
Rewarding Professional Contributions in the Public Spheres

Position Statement. The purpose of this position statement is to (1) encourage members to involve themselves professionally in the domains of public policy, education, and research on teaching and learning; (2) recognize specific efforts by geoscientists directed toward the enhancement of earth science in these domains; and (3) recognize the valuable scholarship and professional activities of those members participating in the domains of public policy, education, and research on teaching and learning.

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RATIONALE

Scholarly efforts by geoscientists within the realms of public policy, education, and research on teaching and learning constitute valuable scholarship and professional activity. GSA's recognition and support of those efforts reflect the Society's mission to promote the geosciences. Applying the results of geoscience research in the arena of public policy and providing education at all levels improves communities and enhances society while showing the importance of public support of research geoscientists. The National Academy of Sciences (2016) recently stated, "... the complexity of scientific methods and the ways in which science progresses can also make communicating science to the public quite difficult. ... A growing body of scientific evidence can help inform the most effective ways of communicating with the public under different circumstances ... [and] reviews the evidence about effective approaches to science communication and offers an agenda to help guide future research in this area."

Research on teaching and learning in the geosciences not only contributes greatly to the effectiveness and stature of geoscience education, it is a rapidly maturing research field with many external funding sources, peer-reviewed journals, and a vibrant community. The Society's explicit affirmation of the value and importance of its members' contributions to public policy, education, and the scholarship of teaching and learning will serve to expand and inform personnel decisions based on those activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Society recommends the following actions:

Geoscientists are encouraged to

1. Engage in scholarly and service activities, including research, publications, and presentations on geology and public policy;
2. Participate in policy development related to earth systems and earth processes; and

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3. Advance geoscience education and curricular reform and produce research, publications, and presentations on pedagogy and curricular innovation.

Supervisors, administrators, institutional/organizational leaders, and department peers are encouraged to

1. Recognize and reward efforts in geoscience public policy, education, and research on teaching and learning through positive performance evaluations, reappointments, promotions, tenure consideration, and awards;
2. Include these areas when establishing criteria for recognition, evaluation, advancement, promotion, and granting tenure;
3. Support by the appropriate reassigned time or travel assistance those geoscientists engaged in substantive scholarly and professional activity on issues of public policy, education, and research on teaching and learning; and
4. Be aware of the current state and value of research on teaching and learning in geoscience and its important contribution to the geosciences community.

Adopted May 2001; revised May 2009, November 2012, May 2017

ABOUT THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The Geological Society of America, founded in 1888, is a scientific society with more than 25,000 members from academia, government, and industry in more than 100 countries. Through its meetings, publications, and programs, GSA enhances the professional growth of its members and promotes the geosciences in the service of humankind. GSA encourages cooperative research among earth, life, planetary, and social scientists, fosters public dialogue on geoscience issues, and supports all levels of earth science education. Inquiries about the GSA or this position statement should be directed to GSA's Director for Geoscience Policy, Kasey S. White, at +1-202-669-0466 or kwhite@geosociety.org.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GSA AND ITS MEMBERS TO HELP IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen and sustain the professional contributions of its members to geosciences public policy, education, and research on teaching and learning, the GSA recommends that members:

1. Value and publicly acknowledge the contributions of their peers in these areas of scholarship;
2. Continue to stress the value and importance of contributions in these areas of scholarship to internal and external institutional stakeholders; and
3. Serve in positions of academic or organizational leadership in order to recognize and reward contributions in these areas of scholarship.

REFERENCE

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016, *Communicating Science Effectively: A Research Agenda*: Washington, D.C., The National Academies Press, [10.17226/23674](#).