

Dear Friends on the Geology Alumni Council:

February 18, 2011

Before you learn through the “grapevine,” I would like you to know some personal news that I am sure you have expected for a few years. I have this week made the decision that it is time to retire from my tenure at St. Lawrence in an active teaching role and to pursue a new track in the Department, hopefully, as Emeritus Professor, maintaining an active research role. My retirement will begin December 31, 2011. My teaching role next Fall will not include Paleontology. The Department, therefore, has been permitted to fill a three-year visiting professor position in that important area of our curriculum. What will happen to the position thereafter is unclear.

I am sure that I will have many occasions between now and December to chat with you so I will not try to express all my thoughts herein. I simply want to share what a pleasure it has been these nearly 40 years to teach such fine students, to teach with such dedicated colleagues and to have the support of such a fine university behind me. St. Lawrence has really been as exceptional as most all of you have believed it to be. So, too, has been this Department, and you deserve to be proud of its accomplishments and product! Those who may not have found it so have perhaps not engaged themselves deeply enough in the search for their educations, but that number is small when compared with the number who have absolutely blossomed when they accepted the freedom and responsibility for their learning and joined with the faculty and their peers in that endeavor. I am always proud of their (your) diverse accomplishments.

I wish to deeply thank you for the support the Alumni Council members – and all alumni-- have so generously given me and the Department over the years. Because of you, we can provide opportunities now to our students that we could only dream of when I began. We have a national, even international, visibility and impact because of you, especially through SLUGAC. And we have credibility in the profession and in graduate departments because you have had a seriousness of purpose and an ethical behavior about your careers. I have loved to be a part of something as fine as this.

I would be untrue if I did not acknowledge that the mentorship of both Bud Holland and Jim Street were the guiding principles of a great portion of my career as it has to do with the Department in all respects other than teaching. They were great teachers, but my teaching style, beliefs and methods, the relationships to students, and my commitment to field work and professional experience are all my own. I am pleased with the combination of these principles and practices, and I imagine that makes this the correct time to let others have a shot at it, so to speak.

The Department and SLU will continue to need your careful and thoughtful attention and support. I also retire with the strong belief that they will have it. Thanks for letting me do this with that confidence!

With warmest regards,
Mark

J. Mark Erickson,
Chapin Professor of Geology and Mineralogy