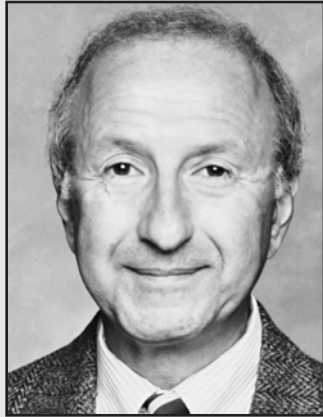


# 2008 MEDALS & AWARDS

## GSA PRESIDENT'S MEDAL

Presented to Roy J. Shlemon



Roy J. Shlemon  
*Roy J. Shlemon & Associates Inc.*

### *Citation by Robert L. Fuchs*

When you are young and know just about everything, or think you do, associating with a mentor can be a significant, life-altering experience. Maybe you are on the verge of losing direction, maybe you have unanswered career questions, maybe you need re-stimulation, maybe you've come to a crossroad, and the path to your future world is unclear. Be of good cheer—a mentor can guide you. I had an industry mentor for ten years, from university graduation through graduate school and out onto the job. It was a gratifying and job-enhancing experience, to say the least.

In 1994, Roy Shlemon created an endowment with the GSA Foundation to support applied geology. The initial activity was student mentoring, and the first expenditure of Shlemon Fund endowment income was in 1996 for three Shlemon Mentor workshops at GSA Section meetings. The program has since grown exponentially—through 2008, 3,000 students have had opportunities to interface with 500 mentors. Roy's program was the bell cow that led to other GSA mentor activities, now an important service for young geoscientists. By mid-2008, 7,000 students had met with 1,700 professionals working in applied geology.

Roy's career has included teaching and research positions at eight institutions and over 30 years as a full-time, multidisciplinary, consulting engineering geologist in southern California. Comfortable in both applied

geology and academia/research, Roy fully appreciates the importance of cooperation and coordination between these two fundamental sectors of the science. For geology students, mentoring presents an early career opportunity to begin this process.

This is the International Year of Planet Earth, one purpose of which is "to encourage more young people to study the earth sciences at universities." The Shlemon Mentor Program in Applied Geology accomplishes this purpose; Roy's role as the Program's founder and enabler accomplishes the purpose of the Presidential Medal.

### *Response by Roy J. Shlemon*

I thank you Bob for your kind words and your wise counsel. It was perhaps 20 years ago when we first met at a GSA Foundation booth during some annual meeting. As President of the Foundation, you made less-than-subtle suggestions about the virtues of starting a program of personal philanthropy. What excellent guidance, and I was eventually able to fund the GSA "Mentor Program in Applied Geology."

The intent of the program was, and still is, two-fold: First, it provides students with access to "real world" geologists, those mentors who could explain what jobs might be available, and what technical and communications skills are necessary for career success. Second, it brings the applied geologist back to the GSA. Too often, unfortunately, industry geologists dropped out of the GSA and its inherent "academic emphasis" in favor of professional groups more akin to their specific field of interest; for example, oil and gas exploration, mining, environmental assessment and engineering geology. Now, however, many applied geologists have returned and gladly share their experience, encouragement and guidance as GSA mentors. And, believe it or not, they do this voluntarily, for they receive no financial recompense for their time and expense! Thus all Mentor Program funds go to GSA administration and direct support of students.

As Bob noted in his citation, the Mentor Program was first implemented in 1996, and since that time over 7,000 students received their "free lunch," answers to their questions and suggestions for career development at each of the seven GSA Section meetings. Based on written responses, the students apparently find that the Mentor Program is well worthwhile, for at least they don't complain about the price of the lunch!

I humbly accept this honor on behalf of many: The GSA Foundation, where I had the honor of serving as a Trustee for eight years; the GSA Program Officers for the Mentor program, who have and continue to devote their time and energy to expand the program (and I here specifically recognize and express deep appreciation to Karlon Blythe and Jennifer Nocerino); and the 1,700 Mentors, the real heroes whose enthusiasm and volunteerism makes the program so successful that it is now emulated by many other geoscience organizations.

As a sage geologist one related to me when we discussed what university courses are most important for career success in applied geology and ultimately for the nebulous "happiness of life:"

- Five years out of school one wishes for more technical skills.
- Ten to fifteen years out, as an administrator, one recognizes that technological change is almost exponential, and thus truly important are well honed communication and "people" skills.
- Forty + years out, as a retired CEO or a well established Independent Consultant, one recognizes that the best university courses for a successful career and a well rounded life are probably literature, music, art and philosophy. Based on their place in the "ladder of life," the Mentors know this and share it with the students, to the benefit of the GSA and to our chosen profession.