



## **GSA'S New Diversity Initiative**

### ***On To the Future***

#### **Announcement: The “*On to the Future*” Initiative**

The leadership of GSA hopes to bring 125 students from underrepresented groups to the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual meeting in Denver in 2013. The central effort of the “*On To the Future*” Initiative will be *GRASS ROOTS*. We ask individual GSA Members to identify and to support *On To the Future* students. Each *On To the Future* student will receive recognition, meeting registration, and support for travel, food, and lodging expenses.

#### **The Transformative Impact of GSA Meetings**

Many GSA members describe their first GSA meeting as a pivotal point in their professional development. It is a moment when students gain insight into the array of geoscience research and career options. In 2013, GSA will be adding new programs to facilitate effective mentoring relationships and networking opportunities for underrepresented students. These personal connections accelerate the process of becoming an engaged and involved member of a scientific and professional community, and are a catalyst in transforming students into professionals.

#### **Component 1: Funding the Program**

The GSA Foundation has launched an accelerated effort to raise \$50,000 in new funds to 1) cover GSA registration for 125 students, 2) support on-site *On To the Future* meeting activities, and 3) to create a pool of funds to help support student travel expenses for those students unable to obtain full local support. Because time is limited, it is essential that the majority of this funding come from GSA members who understand the importance of diversifying GSA's membership. Geoff Feiss, GSA Foundation President ([gfeiss@geosociety.org](mailto:gfeiss@geosociety.org) or 303-357-1011) and Chris Tallackson, Director of Development ([ctallackson@geosociety.org](mailto:ctallackson@geosociety.org) or 303-357-1007) are ‘*on point*’ for support from members. Debbie Marcinkowski ([dmarcinkowski@geosociety.org](mailto:dmarcinkowski@geosociety.org) or 303-357-1047) can assist with corporate partnerships in this effort. Please contact them about giving to the GSA Foundation to support the *On To the Future* Initiative.

#### **Component 2: *Grass Roots* Recruiting and Support of Students**

We ask GSA members to identify and support individual students they know and invite them to

participate in the ***On To the Future*** initiative. We envision the ***On To the Future*** cohort to be composed of community college students, college and university undergraduate students, and graduate students from underrepresented groups who have never attended an Annual Meeting. They need not be presenting their research. *Even if you are not planning to attend the Denver meeting, please consider becoming an ***On To the Future*** supporter.* We anticipate that in many cases a GSA ***On To the Future*** supporter will:

1. Nominate an ***On To the Future*** student
2. Seek local financial or in-kind support from individuals or their home institutions for that ***On To the Future*** student's travel to the meeting
3. Try to provide some level of travel/lodging support to your ***On To the Future*** student
4. Serve, if attending the 2013 Annual Meeting as that student's mentor/guide at the meeting (or, if you cannot attend, you might identify an attendee who is willing to serve in that capacity)

For example, GSA President George Davis has identified a University of Arizona undergraduate geosciences major and has committed travel and food/lodging support for him for the Denver meeting. George will be urging his department head and other university offices to help as well, through direct or in-kind funding, so that perhaps he and his colleagues can support other potential ***On To the Future*** students in their department. We anticipate that many GSA members can do the same at their own institutions. Of course the level of support needed for a given student will range widely depending on proximity to Denver.

Students thus nominated and agreeing to be a part of this program should apply on-line to GSA with a letter of interest, a short bio, a travel budget, and a letter of support from his/her GSA member/mentor. GSA's point person for this initiative is Divya Puri, Human Resources Manager ([dpuri@geosociety.org](mailto:dpuri@geosociety.org)).

### **What's At Stake?**

The Geological Society of America has adopted membership diversity as a critical strategic priority for achieving the Society's mission of advancing the geosciences. Student membership is the fastest growing segment of our Society, increasing 21 percent since 2008 to 7,600. Students now comprise almost one in three GSA members. However, the diversity of our membership and our profession does not reflect the increasingly globalized society we serve (American Geosciences Institute, 2011). Initiating a sustained outreach effort to engage students from underrepresented groups in our meetings will diversify our profession in meaningful ways.

### **Join Us:**

***PLEASE JOIN ***On To the Future***!*** Visit the official [On to the Future website](http://community.geosociety.org/otf) to learn more and have your questions answered. (<http://community.geosociety.org/otf>)

American Geosciences Institute, "The Status of the Geosciences Workforce, 2011" Gonzales, Leila; Keane, Christopher; <http://www.agiweb.org/workforce/reports/StatusoftheWorkforce2011overview.pdf>