

Strategic Advisement for Career and Transfer Success

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While Monroe Community College (MCC), in Rochester, NY, has grown significantly in the past decade, it has also seen tremendous faculty turnover, as professors with 30 years tenure have been replaced by less experienced but enthusiastic new faculty. Administration has been largely supportive, frequently funding experimental projects and professional development opportunities for junior faculty members. Thanks to this support, we were able to design an introductory-level field course (varying from 9-12 days) that has been successfully run twice (to the Yellowstone vicinity and the Grand Canyon), as well as securing funding to create a third iteration to the national parks of southern Utah and northern Arizona. Co-teaching the Yellowstone field course was a tremendously successful project and is one my proudest achievements in my 8 years at MCC!

As junior faculty members have grown into their roles as emerging leaders and mentors, a very active co-curricular club has been created and new courses developed. The Geosciences Association has taken field excursions to Acadia, Cuyahoga, Mammoth Caves, Devils Tower, Yellowstone, Grand Teton, and Badlands National Parks and Monuments, as well as studying more local geologic points of interest. This club has led to at least 25-50 students enrolling in 4 YC geology programs throughout the country with great success and has been a way to create a sense of community on a sprawling campus with over 19,000 students!

However, we find ourselves at a point where we need to re-organize and package our offerings more effectively and move slightly away from our role as merely a “service department” to liberal arts and transfer students, as we re-design our own advisement track. We currently teach several 4-credit courses (Physical Geology, Historical Geology, Field Studies in the Geosciences, and Astronomy) and a wide variety of 3-credit courses, but without many geology majors, tracking alumni and their successes at transfer schools is more anecdotal than systematic.

MCC’s current advisement track for students pursuing an A.S. in Geology requires students to take courses that have not been successfully run at MCC since the 1980s (Mineralogy, Petrology, Invertebrate Paleontology, Geomorphology) based on both enrollment and resources. Furthermore, after a departmental review, it became evident that most A.S. programs in the country do not require these courses. We find ourselves in the timely position of needing to revise our advising sequence at a time when career opportunities for geoscientists are expanding.

My personal goals for this conference are three-fold: 1) to identify what strategies departments are employing to attract majors and increase visibility of the geosciences on campuses, 2) to identify what curriculum is most appropriate for students pursuing both A.S. and B.S. degrees (Are they the same? If not, how do they differ?), and 3) to learn how others are collaborating with local government agencies, consulting firms, and industry to establish internships and employment opportunities for 2YC students.