From the Department Chair . . .

As they say, “time flies when you are having a good time,” and that is mostly true of the last year here in the Department. The academic year seems to have dashed into the summer before we knew it. Since then, faculty, and students have been taking off to attend field camp, make progress on their research, and travel to the far ends of Earth to collaborate with colleagues, attend meetings, and complete their fieldwork.

The time has also flown by for me as Chair. It was six years ago that I took the reins that I will be handing off to Dr. David Foster in August. What progress we have made through the last seven years of budget crises! Not only did we survive, but we have grown, diversified, and become a much stronger department. With some active promotion of the Department and the renewed interest in the earth sciences, the number of undergraduate majors has nearly tripled in the past few years (now up to about 90) and we continue to attract (and graduate) high quality Ph.D. and M.S. students. Many of our undergraduate students are going on to quality graduate schools and our graduate students are being hired by industry and academia. This year (plus summer 2012) we had a record nine Ph.D. students graduate and 55 applicants for our doctoral graduate program. We also had seven M.S. students complete their degrees. This year also marked the initiation of the Interdisciplinary Marine Sciences major we were instrumental in creating. Five of our faculty members participated in the first Geology courses that are part of the requirements for this new major.

I am also pleased to announce we have hired Professor Tom Bianchi from Texas A&M as the Jon L. and Beverly A. Thompson Geology Chair. Tom, a noted marine biogeochemist, will bring expertise in organic geochemistry, oceanography, and continental margin sedimentation. Tom is already moving in and overseeing major renovations on the third floor where a new organic geochemistry lab he will share with Dr. Andy Zimmerman is being constructed.

In terms of research, our faculty members continue to be awarded major research grants from the National Science Foundation. For the first time, Drs. Ellen and Jon Martin had a proposal funded to work jointly in Greenland. I am proud to report that we were well represented at national meetings and conferences this year. Sixteen graduate students and 11 undergraduate students along with 10 faculty members and post-doctoral researchers presented the results of their research at the Annual Geological Society of America Meeting in Charlotte, NC. A number of these students also were awarded prestigious research grants from the Geological Society of America. In December, nine graduate students and 12 faculty members and post-docs attended the American Geophysical Union meeting in San Francisco where they highlighted research being done in the Department. A group of graduate students also did a “road trip” to Oklahoma to attend the AAGP/SEG meeting.

The support from our alumni and friends has been wonderful and I thank you. From the efforts put forth by our Advisory Board, to the donations to the Outcrop of Honor that provided us with funds to purchase a new 15-person van, to the constant smaller donations we receive every month — it all adds up and allows us to do more for our students and continue our rise as a nationally renowned geoscience department.

My six years as Chair have been a real “experience,” one I am glad to have had. I am proud to have been able to represent the Department during that time and hopefully kept us on a path towards excellence in education and research. It is somewhat bittersweet to leave the position with so much more that can be done and that I wanted to do, but I am ready to go back to teaching and being able to focus on my research. I may be leaving the “chair” but I will be standing by to do my part.

TO DONATE to the Department of Geological Sciences, the online giving site is https://www.uff.edu/OnlineGiving/FundDetail.asp?FundCode=007061. To mail a donation, note “Dept. of Geological Sciences, Fund Code 007061” on your check memo line and mail to: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Office of Development, PO Box 117300, Gainesville, FL 32611-7300. We appreciate your assistance in promoting the Department and the University of Florida. GO GATORS!
Greetings from the new Chair, Dr. David Foster . . .

I would first like to thank outgoing Chair Mike Perfit for his six productive years serving the Department. Mike steered us through a crisis early in his term and his leadership has set the Department on a path of steady growth since that time. Dr. Perfit has served tirelessly and he is deservedly returning to a greater focus on teaching and research. As Associate Chair for the entire time that Dr. Perfit was Chair, I am excited to take over with the Department strong, and will call upon his wisdom as we move forward.

There will also be changes in some of the other leadership positions in the Department. Dr. Jon Martin will be the new Associate Chair and Dr. Ray Russo will take over from Dr. John Jaeger as Graduate Coordinator. Dr. Joe Meert will continue as the Undergraduate Coordinator.

As I transition into the chairmanship this semester, I am looking forward to interacting with all of you. That includes catching up at our Homecoming functions and Advisory Board meetings and meeting those of you I have not yet had the pleasure to know. Over the course of this year, you will be hearing from me from time to time. I am developing some plans for focused capital campaigns to further improve and modernize our teaching facilities and field experiences so we are able to continue providing a high quality, comprehensive Geoscience education for our undergraduate and graduate students. I hope you will be able to participate. As many of you know, the University of Florida will be allocated a budget increase from the Florida Legislature this year. These funds will be used for faculty hires to elevate UF to a top-ten university and will be allocated to thematic “clusters” across disciplines. We are participating in the process and I will report positive outcomes as they develop.

 Until then . . . Go Gators.

Dr. David A. Foster
Thomas Bianchi selected for Endowed Chair position

Professor Thomas Bianchi has been selected to fill the Jon L. and Beverly A. Thompson Endowed Chair of Geological Sciences, a full professor position with tenure. Search committee chair Professor Jonathan B. Martin described Tom as a well-known researcher and scholar in the field of biogeochemistry, particularly in organic carbon cycling in estuarine systems, who will make a valuable addition to the Geological Sciences faculty. Tom has worked in these systems world-wide, but has focused on the Mississippi River and the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. He has published more than 125 articles in peer-reviewed journals, three books, and has two other books currently in press. He is associate editor for the journals *Marine Chemistry* and *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta* and accepted the position of Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Estuarine and Coastal Shelf Science*.

Beginning in fall 2013, Tom will teach undergraduate and graduate courses, mentor graduate students, and conduct a dynamic, externally funded research program in biogeochemistry and organic geochemistry. Tom earned his Ph.D. in Marine Sciences – Biogeochemistry at the University of Maryland after completing his M.S. at SUNY Stony Brook and B.S. in Biology/Chemistry at Dowling College. He comes to UF from Texas A&M University, where he held the James R. Whatley Chair in Geosciences and was adjunct professor in the Ecology and Evolution Biology Program.

A second Endowed Chair at the Florida Museum of Natural History, specializing in invertebrate paleontology, was filled in 2012 with the appointment of Michal Kowalewski as curator and professor. Kowalewski holds a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona and an M.S. from the University of Warsaw. He is jointly appointed as Professor of Geological Sciences at UF and is also an Adjunct Professor of Geosciences at Virginia Tech. His research interests include paleoecology, taphonomy, geochronology, stratigraphy, quantitative methods, marine ecology, conservation biology, mollusks, and brachiopods.

Funds for both chairs were donated by Jon and Beverly Thompson. The endowed chairs are intended as complementary positions looking at different aspects of related geological issues. The Thompsons have been generous supporters of the department and museum for years, particularly in funding graduate student fellowships through the Jon and Beverly Thompson Fund and the Ray Skirvin Fund (jointly funded with alumnus Jim Floyd). Jon graduated with honors from UF’s Department of Geological Sciences with a B.S. in 1961 and M.S. in 1962. Before his retirement in 2004, he was president of ExxonMobil Exploration Co. and vice president of ExxonMobil Corp. after the two companies merged in 1999.

The Thompsons have not only provided substantial financial support to the department but also to the Florida Museum of Natural History to help complete the Hall of Florida Fossils. The Thompsons also have given extensively to the McKnight Brain Institute and the Florida Opportunity Scholars program. Jon has built on the education he earned at UF to become not only a global leader in his company and in the petroleum industry, but also a leader, public servant, and philanthropist in his professional and personal endeavors.

Annual student awards given at End of Year party

Student awards for 2012–13 were presented on April 25 during an End of Year/Earth Day party held at the home of Assistant Professor Peter Adams. The awards committee of Adams and Associate Professor Andrew Zimmerman announced the selections.

The Horn Award (graduate student who excelled in eagerness, inspiration, involvement in/contribution to the department, academic ability, and research activity during their total graduate career at UF) went to Ph.D. candidate Susanna Blair; the John Ridge Award (outstanding graduate student in academic excellence) to Ph.D. student Aldo Rincon; and the Ernst Awards (outstanding teaching assistant) went to M.S. student Dylan Loss for GLY classes at the 1000-2000 level and Ph.D. student Chong Ma as a TA in GLY 3000 level or above classes.

Also presented were the Danker Award (outstanding graduating undergraduate who excelled in scholarship, enthusiasm, motivation, leadership, and involvement in the department) went to B.S. graduate Matthew Celestino; the Eades Award for Environmental Geology Studies (in honor of James Eades) went to Ph.D. candidate Jessica Lovering; the Nichol Paleontology Award (commitment to excellence studying or investigating paleontological topics) went to M.S. student Sean Moran; and the Estwing Award (best field camp student) went to B.S. graduate (and now M.S. student) Patrick Gelato.

The Chair’s Best Student Thesis Award went to B.S. graduate Sarah Widlansky; the Tarr Award (by Sigma Gamma Epsilon for the undergraduate major displaying scholarship, personality, leadership, contribution to the school, and ability to get along with people) went to B.S. graduate Karen Vyverberg; and the Outstanding Departmental Citizen Award (to a member of the Department of Geological Sciences -- undergraduate or graduate student, post-doc, staff, or faculty -- for contributions toward the betterment of education and outreach in the Department) went to Postdoctoral Fellow Rachael Walters.

Congratulations to the winners and to the effort this recognition represents.

Outgoing Chair is new AGU Fellow

Outgoing Chair Michael Perfit has been selected by the American Geophysical Union (AGU) as one of its 2013 class of Fellows. Established in 1962, the Fellows program is a special tribute for those scientists who have made exceptional scientific contributions and attained acknowledged eminence in the fields of Earth and space science. Confirmed on not more than 0.1 percent of all AGU members per year, Perfit is one of only 62 Fellows chosen this year and the only one from the state of Florida. He will be recognized during the AGU Fall Meeting in December in San Francisco. Perfit joins two other Geological Sciences faculty members chosen as Fellows by AGU in previous years, Emeritus Professor Neil D. Opdyke (1976) and Distinguished Professor James E.T. Channell (1998).

Ph.D. candidates receive GSA awards

The Department of Geological Sciences was well represented at the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America in November 2012 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Ten faculty members, six post-doctoral fellows, 17 graduate students, and 11 undergraduates from the Department and the Florida Museum of Natural History attended the meeting. The group made at least 24 presentations. During the meeting, Ph.D. candidates Amy Brown and Mitra Khadka, students of Dr. Jonathan Martin, were presented with 2012 Geological Society of America Hydrogeology Division Student Research Awards. Announced earlier, these awards recognize Amy and Mitra as two of the top hydrogeology students in the larger GSA grant application pool. Only four such awards were given by GSA this year.
The inaugural Geological Sciences Careers Day helped students plan for their futures

Members of the Geological Sciences Advisory Board offered guidance on preparing for and making the transition from university training to a career in earth sciences at the first ever Careers Day on March 28, 2013. Organized by Ph.D. candidate Susanna Blair and Post-doctoral Fellow Rachel Walters, a group of 29 graduate students and five undergraduate students explored the roles of geologists working in mining, oil and gas, consulting, and state agencies. They learned the basics of preparing elevator speeches and resumes, identified the skills potential employers value, found out what to expect in job interviews, and began thinking about what they can do now to get ready for their careers.

The material was presented in lectures, panel discussions, individual exercises, small group activities, and question and answer sessions. The expert panel consisted of Advisory Board Chair Kendall Fountain of Plum Creek, James “Jim” Anderson of ExxonMobil Upstream Research Company, Charles “Chuck” Drake of Tetra Tech, George Foster of Creative Environmental Solutions, Inc., David Podmeyer of Continental Mineral Processing, Jerry Black of Geohazards, Inc., Steve Krupa of South Florida Water Management District, Neil Johnson of MWH Global, and Elliot Mallard of EAM2 Services, LLC.

Everyone who participated gave positive feedback and some board members offered to work individually with students who want more assistance. Students found it helpful to learn about the range of job opportunities, what employers want on resumes, and what they expect from employees, Blair said. Participants particularly enjoyed asking questions of panel members.

The success of Careers Day means it will likely become an annual event. In planning for the future, participants said it would be helpful for students to meet earth scientists at early stages of their careers to get a better sense of what entry-level jobs are like, particularly in government agencies.

Are you interested in sharing information about what you do with the geologists of the future? Contact Susanna Blair at swblair@ufl.edu if you are willing to participate in a future Careers Day.

GLY graduate and UF runner in Boston Marathon

Jeremy Criscione, who earned his B.A. in geological sciences in 2009, came in 28th of 17,580 finishers in the 2013 Boston Marathon with a time of 2:21:45. Jeremy was unharmed in the bombings that occurred after he had completed his race.

While running for the UF track team, Jeremy’s longest race was 10,000 meters. He ran his first marathon in January 2012 at the Olympic Trials in Houston, finishing a respectable 59th in a field of elite runners. Boston was only his second marathon. He runs as part of the Hansons-Brooks Distance Project South professional team based in Lakeland.

GLY undergrads stay in touch

Pictured above, St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) Governing Board Member Chuck Drake, P.G., congratulated Water Use Regulation Compliance Coordinator Shannon Joyce, P.G., for her 25 years of service to the agency. Chuck received his B.S. from UF in 1981, and Shannon her B.A. in 1982. Chuck and Shannon attended field camp together under the direction of Dr. Bob Pierce many, many years ago!
Thanks to our many generous Outcrop of Honor donors, we have a new van!

Travel to the annual undergraduate field camp and other off-campus research activities has become more reliable with the arrival of the Department’s new 15-passenger van on January 10, 2013. The 2013 Chevrolet 350 Express was purchased for about $24,000, which was provided by generous donations to the Department and with help from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In accordance with UF’s policy for green vehicles, the van can operate on E-85 fuel.

The new van’s amenities include cruise control and air conditioning that works, as well as the reduced likelihood of breakdowns compared to its predecessor. It has already been used for local trips for Florida Geology Lab classes and research field work. The van also has proven its ruggedness and comfort during Paul Ciesielski’s five-day Paleontology field trip to Tennessee and Kentucky in March and Jim Vogl’s four-day Structural Geology and Tectonics field trip to Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina in April. The first long-haul trip for the new van was the six-week summer field camp, which began May 11th.

Deciding who gets to ride in the new van during field camp was competitive.

“Well, of course the field camp director drove the new van!” said Meert, who is field camp director. “In general, students self-sort and so dibs on the van will be first-come, first-served. Once the new van reached capacity seating, they had to fight over the next newest vans.”

Meert is enthusiastic about the arrival of the new van.

“As a former driver/passenger of the Rock Wagon (circa 1970s and ’80s) and field camp director, I am thrilled to have a new van and grateful for all the alumni who contributed to make this happen via your dedications to the Outcrop of Honor in Williamson Hall,” he said. “Thank you very much! As you all know, Florida Geological Sciences students absolutely need to get out into the field and their camp experience is always the highlight of their undergraduate career.”

UF Geological Sciences Alumni and Friends Homecoming Open House is on November 9, 2013

We missed most of you at Homecoming last year and we’d like to make up for it this year and into the future. Even though the kickoff time for the University of Florida Homecoming football game against the Vanderbilt Commodores on Saturday, November 9, is still unknown, we want you to come back to campus to celebrate the day. Plan to be here three hours before kickoff. Food appropriate to the time of day will be served.

The Geological Sciences Homecoming event will be held in or near Williamson Hall. Details and registration information will be provided in early October.

Mark your calendars—we plan to host a Department Homecoming event every year beginning three hours before the Homecoming football game. This will be a great opportunity to visit with fellow alums, current students, and faculty. We look forward to seeing you this year on November 9.

GLY grad student earns prestigious scholarship

Ph.D. candidate and NSF Graduate Research Fellow Kelly M. Deuerling was selected in February 2013 as the first ever recipient of the American Geosciences Institute’s Harriet Evelyn Wallace Scholarship for women in geoscience. The selection was based on her outstanding contributions to her field, her commitment to several extracurricular activities, and her strong participation in the geoscience community. Deuerling is a highly accomplished geoscientist with wide ranging field experiences, lab skills, grants, and awards to support her research and a publication in review. Her research focuses on the chemical weathering of the glacial foreland in western Greenland using tracers of subglacial hydrologic systems and oceanic fluxes of radiogenic isotopes.

The Harriet Evelyn Wallace Scholarship is awarded to a female student pursuing a thesis-based master’s or doctoral degree in the earth sciences who most exemplifies the strong likelihood of successfully transitioning from graduate studies to the geoscience workforce. Deuerling will receive $5,000 for the first scholarship year and, on successful completion, will receive a second year $5,000 scholarship. AGI is a nonprofit federation of geoscientific and professional associations representing more than 250,000 geologists, geophysicists, and other earth scientists. Founded in 1948, AGI provides information services to geoscientists, serves as a voice of shared interests in the profession, plays a major role in strengthening geoscience education and strives to increase public awareness of the vital role the geosciences play in society’s use of resources, resiliency to natural hazards, and interaction with the environment.

PUT YOUR NAME ON THE WALL by donating to the University of Florida Geological Sciences’ Outcrop of Honor.
Go to http://www.geology.ufl.edu/images/outcrop_brochure.pdf or call 352-392-2231 today!
Can You Dig It? 2013 was a hit!

More than 1,600 rock loving people attended the 7th annual Can You Dig It? public outreach event on March 16 at the Florida Museum of Natural History. Sponsoring the Department of Geological Sciences in collaboration with the Gainesville Gem and Mineral Society, more than two dozen demonstrations and hands-on activities let young and old(er) participants into the world of geology.

In addition to perennial favorites like Oreo plate tectonics, the gem mine, and volcanic explosions, several new ways of learning about geology were added this year. They included sculptor Greg Johnson demonstrating the tools and methods used to make sculpture from stone and an augmented reality sandbox created by Post-doctoral Fellow Rachel Walters, which showed attendees colorful representations of topographic maps.

We are grateful to financial supporters Geohazards, Inc., Creative Environmental Solutions, Inc., Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., and Tetra Tech, whose contributions helped defray the cost of putting on the event. Special thanks go to Ilene Silverman of GTN TV for featuring Chair Michael Perfit and Senior Lecturer Matt Smith discussing Can You Dig It? on “The Ilene Silverman Show.” Other first-time announcements came from Storm Roberts’ Staycation Friday broadcast on WKTK-FM radio and publication in AAA’s Going Places magazine’s events page.

But the biggest thanks go to organizer Dr. Matt Smith and the 70-plus student, faculty, and museum volunteers and museum staff who made the whole event possible. Everything went smoothly and everyone who attended had a great time because of them.

Want to join the fun? Can You Dig It? will happen again on Saturday, March 15, 2014. We’d love to see you there.

Geological Sciences research and activities . . .

- Professor Elizabeth Screaton spent October 23 to December 11, 2012 aboard the JOIDES Resolution as a member of the Integrated Ocean Drilling Program (IODP) Expedition 344, the Costa Rica Seismogenesis Project A Stage 2, also known as CRISP2. Dr. Screaton joined an international team of scientists studying the subduction zone where the Cocos tectonic plate dips beneath the Caribbean plate off the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. The expedition left Panama in October and finished the journey in Puntarenas, Costa Rica in December. The team of 34 scientists from 12 IODP member countries drilled 10 boreholes, each of which penetrated from 25 to 800 meters into the ocean floor. In total, the team recovered more than one and a half kilometers of core.

- Professor and Chair Michael Perfit spent a week in March 2013 in the northern section of the Sultanate of Oman doing field work to study a 90 million year old piece of the ocean floor that was thrust onto the continent during the tectonic collision of Africa and Asia. This exposed section of oceanic crust, known as an “ophiolite,” is one of most well exposed on Earth. Perfit was invited there by Professors Adolphe Nicolas and Francoise Boudier from the Universite’ Montpellier in France, who have been mapping the terrain for more than 30 years. During this trip, they documented and sampled rocks formed in the crust and upper mantle that are rarely exposed in modern oceans. This information will be used as part of continuing research on how magmas form and erupt at mid-ocean ridges.

- Associate Professor Raymond Russo was interviewed by the Gainesville Sun about a window rattling sonic boom on March 21, 2013 that affected a large area of North Central Florida. Law enforcement agencies received many calls about the boom. Russo said people could mistake it for thunder. He said the event was likely caused by a military-grade jet breaking the sound barrier. When planes fly faster than the speed of sound, a sonic boom results because a shock wave forms at the front of the plane, spreading out in a cone shape. Russo said planes at higher altitudes create wider cones, allowing the sonic boom to affect a larger area.

- Professor Paul Mueller attended the IODP/GeoPrisms workshop in Kona, Hawaii on deepest drilling into the ocean floor, which was sponsored by the Japanese Science Foundation (JAMTEC), in September 2012. A total of 58 scientists from the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Mexico, Canada, Taipei, New Zealand, and Australia, participated in the workshop.

- M.S. student Stephanie James has received a Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies student award to support her research project “Ambient Seismic Noise Tomography: A New Technique for Imagining Subsurface Hydrogeologic Units in Carbonate Aquifers.”

Dr. Liz Screaton selected as UFRF professor

Professor Elizabeth Screaton has been selected by the University of Florida Research Foundation (UFRF) as one of only 34 faculty members across the entire university to be a UFRF Professor for 2013-2016. Her selection fulfills a prediction made a year ago by Chair Mike Perfit that another Geological Sciences faculty member would be honored in this way soon.

This recognition goes to faculty members with a distinguished current record of research and a strong research agenda likely to lead to continuing distinction in their fields. The selection process included recommendations by their college deans based on nominations from their department chairs, a personal statement, and an evaluation of their recent research accomplishments as evidenced by publications in scholarly journals, external funding, honors and awards, development of intellectual property, and other measures appropriate to their field of expertise. In many colleges, this selection process is conducted by a special faculty committee.

“It is this selection by their peers that makes the UFRF Professors so special,” said David Norton, UF’s vice president for research. “Typically, the nominating documents highlight the progressive nature of the nominee’s research and the important role education plays in their scholarly activities. It is the work of these faculty and their colleagues across campus that has moved UF into the top tier of public research universities nationally.”

Liz is one of 11 Geological Sciences faculty and Florida Museum of Natural History affiliate faculty who have been honored with this award to date. “Geological Sciences has had at least one UFRF Professor in 12 of the 16 years these professorships have been awarded, demonstrating the excellence of the faculty we have in the Department and Museum,” Perfit noted. While this is the first time Liz has received the award, Jim Channell, Steven Manchester, Jon Martin, and David Hodell (now at Cambridge) have each won twice. Other awardees have been Jonathan Bloch, David Dilcher, David Foster, Bruce MacFadden, Paul Mueller, and Perfit. Perfit believes GS continues to have one of the highest proportions of UFRF awards per capita of any UF department.
Drs. Jon and Ellen Martin study terrains on Greenland

Professors Jon and Ellen Martin have started a collaborative research project to study the hydrogeochemistry and radiogenic isotope flux from sub-glacial, proglacial, and deglaciated terrains on Greenland. Radiogenic Sr and Pb and non-radiogenic Nd are preferentially leached during incongruent weathering of bedrock and sediments in glacial terrains. One goal of the project is to determine whether there are distinct chemical weathering fluxes from each of these environments reflecting the intensity and duration of weathering. Marine records of these isotopic systems have been used to try to reconstruct continental weathering conditions in the past. The current research will provide a framework for interpreting those records.

The project started with a field season in Illulisat on the west coast of Greenland in summer 2011. Jon and two graduate students, Jason Gulley and Kelly Deuerling, were helicoptered into a remote area where they collected initial samples used to form the basis for a National Science Foundation (NSF) proposal. During the trip, they discovered that Greenlandic black flies are worse than Greenlandic mosquitoes and sub-glacial outlet portals are hard to find.

Jon, Ellen, Kelly, and graduate student Cecilia Scribner returned for a month-long field season in the Kangerlussuaq region in 2012 supported by funds from the National Geographic Society and UF. They learned to avoid setting up equipment or standing too close to a major ice sheet in the summer, that water sampling equipment does not like rain, and that the mosquitoes might be capable of carrying off the equipment. They left Kangerlussuaq two days before one of the largest recorded meltwater events in the region washed out the town’s only bridge, taking a tractor with it. See what happened here: (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rauzduv1Yog&feature=related and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SuJ1sFn_B0).

The project has since been funded by NSF. Plans for summer 2013 include two months in the field, returning to the Kangerlussuaq area as well as visiting a new location near the town of Sisimiut. This will include two helicopter trips to interior locations for Jon, Ellen, Kelly, Cecilia, incoming graduate student Andrea Portier, and two undergraduate researchers, Mike Davlantis and Daniel Collazo. They look forward to meeting whatever annoying insects inhabit these areas.
Williamson Hall undergoes renovation

Even before the Department of Geological Sciences relocated to Williamson Hall in 1998, the 75,533 square-foot building, built in 1958, was in need of some updating. The second and third floors of the west wing of the building, which house faculty and graduate student offices, had issues with temperature control. The air handler covering this section of the building had exceeded its useful life, resulting in so many requests for maintenance that UF’s Physical Plant Department decided it needed to be replaced. Now the temperature problems have been solved, although doing so inconvenienced many faculty members and graduate students.

Construction was done during the Spring 2013 semester beginning January 7. The project was designed by Affiliated Engineers, Inc. and the work was done by Oelrich Construction at a cost of $774,000. “Along with the air handling unit, we had to replace all the ductwork because it was too old,” explained Project Manager Francisco Oquendo of the Physical Plant Department. “A lot of air was being lost through leaks in the ducts.”

Work began on the second floor, requiring faculty and students housed there to relocate. Some went to the fourth floor of Yon Hall across the street, while others found temporary space elsewhere in Williamson. Being forced to move out of their offices gave those housed in the affected area an ideal opportunity to dispose of obsolete and unneeded materials.

The work started with removal and replacement of the second floor ductwork, and installation of the new air handler occurred during Spring Break. Once the second-floor renovations were completed on March 8, the occupants of the third floor moved to the second floor so replacement of the third-floor ductwork could be done. In addition, hallways on both floors and some offices were repainted. The project was completed on May 31, ahead of schedule and within budget.

The resulting improvement in comfort was worth the temporary disruption, noted Chair Mike Perfit. “We’ve been dealing with unpredictable temperatures the whole time the Department has been here,” he said. “Now this part of the building is more comfortable and more energy efficient, and temperature control will be more reliable. We appreciate what the Physical Plant Department has done to improve Williamson Hall.”