni Award – **Gen Derwin**
- SGA Tar Award – **Lydia Howard**

Department Activities

The faculty and students of the department have had many highlights this past year. Below are just a few of the amazing things that our department had the opportunity to be a part of.

2024 Family Weekend Tailgate



2025 Departmental Awards Picnic



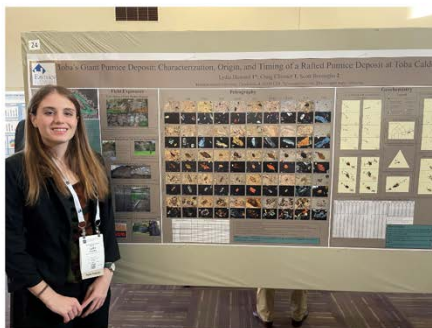
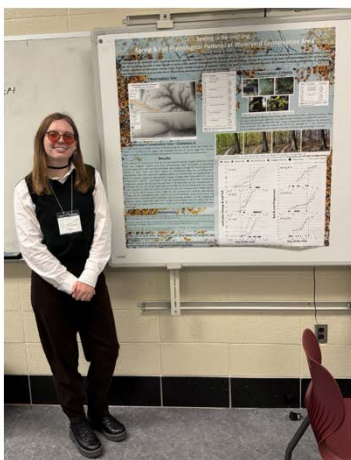
2025 GTU Summer Field Trip



Field Work in Dr. Riley's Surface Water Class



Student Presentations – Lydia Howard and Lyssa Nave



Student Organizations

Gamma Theta Upsilon (GTU)/Geography Club

Gamma Theta Upsilon and Geography Club had a fantastic year. Led by our outstanding leaders Lyssa Nave and Joshua Lee, every month saw multiple activities. Bowling, game nights, movie nights, and lots of dining out were on the agenda. In November, several of our members celebrated Geography Awareness Week by painting the EIU Spirit Rock. We look forward to more excitement (and possibly another trip!) in the coming year.



Geology Club, AIPG Student Chapter, & Sigma Gamma Epsilon (SGE)

We had a great year again, as usual! The highway section under our stewardship is still being maintained, although we were not able to get out as many times this year as we would have liked. Operation Gratitude benefited again this year from members' altruism, with a donation box full of scarves and Beanie Babies having been collected and sent for the troops. In case one starts wondering about the military these days, they use the toys to make friends with the local young ones. Gamma Chi received both of the national annual awards available to student chapters, keeping our "winning streak" of having the most awards of ANY chapter in the nation alive. Our students ARE amazing!

The Faculty

Diane Burns

Hello Wonderful Alumni! It has been another year—and I hope all of you enjoyed a healthy, safe and happy year. I am on sabbatical this Fall, hoping to revitalize the intro Earth Science labs as they are sorely in need of some updating. I will also be traveling, investigating possible outcrops to photograph and mount as full-sized graphics on the department walls. I received an internal grant to do this a year ago and hope that—if and when I am allowed to install them—all can use them to their advantage in the department classes as well as utilize them as recruiting tools. Personally, life is grand; I wish the best to all until next time!

Craig Chesner (emeritus)

The Keweenaw cabin continues to consume me, but will be a wonderful place to host geology colleagues, alumni, friends, and family. My career work, **TOBA CALDERA: *The Eye of Sumatra, Evolution of the Toba Caldera Complex***, has now been published by *SpringerBriefs in Earth System Sciences*! Our network of successful EIU Geology graduates continues to grow and often supports current students and recent graduates. Your accomplishments and efforts mean more than you know! Please keep me posted on the highlights of your lives and careers, and if possible, come share a beer with me in Charleston or the Keweenaw!

Mike Cornebise

Greetings from EIU! I hope this newsletter finds you well. I continue to serve as Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. I also continue to teach in the department and I'm happy to offer a section of the Geography and Culture of Latin America (GEO 3065) this semester. The department has recombined the Middle and South America courses into a single course that covers the Latin American region. I hope you can all join us on October 11th at Tent City for EIU Homecoming: the theme this year is "Boogie with Billy"! We'll feature disco inspired entertainment and a catered taco bar at the CLAS tent, so stop by and spin our prize wheel. My family is doing well. Sam has started the MBA program at EIU and Sofia begins her junior year (also at EIU) as a Public Relations major. Roxanne has returned to K12 education as a substitute teacher in the Charleston school district. Have a wonderful year!

Cameron Craig

Salutations! All is well and in great spirits for another year to serve my university, department, and students! I continue to teach Weather & Climate, Spaceship Earth, Broadcast Meteorology, Cultural Geography, and World Regional Geography." I

also continue to work closely with my broadcast meteorology students at WEIU's EMMY award winning news program, "NewsWatch." We continue to have a strong team of Broadcast Meteorology students who keep viewers informed across the region. We also continue having a fantastic relationship with National Weather Service Lincoln in providing climate data from the Dalias Price Memorial Weather Observation Station.

Jake Crandall

Hello alumni and friends, another fall semester is upon us! This year has flashed by and was chaotically punctuated by fun and success. Emily and I just brought home a puppy, who has already turned the house and our sleep schedules upside down. She is a little yellow lab that we call Molly, and she has been the light of our lives this past month. Her training has been going well, and I'm excited to see what she has in store for us in the coming months. She's a handful and is growing quickly and will soon be out of the puppy stage, though not too soon, I hope. There's not much else in this world that I'd willingly get up at 5:30am every morning for.

I have recently concluded my latest stint as a NASA panel chief, where I was able to be a part of the funding process for a number of amazing and exciting project proposals. One of my research groups and I have our fingers crossed for a recently submitted grant proposal of our own that would open new possibilities with our continuing Mars analog research projects. Another research group that I am thankful to be part of just published a paper in *The Journal of Geophysical Research: Planets* entitled "The "Analogues for VENUS' GEologically Recent Surfaces" (AVENGERS) Initiative: Using Terrestrial Analogs to Study Recent Volcano-Tectonic Activity on Venus and Inform the Characterization of Terrestrial Exoplanets". Working with such a talented group and professionally exploring the realm of exoplanet research has been a rewarding experience.

Emily, Molly and I hope you've all had an enjoyable year, and wish you all the best in the year ahead.

Be well,
-JRC

Jim Davis



It is hard to believe that I am now in my 23rd year at EIU. I continue to serve as the chair of the department as well as teaching my usual courses in Cultural Geography, Sports Geography, Geography of Europe, and Tourism. In addition to my duties in the department, I continue to serve as the NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative for EIU. This is my 15th year in that role, and I continue to enjoy working with the student-athletes on campus. I was able to get some time away from campus this summer. Dr. Viertel and I led a 3-week field trip down Route 66 and to the Grand Canyon. You can read more about that trip in this newsletter. My wife and I also spent a week in the Smoky Mountains and traveled to Mt. Airy (Mayberry), NC to experience all the Andy Griffith tourism there. My kids also are doing well. Amanda is now married and lives in Florida. Emily is a Junior majoring in Geography here at EIU and is working with Cameron Craig in the Broadcast Meteorology Program. I hope you all are doing well and will visit if you find your way back to Charleston.

Bob Jorstad (emeritus)

Retirement living on the Central Coast of California is truly great. Since moving here a little over two years ago we have made many new friends and are keeping quite busy with family, volunteering, walking, and church. The weather is wonderful and it is very nice having family just a mile away.

This past year we made another trip to Kona on the Big Island of Hawaii. At the start of the summer we made a trip with our son Rob, an EIU Physics alum, to the national parks and monuments in southern Utah. We did some hiking in Bryce Canyon N.P., Escalante N.M., Capitol Reef N.P., Canyonlands N.P., Arches N.P., Natural Bridges N.M. and Grand Canyon N.P. We got to the north rim about two weeks before the fire. Needless to say, it was an incredible journey.

Belayet Khan (emeritus)

More than nine years into retirement, I am happy to reflect on my delightful experience as a member in the Department of Geology and Geography at Eastern Illinois University. Over the course of 39 years, I had the wondrous opportunity to interact with my colleagues and students who made for a truly special career. My involvements on various committees allowed me to strive for a positive impact on

campus, and this meant a lot to me as someone deeply invested in EIU. Collaboration was key to our success on many fronts over the course of almost four decades.

Certainly, the highlight of my time at Eastern was the privilege of teaching our incredible undergraduate students. Sincerely, I always looked forward to teaching every one of my classes. Each semester, I was thrilled to teach students who greeted me with genuine curiosity and enthusiasm for the learning materials.

I found myself thriving off their engagement, and this made me feel a strong sense of purpose in my role as a teacher. For years, I looked forward to weekends for a reason different than most as I taught off-campus classes. Teaching has always been a passion of mine, but it was over the years at Eastern that it became my calling. I am so honored now to be able to consider it my life's work. Beyond the classroom, I am eternally grateful to God for the blessed life I have had in Charleston with my wife and three children. It is amazing to think that Charleston is our beloved home.

By the grace of the God, our three children are doing well, and they remain busy with their academic and professional responsibilities. Our older daughter serves as a Financial Advisor for an Investment Company in Indiana. The younger daughter is an Emergency Medicine Doctor and an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. She graduated from the University of Chicago and Rush Medical College in Chicago. Our son, after graduating from Northwestern University, Rush Medical College, and the University of Illinois Medical School, Chicago has recently completed his three-year Fellowship Program on oncology and hematology from Cleveland Clinic, Ohio. He has recently joined a hospital in Chicago. I must say, the Charleston schools provided excellent education for our children, and we found a strong sense of community that we know is unique to our charming small town. As we each pursue our respective endeavors, my wife devotes her efforts to caring for our family, and we would certainly be lost without her support.

With our lifelong love for traveling, my wife and I have made some trips since my retirement. In recent years, we have traveled to Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, India, Bangladesh, Sweden, Finland, Spain, Czech Republic, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. Although we are always seeking new adventures, we love coming home to Charleston, and our children know that home is the best place for all of us to converge whenever possible. The gratifications of my career at EIU will forever stay with me. Early in my career I have hoped for an academic position where I would feel a sense of belonging, and Eastern has been that place for me. I must admit, I had no premonition of the tremendous passion and fulfillment I would find at Eastern. I humbly want to state that by God's grace, my vision has come to fruition, and I remain optimistic that the future will continue to provide treasured adventures.

Barry Kronenfeld

Hello alumni! I hope you are all doing well and enjoying the prolonged summer. This has been a year of quiet fiddling for me. Fiddling with classes, fiddling with my work environment, fiddling with online teaching and recording, and of course always fiddling with maps and GIS data. As an example, I've been experimenting with making maps using nothing but voice commands—"Filter cities to population greater than 100,000, add rivers to the map...." Imagine the day when we don't have to navigate through all of those menus, panes, dialogs, etc.! I don't pretend to be the person that is going to make it all happen, but I do have a few tricks up my sleeve, and it's been interesting to rethink how we interact with our GIS. I've also been working with former student (now alumnus!) Cameron Clark to experiment with hydrology data for the state of Illinois, with the aim of producing user-friendly multi-scale stream data that will make it easier for cartographers around Illinois to show the rivers that they want on their maps. At home, my wife and I continue to lead a quiet life with our two cats. Our highlight this last year was a trip to a sleepy hot springs hotel in the mountains north of Albuquerque—sometimes the hidden gems are in the places you would least expect!

Christopher Laingen

August 2025 marked the start of my seventeenth academic year at EIU. The previous year was enjoyable, both professionally and personally. Professionally, I continue to enjoy the courses I teach, and I remain active in research and publishing—most notably with a group of historians who are reviving interest in studies related to the Midwest and my “every four years” contribution to the *Atlas of the 2024 Elections* (published by Rowman & Littlefield). I couldn't imagine a better job to have... one where I simply have to be interested in the world around me, and then talk to people and write about it.

Personally, things could not better, either. My wife (Mary) continues her work on campus as the EIU Pre-Health academic advisor; and our two kids—Kenny an 8th grader and Edy a 6th grader—keep us busy with sports and other extracurricular activities. This past year we were very fortunate to be able to go on a few memorable trips—trips that mostly involved hiking and camping. Over spring break, our family went on a three-day hike, covering around 25 miles, in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Next, in early June, my son and I took on a much more demanding hike in the Black Hills of South Dakota: the 125-mile Centennial Trail, which connects Wind Cave National Park in the south with Bear Butte in the north. Aside from the hundreds of ticks we pulled off ourselves over the first two days, the conditions could not have been better. This was my son's first “serious” long hike, but we were able to finish in only seven days, two days shorter than we were anticipating. Lastly, in mid-July, my wife and I took our annual hiking trip—this year to the Sierra Nevada Mountains, completing the 60-mile “North Lake-South Lake” trail, which overlaps with one of the most scenic sections of the John Muir Trail (which includes going over Muir Pass).



The Gosben Prong Trail, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, March 2025.



The Centennial Trail, near Dalton Lake (South Dakota), June 2025.



Evolution Lake, Kings Canyon National Park, July 2025.

Katie Lewandowski

Greetings! Honestly, I don't have a whole lot to report. Things have been going along business as usual. One of my big efforts in the last year is to get Secondary Science added as a discipline to the Masters and Teaching (MAT) program. I am hoping it will be added for the next cohort, but we will see. There's still quite a bit of bureaucratic paperwork to be done.

Last year, I taught science methods for the pre-service teachers, vertebrate paleontology for the geology majors, oceanography and intro to earth sciences for the gen-ed crowd. I continue to work with independent study students both in education and in paleontology. Right now, I have one of each doing independent studies with me. Dez Bonds is a chemistry teacher licensure student working on improving her planning and teaching skills. Max Bruggman returned from last year to work with me on the benthic forams from the Pleistocene from around Tasmania. I hope he will be able to attend a conference and present a poster in the spring. We shall see!



For our big trip this year, my husband and I visited Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park. It was amazing! Can't beat the geology and the biology. We saw black bears, wolves, moose, pronghorn, mountain goats, bison, and many different kinds of birds. The weather was perfect!

Cheers,
Katie

James Riley

Oh, well, a touch of grey, kinda suits you anyway
That was all I had to say and it's alright



The tallest sand dunes in North America rise over 220 meters above the San Luis Valley of south-central Colorado and are pinned against the Sangre de Cristo Range of the southern Rocky Mountains. The dunes are derived mostly from volcanic materials that were transported to the valley by glacial and fluvial processes from the adjacent San Juan Mountains beginning during the Pliocene. Sediment accumulated on the bed and shoreline of proglacial

Lake Alamosa and subsequent smaller lakes that submerged portions of the valley floor until the middle of the Pleistocene. Once the lakes drained and the valley dried, prevailing southwesterly winds pushed saltating lakebed sand against the base of the mountains, while storms produce opposing winds that help sustain the height of the dunes. Here, amidst a field of reversing dunes, snow drapes a steep slip face on the flanks of High Dune in Great Sand Dunes National Park.

Dave Viertel

2024-25 was full of excitement. While I still teach remote sensing and land use planning courses as well as cultural geography, I've once again added Urban Geography to the mix this Fall. It was a busy year in research with 3 articles going into publication. I've also continued my work on the International Education Committee, switching from Chair to Vice-Chair for the coming year. I'm proud to say I achieved the rank of Full Professor this year.

Things are going great for my family as well. My daughter Ella is fifteen and driving. Varsity tennis and band at the high school keep us very busy. My wife continues to advise several hundred students over in the Education department—nice to be able to work close to one another. I am looking forward to seeing students, parents, and former students at homecoming, parents weekend, and beyond!

Support the Students, support the Department – all are welcomed and appreciated!

We have great students, solid programs and meaningful impact on people's careers. You have experienced it, and your support helps to keep it going. Support comes in many guises – passing along job opportunities and internships, visiting the department to give colloquia, equipment and specimen donations and, of course, monetary contributions. These funds are used to afford educational and research materials for student investigations, fund travel to present their projects at conferences now that this is permitted again, provide scholarships for deserving individuals and more. They have many more opportunities due solely to your generous support.

If you are interested in a monetary contribution to our department, please visit <https://www.ciu.edu/giving.php>. Once you accessed that page, you will see the first part where you enter the amount you will be given and a drop-down menu to the right of that to direct your gift to Geology and Geography. It is on the second page of the menu under the “College of Liberal Arts and Sciences,” about one third of the way down on that second page. Unfortunately, the Foundation has reworked the website and made it a little more difficult to navigate, but we Geoscientists will not be dissuaded! If you are directing the money to a specific scholarship/fund, please make note of it at the bottom where the instructions ask if the donation is in memory of someone. As always, checks made payable and sent to the Geology and Geography Department will be processed exactly as you direct.

Existing scholarships and funds:

- General Gift Account – unrestricted use towards student support, recruiting, etc.
- Geography Alumni Award – sophomore or junior in Geography
- Geology Alumni Award – sophomore or junior in Geology
- Dewey H. Amos Scholarship – outstanding junior in Geology or Earth Science
- Robert G. Buzzard Scholarship in Geography – junior or senior in Geography
- Jon and Diana Giffin Geologist Scholarship – at least sophomore Geology major with plans to continue in geology
- Vincent P. and Pamela R. Gutowski Scholarship – any student majoring in Geography
- Ruby M. Harris Award – senior in Geology, Geography or Earth Science

- Robert and Mary Jorstad Scholarship – junior or senior Geology student or junior or senior in Phys
- Belayet Khan Geography Scholarship – junior or senior Geography student
- Walter H. and Dorothea V. McDonald Scholarship – junior in Geography or Earth Science
- Grace Markwell Meier Award – outstanding member of Gamma Theta Upsilon (GTU)
- John Popp Field Geology Scholarship – seniors in Geology attending field camp
- Dalias and Lillian Price Memorial Endowment – supports student observers in obtaining daily climate data for the National Weather Service
- Errett and Mazie Warner Presidential Award – juniors or seniors in Geology, Geography or Earth Science
- Annie L. Weller Scholarship – junior or senior in Geography
- John George Wozencraft, Jr. Memorial Award – either Mathematics (even years) or Geogrpahy (odd years)
- Troyt York Memorial Scholarship – junior or senior in Geography
- Wise and Stoner Undergraduate Scholarship in Geography – junior or senior in Geography
- Others – establish your own scholarship or memorial fund!

We would especially like to encourage alumni to check for the possibility of matching funds from their employer, as any donation is then multiplied. For example, some large petroleum companies offer a 3:1 match. Gifts-in-kind of equipment or specimens are appreciated but please contact the department beforehand to ensure optimal use as well as conformance to University regulations. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to email or call me – thank you so very much!

Dr. Jim Davis, Chair
 Email: jadavis2@ciu.edu
 Phone: (217) 581-2626

Feeling social? Come see what is going on in social media!

We have Facebook pages and groups – pages are public, but the groups need to have you invited to join. Besides “shout outs” and various GEO-related postings, we also use the groups as a clearinghouse for all job opportunities and internships that come to our attention. If you are looking for a position, you should definitely join! If you know of opportunities, you can either join the group and pass along the information or just send along in an email and we’ll get it posted. To join or to send job opportunities, please email Jim Davis at jadavis2@ciu.edu.

Coming soon – Instagram and YouTube!!

More information on the department, faculty, and student opportunities can be found on our website:

eiu.edu/geoscience



AY25-26 GEO Department, Left to Right: Kembra Melton, Dave Viertel, Jake Crandall, Cameron Craig, Mike Cornebise, Jim Davis, Jim Riley, Katie Lewandowski, Barry Kronenfeld, Chris Laingen, Jay Gatrell.