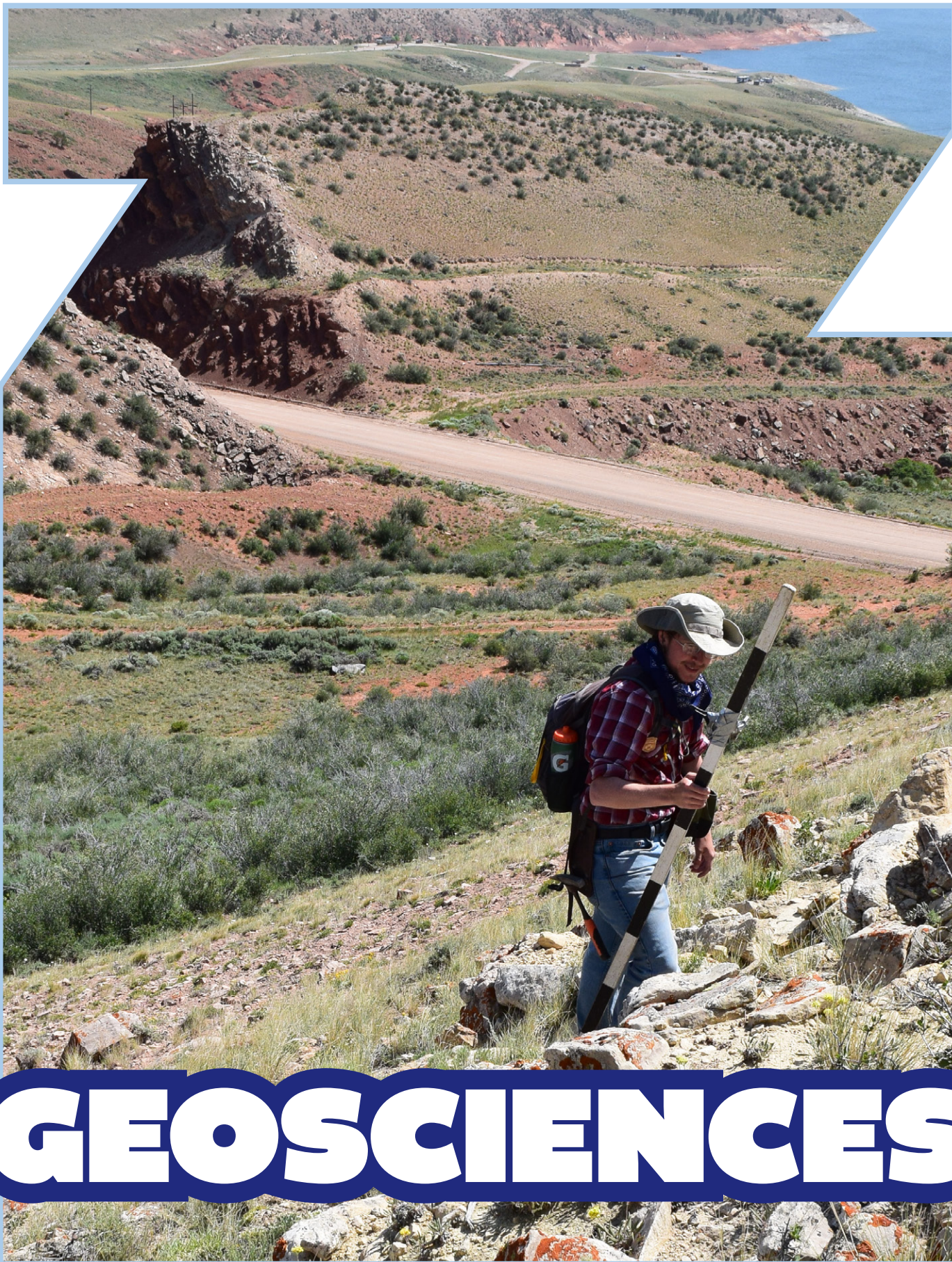




GEOSCIENCES

Newsletter | 2025

THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON | BCAS

A Note from The Chairman

Dear Alumni and Friends,

This Geosciences Newsletter covers calendar year 2025, a year of many positive changes to Geosciences. Due to budgetary constraints, we can no longer mail printed newsletters. This newsletter, as well as recent past years, can be downloaded from the department webpage (www.uakron.edu/geology). Details of numerous positive departmental activities can be found within this newsletter; here are just a few. In January we were joined by new tenure-track faculty member Dr. Nick Pollock, a physical sedimentologist with a specialty in volcanoclastic sediments. Nick is already working with a MS student and a honors student. It was nice to see so many students and alumni at the April departmental picnic/awards ceremony. In May, Dr. David Steer retired, having provided the department, college, and university with many years of dedicated service. We wish him well in retirement. In the summer, Dr. Caleb Holyoke returned to Saskatchewan, Canada in search of highly deformed rocks. Also in the summer, Geosciences students worked hard at geology field camp. During camp we experienced the costs of an unexpected van brake repair and a slashed tire (siliceous Mowery Shale). However, Phil Fox's (BS04, MS06) donation to the field experience account allowed us to handle these surprises. Read about Phil's career after UA in this newsletter. As summer ended, Tom Quick oversaw the installation of 18 new computers in the Geosciences computer lab. The existing computers were over 8 years old, took forever to load GIS maps, and by October would no longer be compatible with the UA system. As we pay off these computers, special thanks to Tom Sperr, Pete Mazzeo, and all the Geosciences faculty (they won a monetary award for excellence in teaching within the College – no surprise there) for their help. In the fall, Tom Quick was promoted to Professor of Instruction, Dr. Molly Witter to Associate Professor of Instruction, and Chrystal Fretz to Associate Lecturer, congratulations to all. Throughout the year Geoscience majors continue to do great things. Both the Geosciences and Association of Women Geoscientist Clubs are active with meetings, guest speakers and hikes. The dedicated faculty continue to provide robust experiential learning activities in their classes. Numerous students also get involved in a variety of research projects. Thanks to the Dr. Roger Bain Memorial Award in Geosciences,

students can conduct meaningful research and 7 of them presented their findings at professional meetings.

Thank you once again for your continued financial support. It takes a village to provide quality geoscience education and for your help we are truly grateful. Your donations directly impact our undergraduate and graduate students. Due to your generosity, we awarded over \$16,000 in scholarships and awards to 42 students in 2025. Our students truly appreciate your interest in their academic well-being. You can continue to support students by clicking the "Give online" button found near the bottom right side of our webpage (www.uakron.edu/geology) or referring to the giving support section in this newsletter. You can direct your donation to support scholarships, field camp, or for a designation of your own choosing. However, donations to the Geosciences Restricted Account provides the maximum flexibility to aid the greatest range of Geoscience students.

Please keep in touch, I welcome your emails, phone calls and visits. Feel free to contact me any time (jpeck@uakron.edu; 330-972-7659). You are always welcome to visit Crouse Hall to see what has changed and meet the new faculty and students. I know that we would all enjoy hearing what you have been doing.

-John Peck

Please Support Geosciences!

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**Newsletter edited by John Peck, Ira Sasowsky and
Ella Pitz. Layout and production by University of
Communications and Marketing.**

Alumni Report

Phil Fox | BS '04, MS '06



I currently live in Katy, Texas, with my wife, Augusta, and our two children, Isla (5) and Cooper (2). I work for Coterra Energy as a geologist on the corporate business development team, providing technical underwriting for mergers and acquisitions. Like many careers in energy, my path to Texas—and to my current role—has been anything

but linear, often shaped by commodity cycles. While it's been a roller coaster, I wouldn't trade the experience.

I earned my BS in Geology at The University of Akron in 2004 and stayed on for an MS, which I completed in 2006 after Dr. John Peck offered me a project studying sediments from Lake Bosumtwi in Ghana. Following graduation, I joined SAIC in Columbus, Ohio, supporting environmental remediation projects with BP, the Ohio Air National Guard, and NASA.

In search of a new challenge, I moved to Oklahoma City in 2008 to join Chesapeake Energy's rapidly expanding Barnett Shale team. The pace was fast, expectations were high, and the experience reinforced the work ethic and adaptability I developed at Akron. Fun fact: while at Chesapeake, there were six additional Akron geoscience alumni employed there.

In 2011, I left Chesapeake and joined Marathon Oil, where I spent eight years expanding my technical skill set across exploration geology, petrophysics, and reservoir engineering, eventually moving into a leadership role.

In 2019, I departed Marathon Oil to lead the geoscience department at Red Wolf Natural Resources, a private oil and gas company that I helped build from the ground up. Shortly after its formation, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global energy markets, ultimately leading to an asset merger in 2021. During a brief slow period that followed at Red Wolf, I focused on professional growth, teaching myself database management, Python, and machine learning to better integrate large datasets into exploration workflows.

In 2022, I returned to Marathon Oil in Houston, working in corporate M&A and exploration before later serving as Permian geoscience manager. After Marathon was acquired by ConocoPhillips in 2024, I

decided to leave a potential role with Conoco to join Coterra.

When I entered Crouse Hall for the first time in 2001, I wasn't sure I could succeed as a scientist. Thanks to The University of Akron geoscience faculty and staff, I left confident in my ability to think critically, ask the right questions, and adapt. Go Zips!

Faculty News

JOHN BELTZ

Professor of Instruction | jfb4@uakron.edu

John is teaching in his 33rd year at the University of Akron by continuing to instruct Historical Geology, Physical Geology, Earth Science, Introduction to the Oceans, Wetlands, Earth's Atmosphere and Weather, and Dinosaurs. He continues to teach the Historical Geology laboratory as well. In Spring 2025, John and Molly Witter-Shelleman split the Historical labs, teaching them at the same time across the hall from each other. Molly did an outstanding job, learning the paleontological material in a few short weeks of prep time.

John and Tom Quick continue to teach the Wetlands class. John instructs the sections covering wetland types and determination, wetland soils and basic plant identification, Tom instructs sections covering the chemical analysis of wetland water and soil samples collected on field trips. They take the class to the Bath Nature Preserve and Jackson Bog in Stark County for observation and a few basic water measurements. They take the class on the last week to the wetland behind Tom's house. Tom's wetland has developed from an old pond that drained after a dam breach in the 1980s. They are continuing to look for changes in the ecology and water/soil chemistry over time as it transitions back into the wetland that it had been before the dam was built.

John still serves as secretary for the department's faculty meetings after more than twenty-three years. He also continues as the department's Gen Ed Assessment Coordinator and is in his fourth year as Geosciences Undergraduate Advisor. In his spare time, he collects autographs and books covering all aspects of ancient Egypt. 21-year-old Hollie will be finishing up her time at The University of Akron soon, working toward a degree in early childhood education. 17-year-old Will is in high school, showing an aptitude toward math and the sciences. He plans on going to the University of Akron after he graduates and wants to join the Geoscience

department, either concentrating on mineral science (he loves minerals) or geochemistry (he is fascinated by the elements and how they interact).

MEERA CHATTERJEE, PH.D.

Professor of Instruction
meera@uakron.edu

Meera has demonstrated a strong commitment to teaching by consistently offering multiple sections of “Cultural Diversity” and “Introduction to Geography.” In response to the increasing demand for remote learning, she proactively developed and implemented fully online (100%) versions of both courses, thereby expanding access and supporting institutional goals for flexible instruction. These sections have consistently attracted strong student enrollment. The course “Introduction to Geography” incorporates open educational resources (OER), reflecting her commitment to affordability, and



Field camp, Wyoming

she has continually refined the course to enhance student learning. In Fall 2021, she adopted a new textbook for “Cultural Diversity” and recorded all lectures using Learning Glass for the online sections. These efforts resulted in a comprehensive redesign of both courses, strengthening alignment and instructional quality across online and face-to-face modalities. She secured GenEd approval for “World Regional Geography,” ensuring it meets the Social Science and Global Diversity requirements, and successfully taught the course.

Beyond her teaching responsibilities, Meera, together with Molly, served as the department representative on Launch Leaders, a college-level teaching initiative. In 2025, the department was recognized with an award for the innovative work spearheaded by Meera and Molly.

She is delighted to share that she became a grandmother for the third time to a beautiful baby girl, Nina Mukherjee. In short, it has been an eventful and joyful year.

SHANON DONNELLY, PH.D.

Professor of Instruction | sd51@uakron.edu

Shanon continues to teach a variety of GIS, geography, and drone related courses that draw a diverse crowd of students from majors across campus. Shanon enjoys working with community partner organizations in many of his courses and has built strong relationships over the years with organizations such as Summit Metro Parks and Habitat for Humanity’s Neighborhood Network. Shanon was awarded a Summer Faculty Research Fellowship this year to continue work on the impact of historical Urban Renewal projects on the current physical and social landscape in Akron. The Geosciences Service Learning course again worked with Summit Metro Parks on mapping the locations of *Phragmites Australis* in several locations across Summit County using UAS (drones). With the goal of strengthening the university’s commitment to community engagement, Shanon continues to be active with the EX[L] Center. When not teaching, Shanon takes any chance he can get to fly drones and hot air balloons, both commercially and recreationally.

CALEB HOLYOKE, PH.D.

Associate Professor | cholyoke@uakron.edu

In 2025, three undergraduates and one graduate student worked with Caleb in the rock deformation lab. Karl Wehner defended his M.S. thesis on how partial melting affects water distribution in quartzites in May and is now teaching at Indiana University Northwest. Jordan Collins returned to work in the lab briefly this spring before getting



Sed-strat West Va. Trip

a permanent position with Summit Metro Parks. Grace Kruse started her Honors Thesis investigating the effects of stress concentrations on the quartz-coesite reaction by performing experiments at the Argonne National Laboratory. Bailey O'Brien, a first year student, started working in the lab and performed a series of experiments on partial melting of diabase. She presented her results at The University of Akron undergraduate research conference in April. Ian McCartt, a sophomore, started an experimental study of melt segregation mechanisms during partial melting of a biotite gneiss. A new graduate student, Ryan Oatman, started in the fall semester. When outside of the rock deformation lab Caleb was seen teaching structural geology, engineering geology and physical geology. He also returned to Stony Rapids, Saskatchewan to do some field work looking at naturally deformed rocks and enjoy a plane flight which landed on water.

JOHN PECK, PH.D.

Professor | jpeck@uakron.edu

In 2025, John taught Sedimentology-Stratigraphy, Rivers, Honors & Independent Research, and



1st semester major Kyle Guibord, Summit Lake sampling

Geology Field Camp. Students spent many warm and sunny days in the field developing field skills and gathering data. The Rivers course required substantial written reports because employers indicate written communication is a key job skill. In 2025, John received Sea Grant funding to study environmental change as recorded in the sediments of Lake Erie. John supervised several student research projects in 2025. Rachel Engels

completed her Honor's thesis conducting an environmental impact study of leaded gas used by small aircraft and won a "best presenter" award at the UA research day. Undergraduate Dylan Coyn analyzed reconstructed environmental history from Nobles Pond sediment cores. Undergraduate Ayya Naffe spent a week on the RV Lake Guardian ship



New GIS computer, thanks Dean Usher, Pete Mazzeo, and Tom Sperr.

helping to obtain sediment cores from Lake Erie and then completed an environmental magnetic study of one of those cores. New geoscience majors are offered a small stipend and the opportunity to conduct research with a faculty member. In 2025 new major Ian McCartt studied Pb in stream sediment near a former skeet shooting club, Sam Jones studied wind-wave mixing impacts on lake sedimentation, and Kyle Guibord studied recent heavy metal pollution trends in a local lake. Second year graduate student David Williams is far along examining the roles of storm frequency and lake-level on the transgression/regression behavior of the Sheldon March barrier spit. He won 2nd place best student presenter at the fall WMAO conference. New graduate student Casey Worges has begun an environmental history study of Meyers Lake by collecting long cores in the fall. John greatly appreciates the help from Geosciences donors, the public park systems, and private property owners who help make these student educational experiences possible.

NICK POLLOCK, PH.D.

Assistant Professor | npollock@uakron.edu

Nick joined the Department of Geosciences in January 2025 after several years at a small university in Salt Lake City, Utah. His move to Akron marked a return home, as he grew up in Northeast Ohio, and he is enthusiastic about engaging students with the region's rich and accessible local

geology. In his first year, Nick taught Introductory Physical Geology, Climate Science and Solutions, Regional Geology of North America, and a Graduate Student Seminar. He also served as a co-instructor for the Department's Summer Field Camp alongside Dr. Peck, leading students to a variety of incredible geologic sites across the western United States. Nick initiated two research projects during his first year at Akron. One examines the frequency and severity of landslides in Southeast Ohio, while the other focuses on microplastic sediments in the Cuyahoga River near Akron. Two students joined these efforts: Sarah Alfiero, an M.S. student who graduated from SUNY Geneseo in 2025, is working on remote sensing of landslides, and Ella Pitz, a senior undergraduate student, is studying microplastics in the Cuyahoga River. Ella will transition into Akron's M.S. program in Fall 2026 as the Department's first participant in the new 4+1 Master's Degree program.



Field camp in Bighorn Basin, WY

Outside of teaching and research, Nick enjoyed spending time with his family, especially his 1.5-year-old daughter, Nora, whose favorite activity this year was collecting rocks along local trails and creeks.

TOM QUICK

Professor of Instruction

tjquick@uakron.edu

Tom continues to work with students on the X-Ray machine and ESEM. Tom has updated his Earth Science interactive instructional videos using H5P and AI generated voices as part of the narrations. The lectures were well received in fall and Tom

will continue to make improvements. Also, all new PowerPoint slides were created that now contain alternate text for greater accessibility. Tom is continuing to improve on the weekly introductory videos in his courses.

Tom is continuing to develop field data recorders using cellular technology. One of the problems is the battery life out in the field and Tom hopes that a new design in the switching circuit will make a difference. The new circuit will replace power hungry mechanical relays with solid state signal switches. Initial results look promising. Tom has built a new aluminum track core splitting device that uses a router to cut the sides of ABS pipe. It was successfully tested in the fall with several cores split in two.

Tom is still doing the usual equipment maintenance in the department from equipment and chemical inventory to repairing equipment as needed.

IRA D. SASOWSKY, PH.D.

Professor | ids@uakron.edu

In 2025 Ira taught Groundwater Hydrology, Geomorphology, an Honors Natural Science Colloquium titled "Our Great Lakes", the Caves module (1-cr., twice), and the Geoscience Research & Consulting Methods course. MS student Ryan Johnston has made great progress on his project studying the sediments in Sarah Furnace Cave. Ryan received two grants in support of his work, The Wilson Award from Karst Waters Institute, and a Visiting Researcher Award from the Institute for



Field camp, Grand Tetons, WY

Rock Magnetism (IRM) at University of Minnesota. Ira spent 1 week with Ryan at the IRM in the summer working on his cores. Ira attended the Karst Waters Institute annual meeting in Tampa Florida in April, and had a chance

to visit the famous Tarpon Springs as well as several other karst features. In June he attended the National Speleological Society Convention in Cobleskill, NY, camping in the blistering heat, but enjoying many good lectures and a field trip through the glaciated karst of the region. Research on the Bellevue-Castalia Karst Plain continued over the year with colleagues from ODNR and University of Toledo, culminating in a comprehensive paper in the journal *Boreas*. Ira also initiated a research project examining the sediments in Boar Hole Cave, West Virginia, with colleague Dr. Josh Feinberg from University of Minnesota as well as Dr. Josep Pares from the Centro Nacional de Investigación sobre la Evolución Humana in Burgos Spain. He remains on the Editorial Board for the journal *Environmental & Engineering Geoscience*, and on the Board of the Karst Waters Institute.

JOHN SENKO, PH.D.

Professor | senko@uakron.edu

I taught Introduction to Environmental Science (Spring and Fall 2025), Geomicrobiology (Spring 2025) and Geochemistry (Fall 2025). In the lab, we are continuing our research on microbially influenced corrosion and the development of electrochemical techniques to detect microbiological activities in wetland sediments. We have also begun some preliminary work to extract rare earth elements (REEs) from fly ash, the uncombusted materials from coal combustion. Ethan Rang completed his MS in Geology, working with Molly-Witter-Shellman and me. Sandunika Weerasinghe (Integrated Biosciences PhD student) continued her work on monitoring microbiological activities in wetland sediments, and participated in the prestigious Microbial Diversity Course at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, MA. Charitha Basnayaka as an Integrated Bioscience PhD student and will be working on a project to understand how soil-associated microorganisms can corrode carbon steel.

DAVID STEER, PH.D.

Professor | steer@uakron.edu

In spring 2025, Dr. Steer completed his final semester teaching in the department before retiring after 26 years at The University of Akron. In Dr. Steer's final term, graduate student Alex Russell, completed his Master of Science thesis entitled "Ground Aquifer Delineation Using Laplacian Edge Detection in Electrical Resistivity data from Berkshire County, Massachusetts." Dr. Steer also revived the long-dormant Regional Geology course. That course included a field trip to the Adirondacks where students hiked to the Hooper garnet mine,

traversed Ausable Chasm and studied the Vermont 279 roadcut near Bennington, VT. Professor Steer enjoyed his time while at The University of Akron and is now appreciating the freedoms that accompany retirement. He wishes his colleagues and former students all the best in their future endeavors.

MOLLY WITTER, PH.D.

Associate Professor of Instruction

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Molly Witter has been at University of Akron for 5 years and was successfully promoted to associate professor of instruction this past year. She continues to teach Introductory Physical Geology, Mineral Science, and Silicate Mineralogy and Petrology. During the Spring 2025 semester, she also assisted John Beltz with the Historical Geology lab. Students in Molly's Petrology class went to the Everett Covered Bridge in Spring 2025 to look at crystalline rocks carried into the region during the last glacial maximum. She also partnered with Caleb Holyoke and Nick Pollock to take Physical Geology students to Gorge Metro Park and Hampton Hills Metro Park for a weekend day trip. Molly has enjoyed helping to advise multiple graduate students in the department and getting to see them through to successful defenses in 2025. She also continues to work with undergraduate students for small independent study projects.

Outside of teaching, Molly has enjoyed continuing to be the faculty adviser to the Association of Women Geoscientists (AWG) club and running the department's social media account on Instagram (@uakron_geosci). She served as a panelist for the Women's Empowerment Summit hosted by the Undergraduate Student Council, volunteered for the GoodYear STEM Day, and visited Bolich Middle School for their "Rock Fest" in Spring 2025. At home, Molly has been keeping very busy wrangling two active little boys! She has started volunteering with a local nature-based education non-profit, Tiny Green Learning, hosting monthly outdoor toddler playdates. Molly also enjoyed a big family trip to Alaska in July as part of her summer break.



Regional geo class, upstate NY

Obituaries

BRUCE BERNEL

UA Geoscience alum Bruce G. Bernel, known to everyone as “Quack,” passed away on October 3, 2025, just two days shy of his 76th birthday. Born and raised in Akron, Ohio, he graduated from Firestone High School, attended University of Michigan, and earned his undergraduate degree from Kent State University. He later earned a juris doctorate from the University of Akron School of Law and a MS in geology from the University of Akron (under the direction of Professor L.L. Chyi).

Bruce’s career was varied and impactful. He practiced law for 30 years, pursued environmental consulting, and spent several years teaching. An avid traveler, he visited many national parks, Civil War sites, and was a lifelong motorcycle enthusiast.

Bruce loved sharing time, stories, and laughter with others. A true foodie, Bruce loved to cook, eat, and host gatherings with his wife, especially festive events like Mardi Gras. He always knew where to find a great meal and delighted in sharing food and laughter with friends and family. He loved spending time with his grandsons, watching movies, listening to music, playing cards and judging their food competitions.

He was a devoted sports fan who enjoyed watching just about any football game on TV, but he passionately supported the Cleveland Browns and the University of Michigan football team. He supported the Ohio State Buckeyes — except against University of Michigan, a game he never missed.

Bruce was preceded in death by his parents, George and Doreen Bernel, and his beloved dogs, Sammy and Chester. He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Phyllis; his daughter, Rene Molenaar, and her husband, Barret; stepdaughters Noelle Bowman and Stephanie Bowman; and his grandchildren, Adam, Ava, Langdon, and Ivar. He also leaves behind a host of lifelong friends who cherished him. His cousins were like siblings, and his friends were like family.

Guest Speakers

DR. JOSEP M. PARÉS

On October 6, 2025, Dr. Josep M. Parés of the Centro Nacional de Investigación sobre la Evolución Humana, CENIEH, Burgos, Spain presented a fascinating seminar titled: Shedding light into the dark: Paleomagnetism in hominid-bearing cave

deposits. At the time, he was a visitor at the Institute for Rock Magnetism and University of Minnesota, but came to Akron to work on some collaborations



Dr. Pares presentation

with Dr. Sasowsky. He shared exciting discoveries about human ancestral use of caves, especially in the world-famous Atapuerca site in Spain. His use of paleomagnetic methods allows dating and correlation of the extensive deposits.

STEVE KRASE

On November 5, 2025, Steve Krase (UA BS 1980), President of HEPHAE Energy Technology, presented a seminar titled: Next-Generation Geothermal Approaches.

Originally from Long Island, New York, he played soccer for the Zips for two years before turning his full attention to his geology studies. Following graduation, Steve had a long career with petroleum-oriented companies including Exlog, Chevron Geosciences, The Superior Oil Company, Teleco Oilfield Services, Baker Hughes, and Halliburton where he served as Global Operations Manager and Director of Engineering. Most recently, in 2021, Steve founded Hephæe Energy Technology, a company dedicated to developing high temperature solutions to support the rapid growth of the Next-Generation Geothermal industry.

Geothermal energy, a versatile and promising renewable resource with vast untapped potential for power generation, has been part of global energy systems for over a century. Today, companies like Fervo Energy are pioneering a new era of geothermal by applying advanced technologies and methods from the oil and gas industry, particularly subsurface expertise. Steve discussed the history of geothermal development, and highlighted the growing opportunities for geologists and engineers in this rapidly evolving field.

Congratulations to the 2025 Graduates!

MAY

- Alex Russell | Geology, MS
- Karl Wehner | Geology, MS
- Justin Skrant | Geology, BS
- Emma Ziebro | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Athena Aslanes | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Benjamin Selby | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Ian Donohue | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Graceann Schwab | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Ella Mahoney | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Sha'heen Williams | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA

AUGUST

- Michael Rebar | Geology, MS
- Rachel Engels | Geology, BS
- Clare Wilson | Geology, BS
- Nick Jones | Geology - Earth Science Track, BA
- Kendall Stevens | Geology - Earth Science Track, BA
- Braden Cook | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Clare Wilson | Environmental Studies, Undergraduate Certificate

DECEMBER

- Ethan Rang | Geology, MS
- Joshua Meola | Geology, BS
- Justin Antalek | Geology, BS
- Mick Frasier | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Katy Bohannon | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Logan Harris | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- John Ellington | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Skylar Looper | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Maggie Mahaney | Geology - Environmental Science Track, BA
- Logan Harris | Environmental Studies, Undergraduate Certificate
- Logan Harris | Environmental Studies, Undergraduate Certificate

Scholarly Publications

(Bold and Italic show UA faculty and students respectively)

PAPERS PUBLISHED

- Fisher, T.G., Aden, D.J., Parrick, B.D., Doro, K.O., **Sasowsky, I.D.**, Norris, T.A. and Chartolani, G., 2025, Subtle relict channels associated with large dolines in an area formerly beneath the Laurentide Ice Sheet, northern Ohio, USA. *Boreas*, 54: 567-589.
- Hannibal, J.T.**, Baird, G.C., and Holstein, A.L., 2025, Use of domestic and imported building stones over two centuries in Erie, Pennsylvania, USA. In Hannibal, J.T., and Straffin, E., eds., *Coastal and Structural Geology, Paleontology, and Building Stones Along the Eastern Shore of Lake Erie*:

Geological Society of America Field Guide 71, p. 71-97, [https://doi.org/10.1130/2025.0071\(05\)](https://doi.org/10.1130/2025.0071(05)).

Hannibal, J.T., Holstein, A.L., Stefano, C.J., Gamble, R., Sanford, A.B., Baird, G.C., and Meldrum, M., 2025, Famennian trace fossils, covered bridges, beach ridges, grape growing, and stream anticlines of Ashtabula County, Ohio, and Erie County, Pennsylvania, USA. In Hannibal, J.T., and Straffin, E., eds., *Coastal and Structural Geology, Paleontology, and Building Stones Along the Eastern Shore of Lake Erie: Geological Society of America Field Guide 71*, p. 137-157, [https://doi.org/10.1130/2025.0071\(07\)](https://doi.org/10.1130/2025.0071(07)).

Hannibal, J.T., and Straffin, E., eds., *Coastal and Structural Geology, Paleontology, and Building Stones Along the Eastern Shore of Lake Erie: Geological Society of America Field Guide 71*. Boulder, Geological Society of America. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1130/2025.0071>

Heard T., E. Eberhard, S. Weerasinghe, T. Morin, C. Monty-Bromer, L. Kinsman-Costello, and **J. Senko**. 2025. Old Woman Creek Wetland Sediment and Electrochemical Sensor Microbial Community, 2023. Environmental System Science Data Infrastructure for a Virtual Ecosystem (ESS-DIVE)(United States); Rewriting the Redox Paradigm: Dynamic hydrology shapes nutrient and element transformations in a Great Lakes Coastal Estuary. <https://doi.org/10.15485/2568076>

Pope T., E. Eberhard, T. Morin, **J. Senko**, C. Monty-Bromer, G. Bohrer, L. Kinsman-Costello, S. McMurray. 2025. miniDOT Logger Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Data of Wetland Surface Water, Old Woman Creek NERR, Huron, OH, 2022-06-15 to 2023-12-15. Environmental System Science Data Infrastructure for a Virtual Ecosystem (ESS-DIVE)(United States); Rewriting the Redox Paradigm: Dynamic hydrology shapes nutrient and element transformations in a Great Lakes Coastal Estuary. <https://doi.org/10.15485/2530251>

Eberhard E., T. Pope, T. Morin, **J. Senko**, C. Monty-Bromer, G. Bohrer, L. Kinsman-Costello, S. McMurray. 2025. PreSens Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Data, Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve, Huron, OH, 2022-07-06 to 2023-12-15. Environmental System Science Data Infrastructure for a Virtual Ecosystem (ESS-DIVE)(United States); Rewriting the Redox Paradigm: Dynamic hydrology shapes nutrient and element transformations in a Great Lakes Coastal Estuary. <https://doi.org/10.15485/2526685>

Eberhard E., T. Pope, C. Smith, T. Morin, **J. Senko**, C. Monty-Bromer, G. Bohrer, L. Kinsman-Costello, N. Haddon, A. Cooper, S. McMurray. 2025. Soil Core Chemistry of Wetland, Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve, Huron, OH, 2023-10-24 to 2024-05-20. Environmental System Science Data Infrastructure for a Virtual Ecosystem (ESS-DIVE)(United States); Rewriting the Redox Paradigm: Dynamic hydrology shapes nutrient and element transformations in a Great Lakes Coastal Estuary. <https://doi.org/10.15485/2530252>

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ABSTRACTS PUBLISHED

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- Coyne, D. and **Peck, J.** 2025. Changing environmental conditions of Nobles Pond, Stark County, Ohio. University of Akron Student Research Conference.
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Donors of 2025

INDIVIDUALS

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Interview with Chrystal Fretz



Ira Sasowsky [IS]: We're here today with Chrystal Fretz, who's one of the most popular teachers in the Geosciences program, and we're here to learn a little bit more about her background and what she does here in the department. So, can you tell us about how you first got involved in the department?

Chrystal Fretz [CF]: Well, I first started off helping Nick Frankovits. I was his TA way back in the day when I was a master's student. After I graduated, I was still helping him with setting up his Brightspace and that sort of thing. So, I was kind of around, but behind the scenes all the time. And then when he decided to retire, I thought I should apply to teach. It was a good fit.

[IS]: So, did you get your undergraduate degree here also and as well as your graduate degree? And, what got you interested in geosciences originally?

[CF]: Yes. I was one of those kids who picked up rocks everywhere I went and brought them home. I'd bring home the rocks I'd find on vacation or random places. I'd come home and clean them and display them.

[IS]: And what classes do you typically teach?

[CF]: Intro to Oceans, Intro to Environmental Science, and occasionally Earth Science.

[IS]: What's your favorite course to teach, and why is that?

[CF]: Oceans. I love the ocean. I've been a fan of going to the ocean my whole life. I like dolphins and I'm really fascinated by sediments, so the marine sediments are pretty cool.

[IS]: Can you tell us some more about your background what you like to do when you're not teaching geoscience?

[CF]: When I'm not teaching geoscience, I have a husband and a ten-year-old son and two dogs and I love to ski, so I also teach downhill skiing in the winter.

[IS]: Oh, nice.

[CF]: Everything I do, I end up teaching. And, I like to read. I like to garden, that sort of thing. Listen to music.

[IS]: What are the things that you enjoy most about teaching?

[CF]: Getting to help people. I enjoy watching students have that light bulb moment where they realize, oh, this is how that works. I love sharing knowledge with people.

[IS]: What are the most challenging things about teaching and how has it changed over the years?

[CF]: Challenging. Well, not everyone learns the same, so you can't just present things one way and expect everyone to get it. You've got to come up with other ideas and other ways of doing things to bring it to everybody. And that's changed over the years, especially with the AI. Some of them don't want to take the time to learn; they want to churn out the work and finish.

[IS]: How many years have you been teaching here?

[CF]: Five years now, already somehow. I started during COVID

[IS]: Yeah, yeah. Well, that had its own challenges for sure.

[CF]: It did. It did, yeah.

[IS]: I think that answered all the questions that I had. But is there anything else that you can think of that you'd like to share about the department or the science?

[CF]: Science is just fascinating, and it always has been. I've also always wanted to be a teacher, so they kind of go together. I started teaching my stuffed animals when I was like 5. Had a little chalkboard, little books that have them sit in there, you know? So it was kind of in me to go that route anyway. And then loving science, just it fascinates me how the world works.

[IS]: Well, great. It was wonderful to learn more about your background and what you do here. Thanks so much for the contributions that you make to the department. I know the students really appreciate your attention to teaching also.

[CF]: OK. Thank you.

Your Support Makes a Difference!

Gifts from alumni and friends are vital to the success of Geosciences – both the program and the students! Each year, donor support makes it possible for deserving, hardworking students to attend field camp or afford tuition; for labs to be updated; and for programming to be enriched – all of which results in an outstanding academic experience. Your gift is tax deductible and 100 percent is used toward the designation of your choice. Donations to the Geoscience Department Restricted Account (636263) have the greatest flexibility to benefit the widest range of Geosciences students, or you can designate your gift to one of the other scholarships. Thank you for your consideration!

ARTHUR E. BURFORD ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FUND (638035)

This scholarship honors former geology professor & chair Dr. Burford, will be awarded to full-time Geoscience students with demonstrated scholastic achievement, with an emphasis towards degree completion, as well as superior character and leadership.

PAUL C. FRANKS ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FUND (637303)

The scholarship honors the memory of former associate professor Dr. Paul C. Franks to support geology majors interested in the resource side of geology (minerals, oil, gas, etc.). Preference is given to students from Northeast Ohio who are attending Geology Field Camp.

GEOLOGY ALUMNI MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND (637348)

This fund has the express purpose of assisting students to participate in the Geology Field Camp who have a 3.0 GPA or better. The student must have promise as a geologist and demonstrate enthusiasm, participation, interest and knowledge.



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JAMES F. FITZGERALD, JR. MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND (637285)

This scholarship honors the memory of James F. Fitzgerald, Jr., a 1970 geology graduate killed during the eruption of Mount St. Helens volcano while engaged in field work for his doctoral dissertation as a graduate student at The University of Idaho. This scholarship is awarded to an outstanding geology senior.

GEOSCIENCES VAN MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT FUND (639516)

This fund allows the Department to maintain and periodically replace our vans and truck used for field trips and Field Camp.

GEOSCIENCES FIELD EXPERIENCES FUND (639572)

This fund helps to defray student costs for field-based experiential learning activities.

ROGER J. BAIN MEMORIAL AWARD IN GEOSCIENCES (637308)

This fund honors Dr. Bain, former geology professor & chair of the department. The fund supports student research expenses, especially that which is suitable for presentations at professional meetings.



Regional geo class, upstate NY



Field camp, Black Hills, SD.

Geosciences Graduate Student awarded Fellowship & Scholarship

Ryan Johnston, a first-year graduate student in the Dept. of Geosciences, has been awarded a Visiting Fellowship by the Institute for Rock Magnetism (IRM) at University of Minnesota. The IRM, a facility supported by the National Science Foundation, provides advanced magnetic instrumentation for use by researchers around the world. The Fellowship will allow Ryan to analyze sediment samples he collected from Sarah Furnace Cave, Pennsylvania, and includes \$5,200 in lab time and expenses. His MS project seeks to understand the relationship between this cave, which is the densest maze in the world, and a massive ~1 million year old, glacially-related paleolake that once spanned across western Pennsylvania and parts of Ohio. Additionally, Ryan won the Karst Waters Institute Wilson Scholarship to support his work.



Ryan collecting core samples in cave.

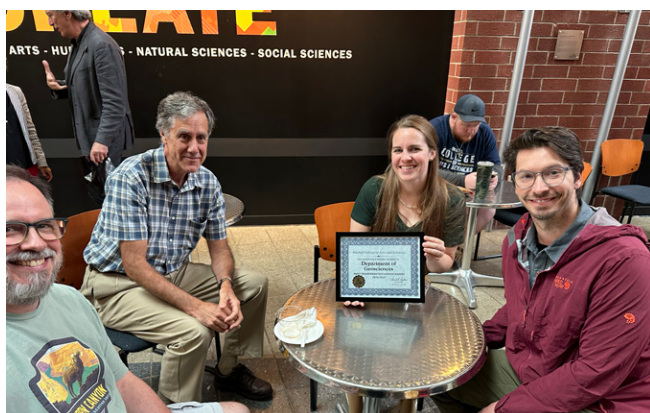
Welcome Gloria!

In October 2025 we welcomed Gloria Thomas to the building. She is a Master Building Services Worker, and has been with UA for 21 years. She originally worked in the dorms, but now has Crouse Hall and part of Buchtel Hall as her domain. She says her role is to “keep things pretty”, and we really appreciate her attention to details. An Akron native, Gloria enjoys the brightness of the refurbished Crouse Hall. In her spare time she loves to quilt; see adjacent photo. We are grateful to have her as part of the Crouse family!



Launch Leaders

Launch Leaders is a BCAS teaching-focused group of faculty that serve as liaisons between the dean's office and the individual BCAS units to help share teaching initiatives, and improve student success, recruitment and retention. Dr. Meera Chatterjee and Dr. Molly Witter have served as the Launch Leaders for the department since 2024. During the Spring 2025 semester, each BCAS unit took on the “Committed to Teaching Challenge”, a teaching initiative developed by the Launch Leaders to find ways for faculty to enhance their teaching practices to better support students. In the Department of Geosciences, we brainstormed different effective teaching strategies we all have used or wanted to try implementing for the Spring 2025 semester and every faculty member selected one technique they would use throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, every



faculty member conducted a survey to assess the effectiveness of the implemented teaching strategies—ranging from think-pair-share techniques to individual student meetings. Over 450 students in geoscience classes completed the survey and every class where a teaching technique was purposefully implemented showed majority positive feedback in that the technique contributed to student learning and success. At the start of the Fall 2025 semester, the department was awarded the “Most Transformative Launch Leaders award” by Dean Ann Usher for the department’s efforts and commitment to exploring effective teaching strategies.

– Molly Witter Shelleman



Professor Emeritus John Szabo Returns

On May 3, 2025, I (J. Peck) had the pleasure once again of having lunch with Professor Emeritus John Szabo. My international travel has been greatly reduced so I enjoy traveling vicariously through John’s stories about Honduras. Hearing what it takes to do car engine repair or water hookups in Honduras is amazing. The years John spent operating the Giddings drill rig or groundwater sampling equipment for research appears to be good training for successfully accomplishing all sorts of things in Honduras. John also continued his generous and substantial donation to the Roger Bain Memorial Award thereby enabling significant student research projects to continue in the Department.

Professor Senko Joins Dean’s Office

Dr. Ann Usher is pleased to announce Dr. John Senko has been named BCAS Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies. Dr. Senko, a professor in the departments of Geosciences and Biology, is an environmental microbiologist whose research explores how microorganisms shape the chemistry of natural and human-influenced environments. His interdisciplinary work examines microbial processes in systems such as acid mine drainage, iron-rich caves, and industrial settings, with projects supported by the National Science Foundation, U.S. Department of Defense, and other agencies. John’s extensive work with graduate students, grants, and research collaborations will be tremendous assets in his new role that will begin on January 1, 2026. He will be transitioning part-time in the job the rest of this semester. Welcome to the Dean’s Office Dr. Senko!

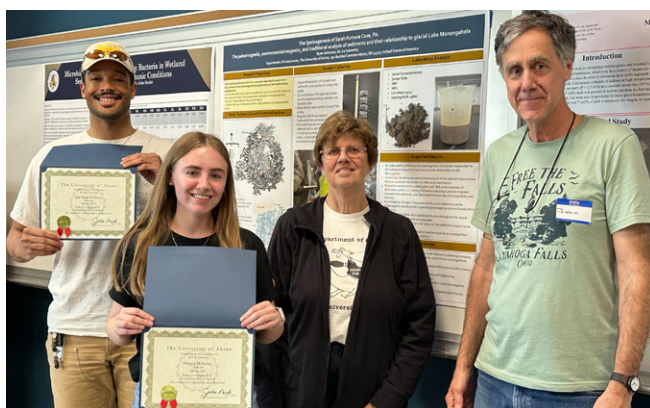
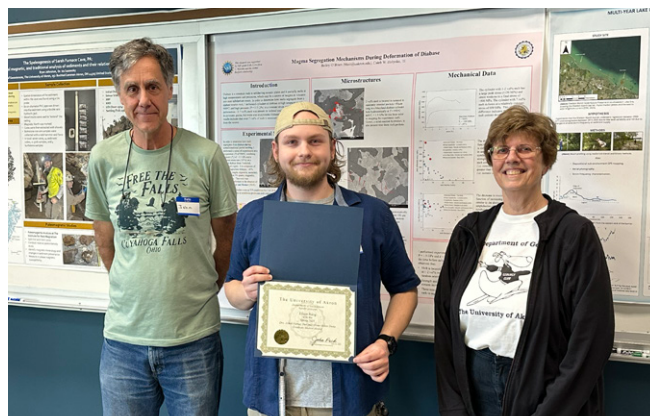
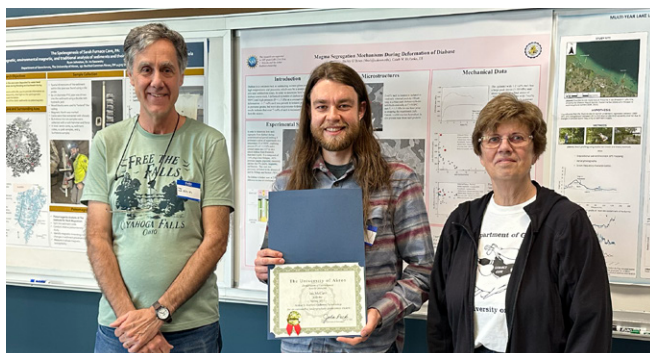
Part-time Faculty

- Dr. Robert Barrett - Environmental Seminar, Geography
- Dr. Joseph Hannibal - Paleobiology
- Ms. Crystal Fretz - Oceanography, Environmental Science

Spring Awards & Picnic



Spring Awards & Picnic



Disconnected Communities:

STUDENTS HELP AKRON RECONNECT WITH ITS PAST

Students from English and Geosciences courses collaborated on a powerful research project exploring the lasting impact of urban renewal in Akron.

Two classes. One neighborhood. Generations of stories brought back to light. In the Spring 2025 semester, students in BCAS took on the challenge of mapping what no longer exists — and, in the process, revealed the enduring impact of urban renewal on Akron's communities. Through the [E]XL Center for Community Engaged Learning's latest [Un]class collaboration, students explored the history of Howard Street and the surrounding neighborhoods erased during the construction of the Innerbelt in the 1960s and 1970s.

Part of a three-course arc on Akron's lost neighborhoods, the current [Un]class, Disconnected Communities, is a joint effort between Dr. Hillary Nunn's English students and Dr. Shanon Donnelly's Geosciences students. English students focused on uncovering untold stories from community meetings and archival records, while the GIS students transformed that research into a digital StoryMap, visualizing communities that no longer appear on today's maps. Their goal? To reinsert lost narratives into Akron's public consciousness — and provide a platform for future research and healing. "An [Un]class allows students to engage in open-ended areas of community study through hands-

on investigative work," said Rachael Herman, an English major and participant in the project. "For this course, we're focusing on urban renewal in Akron and the lives changed by the displacement of those from the Innerbelt area."

The Disconnected Communities [Un]class is the third in a series of EX[L] research projects centered on Howard Street. The first, 'Round Howard Street, explored the neighborhood's vibrant jazz culture. The second uncovered connections between Howard Street and Akron's LGBTQ+ history. With Disconnected Communities, students shifted focus to the consequences of urban renewal — what was lost, what remains, and how communities might begin to reconnect.

"This collaboration showed us how GIS and archival research go hand in hand to show what 'blight' really meant in Akron's Innerbelt construction," said Nunn. "And community meetings have been a fantastic means of showing students how much this still matters to Akron today."

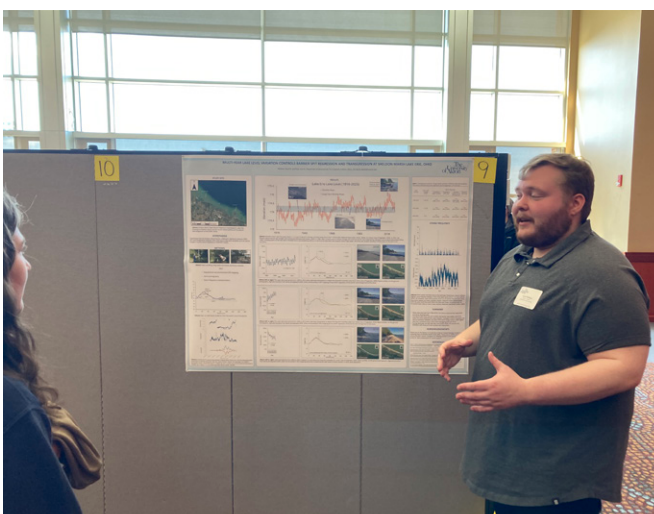
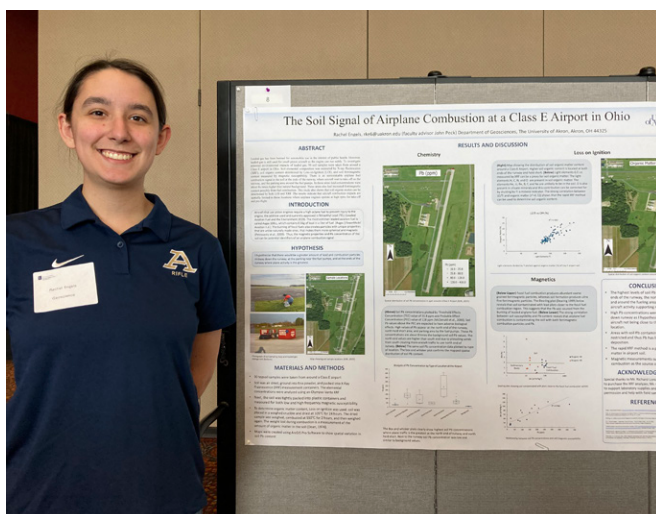
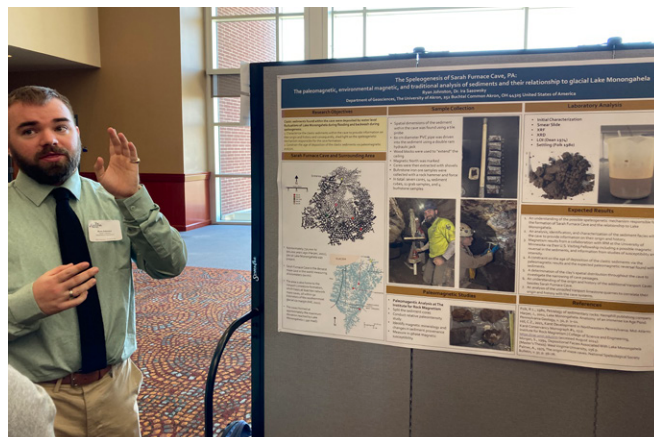
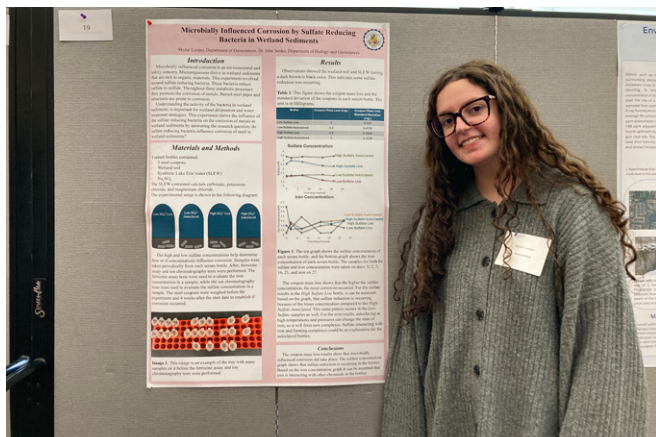
The culmination of their work was presented on May 7 at the Vernon Odom Boulevard Branch Library. For many students, it was the first time the two classes met in person to share their research with each other and with community members, faculty, and local residents.

"The StoryMap helped us overcome scheduling challenges and bring our research together into one cohesive project," Herman said. "It was powerful to see the impact our work had, and to hear from others how it might support future research or even policy decisions."

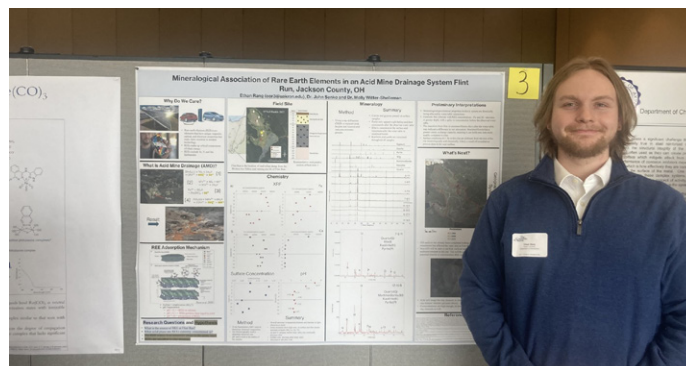
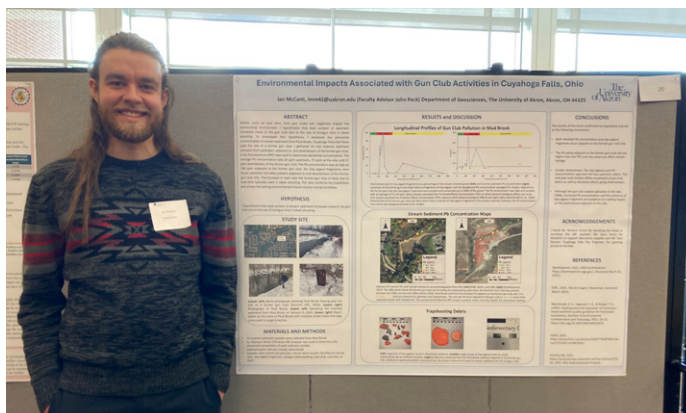
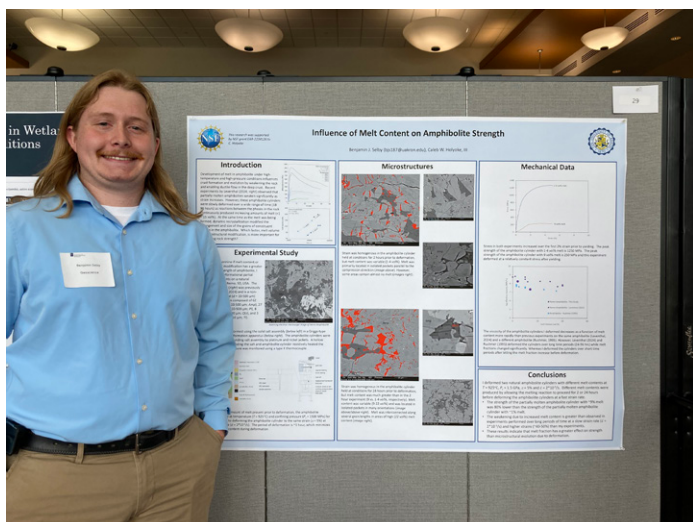
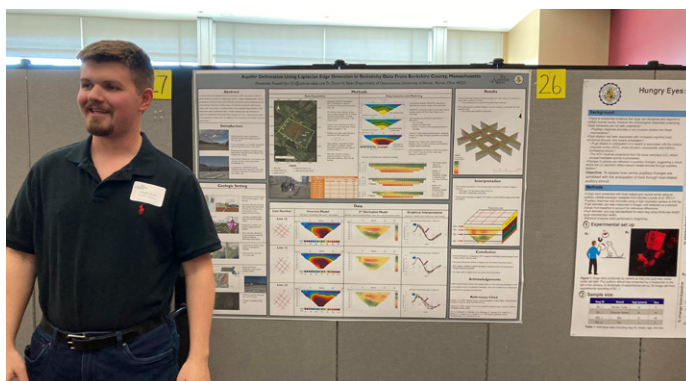
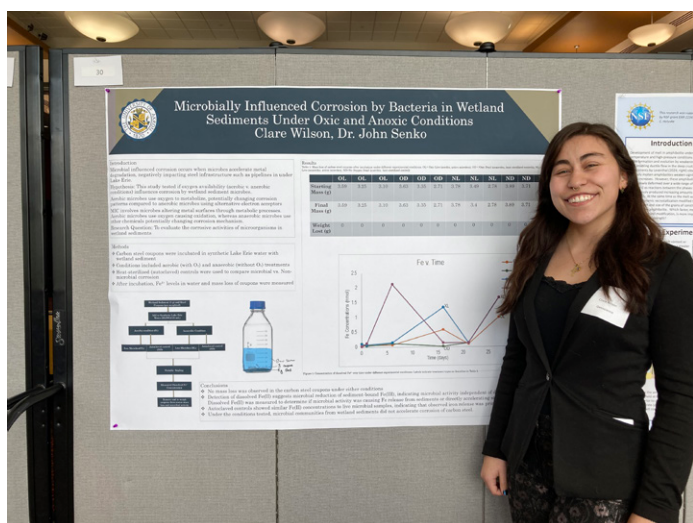
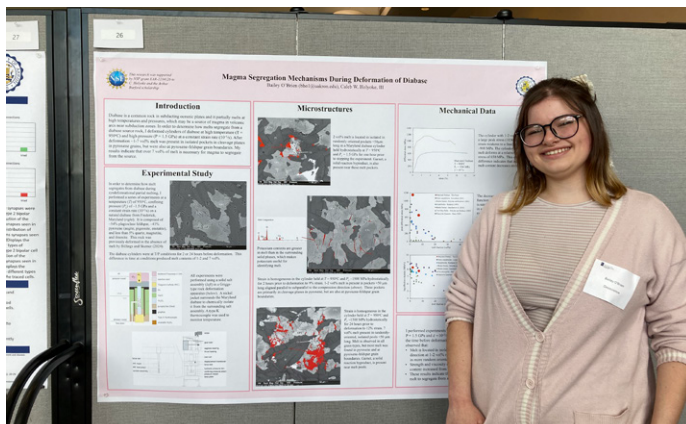
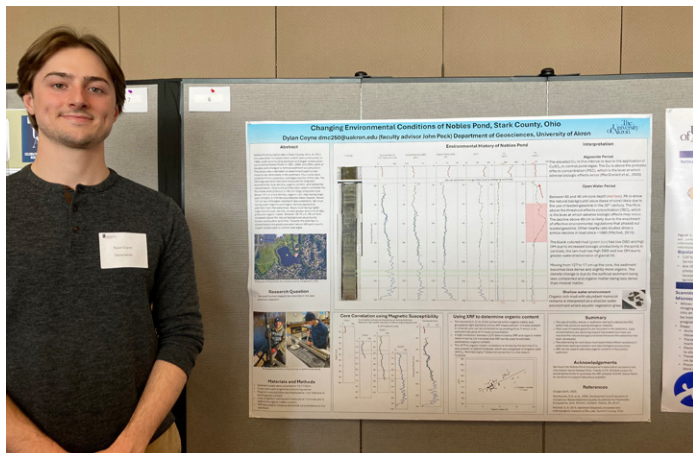
– Lisa Craig, BCAS Marketing



Geoscience Undergraduates and Graduates Presenting at UA Research Days.



Geoscience Undergraduates and Graduates Presenting at UA Research Days.



Awards Given

GEOLOGY ALUMNI MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

- Justin Antalek
- Dylan Coyne
- Caleb Dunn
- Rachel Engels
- Mick Frasier
- Josh Kuhn
- Joshua Meola
- Ella Pitz

JAMES FITZGERALD OUTSTANDING SENIOR AWARD

- Maggie Mahaney
- Sha'Heen Williams

ARTHUR E. BURFORD ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

- Ian McCartt
- Bailey O'Brien
- Isabel Petit

PAUL C. FRANKS ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN RESOURCE GEOLOGY

- Renee Bamberger
- Katy Bohannon
- Jackson Bullock
- Nicholas Carano
- Aubrey Clute
- Lana Garelnabi
- Logan Harris
- Jannet Jalpa Romero
- Laura Laws
- Kamron Miller
- Ayya Nafe
- Bailey O'Brien
- Jess Rhodes
- Cyrus Schultz
- Kendall Stevens
- Ella Wildenhaus
- Clare Wilson

DR. ROGER J. BAIN MEMORIAL AWARD

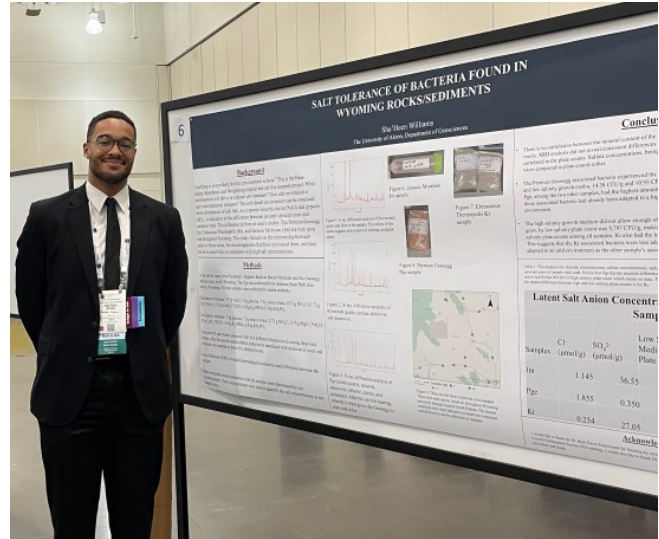
- Jordan Collins
- Alex Russell
- Karl Wehner
- David Williams
- Sha'Heen Williams

DRS. DUTT AND DUTTA ENDOWMENT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

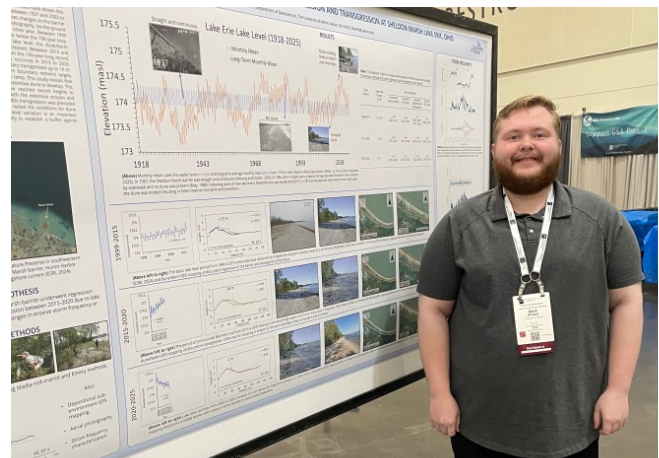
- Ethan Rang

Geoscience Students presenting at 2025 meetings

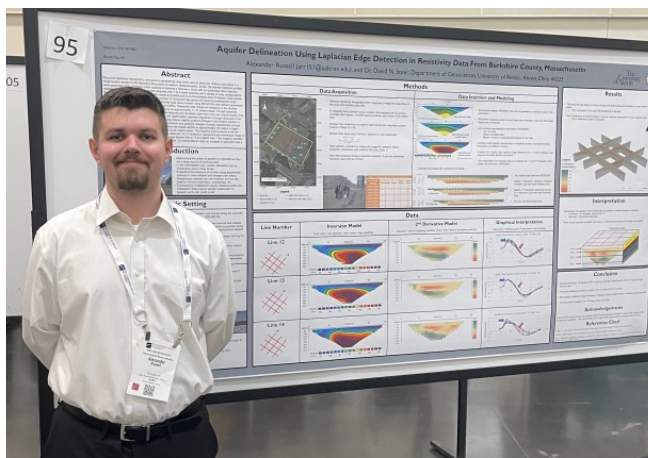
Student attendance made possible by generous support from the Roger J. Bain Memorial Award in Geosciences



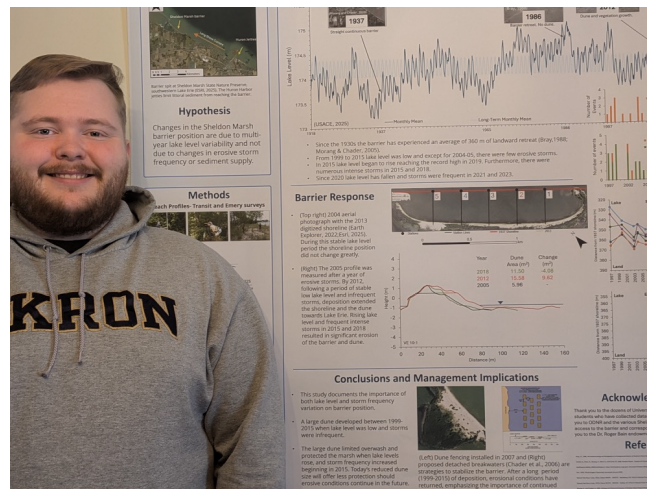
SALT TOLERANCE OF BACTERIA FOUND IN WYOMING ROCK UNITS/SEDIMENTS. Sha'Heen Williams



MULTI-YEAR LAKE LEVEL VARIATION CONTROLS BARRIER SPIT REGRESSION AND TRANSGRESSION AT SHELDON MARSH LAKE ERIE, OHIO. David B. Williams

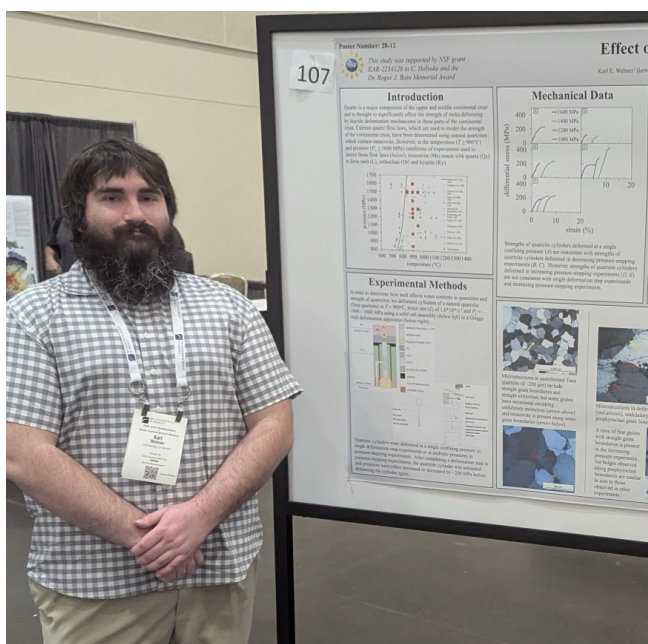


**ELECTRICAL RESISTIVITY IMAGING
OF AN AQUIFER IN WESTERN
MASSACHUSETTS.**
Alexander Russell



**GRADUATE STUDENT
DAVID WILLIAMS WINS AWARD**

Water Management Association of Ohio (WMAO), I am pleased to inform you that you have been awarded the honor as 2nd place winner of the Best Student Poster contest from the recent WMAO conference.



**EFFECT OF MELT ON QUARTZITE
STRENGTH.**
Karl Wehner

GIVING TO GEOSCIENCES

Support from alumni and friends – **like YOU** – is vital to the Department of Geosciences at The University of Akron because your gift is an investment in students!

When you give to scholarships or field camp, you eliminate financial hardships, allowing students to focus on their studies and graduate on time. When you make an unrestricted gift to the department, you provide funds to update labs and enrich programming, ensuring today's students continue to receive an outstanding academic experience.

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