A Message from the Chair

2019 was an exciting year for SEES. Several recently hired faculty members established their labs, including Assistant Professors Jacquelyn Bracco (Alysse and Helmut Heydegger Chair in environmental geochemistry), Karl Lang (tectonics and geomorphology), and Dax Soule (marine geophysics) as well as Associate Professor Dianne Greenfield (biological oceanography), who holds a joint appointment with the CUNY Advanced Science Research Center.

This was my first year serving as chairperson of SEES, which has been a challenging, but very rewarding experience. We are attempting to enhance our impact on the Queens College community by providing undergraduate degrees and minors in geology, environmental science, and environmental studies as well as many popular science courses that help to provide QC students with science fundamentals. SEES also offers a Master of Arts degree in geological and environmental sciences, and a Master of Science degree in applied environmental geosciences. In addition, the school participates in the CUNY doctorate programs via the CUNY Graduate Center.

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This year, SEES was fortunate to host several sensational speakers to the QC campus including international climate activist and physicist, James Hansen, and Jonathan Pershing, the program director for environment at William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Pershing, a QC alumnus, was the former special envoy for climate change in the U.S. Department of State and Department of Energy under the Obama administration. These seminars were funded in part by a grant from Consolidated Edison.

The SEES main office has also been fortunate enough to add a new part-time college assistant, Jessica Yin, who has been a valuable addition to the office staff which is led by Gladys Sapigao.

Best wishes for a successful 2020!

Jeff Bird, Chair
Professor of Terrestrial Biogeochemistry
Lab website: http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/~jbird/Index.html

Cecilia McHugh in front of the R/V Sonne in the Port of Yokohama, Japan.

Departmental News
Our student cohort in SEES grew in 2019, both in our undergraduate and graduate programs (MS and MA). Presently, we have 190 undergraduate majors and 13 minors in SEES and 20 master’s and doctoral students. In Fall 2019, we had 1,070 students in our classes.

Our faculty continue to impress. Greg O’Mullan, an environmental microbiologist and former SEES Chairperson (2016–2018), was promoted to full professor in 2019.

SEES faculty have received several new grant awards, including a prestigious National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER award that was awarded to recently tenured and promoted associate professor Marc-Antoine Longpré. The five-year project is entitled “CAREER: Reactivation controls, timescales, and styles at quiescent hotspot volcanoes: Insights from the Canary Islands.”

SEES is conducting a faculty search for a new tenure-track geoscientist who focuses research on surficial/coastal processes. This person will follow in the footsteps of the recently retired SEES professor Nicholas Coch, who was at QC for over five decades. In addition, SEES is pleased to have permanently added Tyler Mills to the SEES staff as a college laboratory technician.

Faculty News/Research Briefs
Cecilia McHugh
Professor Cecilia McHugh will be continuing her lab’s research with the International Ocean Discovery Program in 2020 aboard Expedition 386. The goal of this program is to study the sediment from the seafloor to better understand the recurrence interval of mega earthquakes.

Gregory O’Mullan
In 2019, Professor O’Mullan conducted analyses of Department of Health bacterial water quality data at more than two hundred swimming beaches on Long Island Sound in support of a beach quality report.
Jeff Bird
Brian Brigham, a recent PhD graduate from Professor Bird’s biogeochemistry lab and O’Mullan’s microbiology lab, has recently published two peer-reviewed papers that have provided critically needed data on the impact of urban wastewater discharge on greenhouse gas emissions and how these emissions contribute to global climate change using the Hudson River Estuary as a case study. The CUNY Graduate Center recently published a spotlight on Brian’s dissertation research and his recent paper in *Limnology and Oceanography*.

https://www.gc.cuny.edu/About-the-GC/Provost-s-Office/The-Sciences/Spotlight/Contents/Alumni/Earth-and-Environmental-Sciences/Brian-Brigham


Dax Soule
In early 2020, Assistant Professor Dax Soule and six QC students will travel to the Bransfield Strait along the Antarctic Peninsula where they will help explore the structure of the back-arc basin found there and the volcanism related to its rifting of the underlying continental crust. During the trip, they will cross the infamous Drake Passage, spend time in the Bransfield Strait, and make shore visits to both seismic installations and Spanish, Chilean, and Argentine research installations before flying home via Punta Arenas, Chile in early March.

Marc-Antoine Longpré
Associate Professor Marc-Antoine Longpré authored a new book chapter for *Dynamic Magma Evolution*, which is a part of the Geophysical Monograph Series published by the American Geophysical Union.

Jacquelyn Bracco
Assistant Professor Bracco, four SEES undergraduate students, and one SEES MA student recently visited the Advanced Photon Source near Chicago, Illinois.