Summary, the State of the Section:

Membership in the North-Central Section stood at 3,145 voting members at the end of December, 2015. The Section is the fifth largest of the six GSA Sections.

In 1990, the North-Central Section Management Board initiated a long-range planning effort to enhance meeting quality and marketing, which has generally been successful. Since 1990, meeting attendance has averaged well over 600 (this includes joint-meeting attendance figures) and because of this, and the fiscal prudence of local committees, revenues from meetings usually have increased. The 2008 section meeting in Evansville, Indiana, had 574 registrants. A 2009 meeting in Rockford, Illinois, had 608 registrants, the largest number of attendees since the extremely successful Minneapolis meeting in 2005. The 2010 joint meeting with the South-Central Section in Branson, Missouri, had 828 registrants, and the 2011 joint meeting with the Northeastern Section in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, had 1,603 registrants. The 2012 meeting in Dayton, Ohio, had 558 registrants; the 2013 meeting in Kalamazoo, Michigan had 476 registrants. The 2014 meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska had 401 registrants. The 2015 meeting in Madison, Wisconsin at the beautiful Monona Terrace had 706 registrants. The 2016 meeting in Champaign, Illinois had 706 registrants (including 256 professionals and 330 students including 45 student volunteers).

For future meetings, a joint meeting with the Northeastern Section in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2017; Ames, Iowa in 2018; a ‘triple joint’ meeting with South-Central and Rocky Mountain sections in Manhattan, Kansas in 2019; and a 2020 meeting in Duluth are confirmed, venues contracted or in the process, and local committees formed or forming.

The financial security of the Section remains sound due to the fiscal prudence of the committee running the 2016 meeting in Champaign, which had a net income of over $21,000. Total section revenue (section dues, meeting revenue, investment/dividend income, and transfers from GSAF/GSA) was $97,979 and expenses were $104,082 (including meeting expenses, grants and awards, and transfers to the Section endowment held by the GSA Foundation). The operating account balance at the end of the 2015-2016 fiscal year was $108,137, exceeding the Management Board’s target of having assets approximately equal to the cost of one typical-sized annual meeting plus operating costs, and of providing stability and ensuring continuity of Section activities. Support for student programs comprises the vast majority of all expenditures (other than spring meeting costs) of the Section.

For perspective, in recent years the dues income for the Section has covered the general operating costs of the Section, but has not been sufficient to support other programs. Thus the Section must continue to ensure income from the Scientific Meetings Program. The Section has allocated up to $14,100 in Section funds (mostly funds generated by Section meetings) to be used for student travel, student paper awards, undergraduate research grants, a contribution to On to the Future, and travel for a student to Congressional Visits Day for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Portions of the student travel funds will be matched by the GSA Foundation, so the amount given to students will be even greater.
The excellent financial state of the Section over the last decade has allowed the Section to dedicate most of its fiscal resources to support student programs and to increase the North-Central Section Endowment in the GSA Foundation. The Section operating account had a 2007-2008 fiscal-year-end balance of $123,699. Subsequently the end-of-year balances have been less, mainly due to funds being transferred into the GSA Foundation. The operating account balance at the end of June 2013 was $113,400. $20,000 was transferred to the endowment during 2013-2014, leaving the operating account with a balance of $107,898 and helping grow the endowment balance to $237,643 by the end of June 2014. By the end of March, 2015, after a transfer of $16,000, the Endowment balance was $265,526. In 2015-2016, $20,000 was transferred to the section endowment from the operating account and the balance at the end of June 2016 was $287,466.

Section Endowment History

The Section has substantially increased its endowment over the years. The Board made an initial pledge and payment of $2,000 in 1996 to the North-Central Section Endowment Fund of the GSA Foundation (this Fund was referred to as the Second Century Fund in older North-Central reports to Council) with funds taken from the Section treasury (operating funds). The Management Board, at its annual meeting, has continued to approve a maximum continuing annual contribution to the Foundation. The funds from this Section endowment fund have been intended for student support. Because of the need to increase the financial stability of the Section, payments were not made over a number of years, and the amount of funds in the endowment remained very low. However, $2,000 was contributed in September of 2005. Since then, because of the increase in financial stability of the Section following the financial success of recent meetings, annual transfers to the endowment have been $7,000 to $20,000.

The fund continued to grow but was greatly affected by the downturn in the stock market in early 2009 and by subsequent market fluctuations. At the end of the 2008-2009 fiscal years the endowment was at $63,997. At the end of May, 2010, with a fiscal-year contribution of $20,000, plus a $5,000 match from the Foundation, the North-Central Endowment was at $100,536, but at the end of June, 2010 (the end of the 2009-2010 fiscal year), the endowment was down to $98,292. With further contributions, the ending balance of the North-Central Endowment as of the end of June, 2011, was $138,312. Because of the excellent state of the Section’s finances, in March of 2011 the Management Board approved a contribution of up to $20,000 to the GSA Foundation in fiscal year 2011-2012 and $7,000 was transferred to the endowment in September of 2011. That was matched by $5,000 from the Foundation, and the endowment at the end of fiscal year 2011-2012 totaled $154,603. A maximum contribution of $20,000 for fiscal year 2012-2013 was also approved at the 2012 meeting of the Management Board, and $10,000 was transferred after the Dayton meeting with the accompanying $5000 match. At the end of June 2013, the North-Central Section Endowment stood at $184,688. The Management Board approved a maximum contribution of $20,000 again for fiscal year 2013-2014 pending outcome of the Kalamazoo meeting actuals, and the $20,000 plus the $5000 GSAF match helped raise the endowment to $237,643 by the end of June 2014. By the end of March, 2015 (most recent numbers available), after a transfer of $16,000 and the $5000 match, the balance stood at $265,365. $20,000 was transferred into the endowment in FY 2016, and the balance on June 30, 2016 was $287,466.
Scientific Meetings Program:

2016: The 50th Annual Meeting was held Monday and Tuesday, April 18-19 at I Hotel and Conference Center on the campus of University of Illinois. Total registration was 620, which generated $78,185 in revenue. 385 papers and posters were presented in 39 sessions (23 oral and 16 poster sessions). The Welcoming Reception on Sunday evening allowed attendees to network through the exhibits, and the Monday evening 50th Anniversary Celebration showcased GSA President-Elect Dr. Claudia Mora sharing the reasons she values her GSA membership and reporting on the upcoming transition to Open access. Available at the celebration were special and appropriately named beer from two local breweries, including cans of specially made Glacial Drift amber ale from Triptych Brewing. Nine field trips were planned and five ran with 79 attendees generating gross revenue of $6,025. Exhibits and sponsorships brought in $3,440. Net revenue for the meeting was $21,072.41.

2015: The 49th Annual Meeting was held May 18-19 at Monona Terrace, the beautiful Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Community and Convention Center on the shore of Lake Monona in Madison, Wisconsin. Total registration was 706, which generated $77,065 in revenue. 397 papers and posters were presented in 45 sessions (25 oral and 20 poster sessions). The Welcoming Reception on Monday evening featured the view from the Grand Terrace, and a Tuesday evening event offered an open house at Weeks Hall and a well-attended, appropriately cool and blustery Wisconsin Tailgate Dinner in the courtyard. Five field trips were run with 126 trippers and focused on Cambrian and Ordovician stratigraphy of SW Wisconsin; Baraboo; Cultural Geology of Beloit; Evolution of the lower Wisconsin River Valley; and Dimension Stone in the 21st Century. Revenue from the field trips amounted to $7,604. Six corporate and organization sponsors contributed a total of $4,275. Sixteen exhibitors paid a total of $2625. After subtraction of the expenses for the meeting, net revenue for the meeting amounted to $27,278.

2014: The 48th Annual Meeting was held April 24-25 at the Cornhusker Marriott Hotel in Lincoln, Nebraska. Total registration was 401, which generated revenue of $35,655. 245 papers and posters were presented in 29 sessions (21 oral and 8 poster sessions). The Welcoming Reception featured a quartet from the Nebraska Chamber players performing Ashfall, composed by Rusty Banks, and a documentary Ashfall Unearthed by Nebraska Educational Television. Four field trips were run with 72 attendees—Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, Pleistocene Geology and Classic Type Sections along the Missouri River Valley, Building and Ornamental Stones in the Nebraska State Capitol Building, and Quaternary Landforms and History of the Nebraska Sand Hills. Revenue from the field trips amounted to $6,464. Two individual and corporate sponsors contributed a total of $5500. Seven exhibitors paid a total of $1300. Dr. Kirk Johnson, Sant Director, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, presented the very well-attended keynote speech: Evolution, Time, Tectonics, Asteroids, Climate, and the Trajectory of Earth Science. After subtraction of the expenses for the meeting, net revenue for the meeting amounted to $15,885.

Professional Development/Awards/Membership and Student Involvement:

The Section's primary Awards and Professional Development Programs are targeted to increase student involvement. Student attendance at Section meetings continues to be substantial, and has increased during the last few years. Student attendance at meetings since 2009 has ranged from 43% (Branson 2010) to 55% (Dayton 2012). At the 2016 meeting in Champaign, 53% of attendees were students.

The Section’s travel grants support student attendance. Up to $6,000 from North-Central Section operating funds were allocated for each of the 2010-2011 through 2014-2015 fiscal years for student
travel to the GSA Annual meetings and to the Section meetings. The funding also provides partial support to a student to represent the Section on the Student Advisory Council (SAC) and travel to the Annual Meeting. The travel grant funding from the section operating fund is partially matched by the GSA Foundation. The Section voted in 2015 to increase the amount of operating funds to be disbursed for travel grants from $6000 to $8000.

The Section has increased maximum Student Paper/Poster Awards from $400 in 1990 to $2,000 at present.

In 2015, the Section also approved covering some costs for a student to travel to Congressional Visits Day in September. This funding will continue for 2016.

During 2015-2016, $14,625 was awarded in travel grants, but $13,275 was disbursed. For the 2015 Annual Meeting in Baltimore, 100 grants were awarded (10 denied) for $25-$100 (most for $100) with a total of $9,200. $8,200 was actually distributed after the meeting, so $1000 was re-awarded for the Champaign meeting. For the Champaign section meeting, 40 grants were awarded (three denied), from $50 to $200, for a total of $5,425. $5,075 was actually distributed, so $725 of funding was left on the table between the two meetings.

In 2015-2016, $1,745 was awarded in undergraduate research grants, and 24 awards of varying amounts totaling $2000 were awarded for poster awards at the Champaign meeting.

The Roy J. Shlemon Mentor Program in Applied Geoscience and the John Mann Mentors in Applied Hydrogeology Program are provided through GSA headquarters at the section Annual meetings, and in 2016 Career workshops were held onsite.

GSA Campus Representatives from the Section are invited to meet with the Meeting Planning and Technical Program Advisory Board and Local Committees during the section Annual Meetings in order to be recognized for their service, and to provide input into future meeting planning, the technical program, and student involvement.

Research Grants Program:

The Section initiated a competitive Research Grants Program for undergraduate student members in 1993. Grant application forms and procedures were developed and have been refined over time. The maximum amount of an individual grant is limited to $300. Eleven grants were awarded in the 2010-2011 fiscal year, for a total of $2,100. In the 2011-2012 fiscal year, four grants were awarded for a total of $1,150; in 2012-2013, three grants were awarded totaling $900. In 2013-2014, four grants were awarded totaling $940. Though marketing was increased to build awareness of the grants, in 2014-2015 four grants totaling $980 were awarded. At the 2015 Section meeting, the Management Board approved increasing the maximum for each award to $500, while keeping the total available for grants at $2100.

Respectfully submitted,

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Executive Secretary, North-Central Section