



NORTH-CENTRAL SECTION THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Report to Council, Presented October 2022
Fiscal Year July 2021– June 2022

Summary, the State of the Section:

Membership in the North-Central Section stood at 2,841 voting members of the Section as of December 2021. The Section is the fourth largest of the six GSA Sections.

2022-2023 Management Board:

Tara Kneeshaw, Chair, Grand Valley State University
Ginny Peterson, Vice-Chair, Grand Valley State University
Craig Dietsch, Past-Chair, University of Cincinnati
Daniel Sturmer, Past-Vice-Chair, University of Cincinnati
Michael B. Wolf, Outgoing Member at Large 2019-2022, Augustana College
Melinda C. Higley, Member at Large 2020-2023, Calvin University
William S. Elliott, Member at Large 2021-2024, University of Southern Indiana
James Zambito, Incoming Member at Large 2022-2025, Beloit College
Donald (Zac) Wormington, Student Representative, 2021-2023 Missouri State University
Robert T. Goldman, Representative to GPPC, 2019-2023, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Financial Summary

Section Operating Account

The financial security of the Section remains strong despite the global Covid-19 pandemic that dominated the last two and half years. The spring meeting generally generates the largest chunk of income for the Section, but the lack of income from the 2020 spring meeting ‘in Duluth’ that went virtual has put some strain on the Section’s account balances over the past two years. The Section’s accounts have recovered some with the success of the spring 2022 Joint North-Central/Southeastern Section Meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. See the table in **Scientific Meetings Program** section below for detail on net income returned to the Section.

The operating account balance at the beginning of FY2022 was **\$81,544**. Total Section revenue was **\$137,778** including section dues, meeting revenue, investment/dividend income, and transfers to GSAF/GSA. Expenses were **\$122,938**, including meeting expenses, and grants and awards. **There were no transfers to the Section endowment held by the GSA Foundation. In the prior fiscal year, revenue was \$39,178 and expenses were \$34,617.** At the end of FY2022 the operating account balance was **\$95,983** for a net gain of **\$14,439** (see chart below). The net gain, although improved over the limited gains in FY2021, did not meet the Section’s annual allocation (see below). The intention is always to have assets to cover the cost of one typical-sized Section meeting plus operating costs, and of providing stability and ensuring continuity of Section activities. Support for student programs and generally, spring meeting costs comprise most of the expenditures of the Section.

The Section has allocated up to \$15,500 for FY2023 in Section funds to be used for:

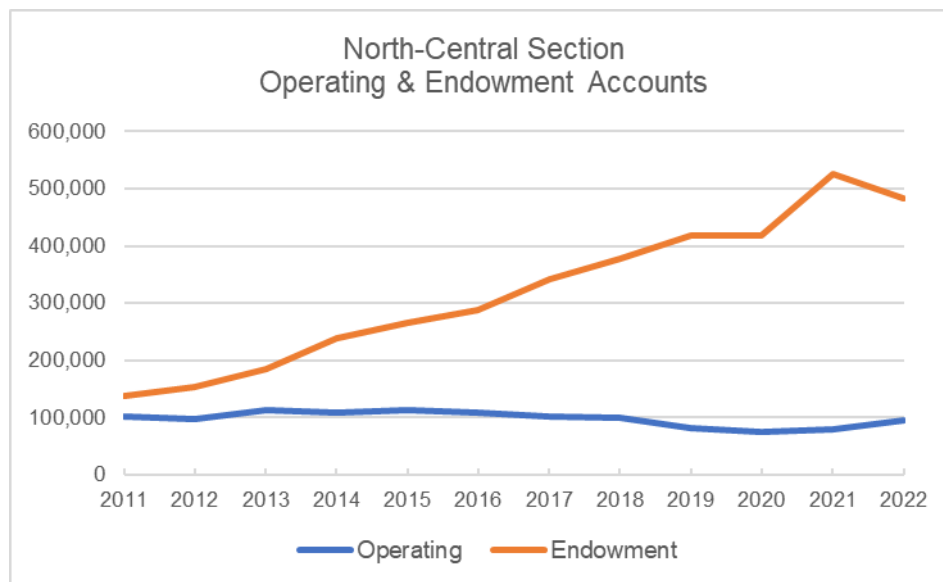
- Student travel grants – up to \$8,000, which is then increased by partial match from GSAF.
- Student paper awards for Section meeting – up to \$2,000.
- Undergraduate research grants – up to \$4,000 total with maximum of \$750 per grant, plus an ‘enhanced’ travel grant of up to \$250 for presenting the research results. This is an increase from a total of \$2,100 prior to 2021, with maximum of \$500 per grant.
- Support for *On to the Future*, up to \$1,500.

During prior years, the section has supported a student with up to \$1,000 to attend Geosciences Congressional Visits Day, (Geo-CVD). While we are pleased that the Geo-CVD is taking place in 2022, after a brief hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the section did not have a nominee for this year's event. The management board and section will be reviewing the candidate nomination process for future years.

The dues income for the Section (\$2757 in FY2022) covers the general operating costs of the Section but is not sufficient to support these programs; each section meeting is budgeted to return a minimum of \$14,000 net income to the section to accomplish this support. While this did not happen with the 2020 and 2021 meetings, we are pleased to report that 2022 meeting did meet this goal. The Section is hoping to continue this trend with the upcoming 2023 meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Section Endowment

The Section has increased its endowment over the years. Every year since 2011, a maximum contribution of \$20,000 has been approved for each fiscal year. The growth of the endowment can be seen below. In FY2019, \$20,000 was transferred into the endowment, and the funds had grown to \$417,649 by end of fiscal year. In FY2020, only \$5,000 was transferred into the endowment due to lack of meeting revenue, and in FY2021 and FY2022 no transfers were made due to revenue losses associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. In FY2021, the fund had an ending balance of \$526,628. In FY2022, the fund saw volatility and significant losses, ending with a balance was \$482,580.



Scientific Meetings Program:

2022: The 56th Annual Meeting was held April 7-8 jointly with the Southeastern Section's 71st Annual Meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. The following report was provided by Craig Dietsch, Chair.

The joint section meeting was held in Cincinnati, OH on Thursday, April 7th and Friday, April 8th, and included two pre-meeting field trips and four pre-meeting short courses run on Wednesday, May 6th and nine post-meeting field trips run on Saturday, May 10th.

Total registration was 844, well short of our initial optimistic goal of 1,200 and short of our budget planning goal of 1,000. The resurgence of covid during the fall and winter of 2021-22 played a major role in the number of registrations, as well as our budget and meeting planning. A key takeaway in our registration numbers is the large number of people who registered during the first day of the meeting -- almost 80. These registrations were likely a last-minute choice to attend the meeting based on perceptions of covid.

The local organizing committee, joined by Audrey Heun of GSA, decided to run the meeting as a “modified hybrid” meeting, emphasizing in-person participation through communications about the meeting and the meeting fee structure, but allowing for individual session chair-persons to include virtual talks and participation (on their own, without in-room technical assistance). A key point here is that the meeting had single prices for the various registration categories regardless of whether the participant attended the meeting in person or not.

It was the experience of the local committee, and through conversations with colleagues during the meeting, that the “modified hybrid” meeting we ran with an “in-person only” fee structure serves the needs of making GSA meetings equitable and does encourage in-person participation.

The meeting had the following technical sessions and events:

- 28 oral sessions, including 293 talks.
- 21 poster sessions, including 227 poster presentations.
- three GeoCareers workshops.
- the Roy J. Shlemon Mentors Program in Applied Geoscience.
- the Darcy Lecture in Groundwater Science.
- a special Sustainability Panel Discussion.*
- “Directions in Geoscience Research and Careers: Virtual Outreach Event for Local Students”
- the John Mann Mentors Program in Applied Hydrogeology.
- and post-meeting, “Geology in the Park: Geology of Cincinnati for Members of the Public”.**

** members of the Local Committee agreed that this special panel discussion – with invited guests from the private and public sectors -- had much potential to capture the interest of meeting participants and the general public. Unfortunately, the event was poorly attended. Challenges with public participation in our meeting is noted below.*

*** this event was conceived of and ultimately run by the Public Engagement (sub)Committee of the Local Committee. The event was scaled back to a visit to a local public fossil park, again highlighting challenges with public participation.*

The Local Committee was interested and enthusiastic about engaging the public with our meeting. However, there are hurdles to open the meeting to interested individuals, K-12 students and teachers, and others including logistics, timing of events, venues, over-scheduling of meeting participants, and the inability of non-registered people to attend events in the meeting spaces. Engaging the public with GSA is a worthy goal but bringing this goal to actuality remains difficult.

Our budget was shaped by the high cost of holding the meeting at the Duke Energy Convention Center whose costs and required commitments for food and beverages were high. The venue (rooms) was good as was the support of the Convention Center staff. Our decision to have a food buffet on both Wednesday and Thursday nights (despite the cost) was the right one and having food and cash bar on the nights of GSA conferences should be standard operating procedure. I did not receive a final budget tally but assume that our meeting broke even.

A note about the technical support provided through a contract with Image AV Inc.: hiring Image AV is expensive, but the staff of Image AV were extremely supportive and provided outstanding technical support which in many instances went beyond contract specifications. For example, technical support was provided by Image AV staff in sessions experiencing real time technical difficulties. Our meeting adds to the positive feedback and informal recognition that Image AV is a reliable and very supportive partner.

Final notes on the meeting: Weekly meetings of the Local Committee were invaluable to keep on schedule and develop and execute ideas for the meeting. Co-Chair Rebecca Freeman’s notes from each meeting were outstanding and the Local Committee was grateful for her efforts. GSA’s liaison to our meeting, Audrey Heun was a tremendous asset to the Local Committee. She was professional, well-organized, hard-working, and a pleasure for all the Local Committee to work with. Audrey helped us make it “our own meeting”. As meeting Co-Chair, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who stepped up to serve on the Local Committee. Their ideas, conversation, commitment to the meeting, and good cheer made our work fun and interesting. A post-meeting summary of impressions and ideas of members of the Local Committee was collected and can be made available

to other meeting organizers. Finally, GSA has developed a productive protocol for organizing and directing local committees and their leadership and interactions with our Local Committee were very helpful.

Success of recent meetings is shown below.

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Location and dates	18–19 April, Champaign	19–21 March, Pittsburgh; joint w/NE	6–17 April, Ames	25-27 March, Manhattan; joint w/SC & RM	18-19 May, Virtually 'from Duluth'	18-20 April, Virtually 'from Springfield, MO'; joint w/ SC	7-8 April, Cincinnati, joint with SE
Attendance	619	1345	607	642	No paid reg	294	844
Net Income	\$21,072	\$19,031	\$11,518.19.	\$7,052	-\$520	\$7,345	\$19,710

Future Meetings: A 2023 meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, hosted by Grand Valley State University is confirmed, venues contracted, and local committees formed. A 2024 meeting in Springfield, Missouri hosted by Missouri State University is organizing jointly with the South-Central section. Discussions are underway for a joint meeting with the Northeastern section in 2025. Potential locations discussed are Buffalo, New York or Cleveland, Ohio.

Date	Location	Local Chair(s)	Joint with
4-5 May 2023	Grand Rapids, MI	Tara Kneeshaw	-
(T) 21-23 April 2024	Springfield, MO	Doug Gouzie	SC
TBD	Buffalo, NY, or Cleveland, OH	-	NE

Professional Development/Awards/Membership and Student Involvement:

The Section's primary Awards and Professional Development Programs aim to increase student involvement. Student attendance at Section meetings continues to be substantial. Student attendance at meetings since 2009 has ranged from 43% (Branson 2010) to 56% (Pittsburgh 2017). Students composed about 48% of the attendees at the last in-person meeting, the Joint North-Central/Southeastern Section Meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2022. At the spring Section meeting, the Management Board discussed strategies for increasing student participation in GSA, which has declined over the past 10 years; however, no concrete action was taken.

Travel Grants Program:

The Section's travel grants support student attendance with the help of a \$4,500 match 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 funding also provides partial support to a student to represent the Section on the Student Advisory Council (SAC) and travel to the Annual Meeting. From 2014 through FY2017, the North-Central Section also supported the *On To the Future* program through the GSA Foundation with \$1,000 annually. The amount was increased to \$1,500 starting in FY2018.

In Fall of 2021, 43 students were awarded travel grants of \$100 (non-presenters) or \$175 (student presenters) to support attendance at the GSA Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon, for a total of \$7375 awarded (41 accepted and \$7025 was dispersed). In Spring of 2022, 20 students were awarded \$250 each for travel to the Joint SE-NC Section Meeting in Cincinnati, OH for a total of \$5000 in awards (19 accepted and \$4750 was dispersed).

At the spring meeting in Cincinnati, the Management Board voted to change the student enrollment verification process for student travel grants. The North-Central Section is no longer requiring completion of a secondary enrollment verification form, streamlining the application process.

Student Paper/Poster Awards: Sixteen students were awarded a total of \$2,000 for poster and oral presentations at the 2022 Cincinnati meeting – one first place (\$200) and three honorable mentions (\$100 each) in each category (oral or poster) for undergraduates and graduates. Because the meeting was held jointly with the Southeastern Section, the costs associated with the awards were split between the two sections. These will post in the next fiscal cycle.

Geoscience Congressional Visits Day: In 2015, the Section first approved covering some costs, up to \$1,000, for a student to travel to Congressional Visits Day in September. This funding was continued for Geo-CVD 2019 for our fifth student to participate. A student was not selected for the 2020 virtual Geo-CVD, and no Geo-CVD was held in 2021. For 2022, no student was selected. The section will be evaluating its nomination process before the next cycle.

Mentor Programs and Career Planning: 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 2022, as in 2021, the mentor programs and Geo-career workshops were successfully held on site in Cincinnati.

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 was initially limited to \$300. Eleven grants were awarded in FY2011 for a total of \$2,100. In FY2012, four grants were awarded for a total of \$1,150; in FY2013, three grants were awarded totaling \$900. In FY2014, four grants were awarded totaling \$940. In FY2015, four grants totaling \$980 were awarded. At the 2015 Section meeting, the Management Board approved increasing the maximum for each award from \$300 to \$500, while keeping the total available for grants at \$2100. In FY2016, three students were awarded a total of \$1,080. 2017 saw \$2,000 awarded to six students. 2018 saw \$2,100 awarded to five students in varying amounts from \$100 to \$500. In 2019, \$2,000 was awarded to nine students in amounts varying from \$200 to \$350. In spring of 2020, four \$500 grants were awarded. In 2021, \$2100 was awarded to six students in amounts varying from \$150 to \$500. At the 2021 Annual Section meeting, the Management Board voted to raise the annual funding for undergraduate research grants to a maximum of \$4000, with up to \$750 for each grant.

In spring of 2022, \$4,000 was awarded to six students in amounts varying from \$400 to \$750; however, only \$3,250 was dispersed as one student did not respond to the award notifications.

- **Lauren Bergeron, Albion College**
- **Ramona Gomez, Missouri State University**
- **Hanna Konavaluk, University of Iowa**
- **Morgan Mellum, Gustavus Adolphus College**
- **Sarah Sommer, Missouri State University**
- **Lauren Wratchford, Saint Louis University**

Respectfully submitted,
Tandis Bidgoli, Executive Secretary, North-Central Section