

Why GSA Membership Is Important to Me



Catherine Smith on the *RV/IB Nathaniel B. Palmer* offshore of the Sabrina Coast, East Antarctica.

Being a member of GSA has been integral to my professional development as a graduate student at the University of South Florida—College of Marine Science (USF-CMS). The 2014 GSA Annual Meeting in Vancouver was my first scientific meeting, and it really opened my eyes to the importance of networking with other geoscientists in sessions, in the poster hall or in the coffee line.

The next year, I was able to meet fellow palynologists at the poster session at the 2015 Annual Meeting in Baltimore as I presented the preliminary results from my master's project. I had fruitful discussions at my poster with multiple palynologists and got to enjoy dinner and a beer with other geoscientists who have helped me and will help me academically and professionally.

GSA has provided me with more than just the opportunity to attend annual meetings; I've also benefitted from various funding and volunteer opportunities. As a GSA member, I applied for and received a GSA Graduate Student Research Grant, which funded additional palynology slides that are essential to my master's thesis. Furthermore, I recently became the GSA Campus Representative for USF-CMS, which allows me to serve as a source of information for students and faculty about GSA membership, meetings, funding, and volunteer opportunities.

My advice to all geoscience students is to attend GSA annual and sectional meetings, apply for student and conference travel grants, and be an active member. You never know when you are going to meet someone who can help you—I talked to someone in the coffee line at the 2015 meeting and now I am writing this testimonial!

Catherine Smith

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