

Why Geology?



Mt. Rushmore ain't got nothin' on Mt. Rutherford. Photo illustration by Liam Skoyles.



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It's not just about the rocks; the study of geology is incredibly diverse. It is a multidisciplinary science that melds chemistry, physics, biology, and mathematics into an encompassing field that studies everything from ancient life to modern catastrophes. It is a science for the scientist who could never pick what they liked the most. It is a science for those who appreciate the beauty and knowledge that can be glimpsed from the earth.

Just over a year ago I found myself wondering what I was going to do with my life. As one of a million pre-med majors at UTD cramming for my organic chemistry midterm, I felt lost and a little under-appreciated. The next semester I enrolled in physical geology on a whim

with Dr. Rutherford (The man for which Rutherford Rd., the Rutherford Ice Stream, and Mt. Rutherford are all named for). I fell

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in love with the material and his stories, and it has been bliss ever since. At long

last I had finally discovered a science that covered all of my interests, and one that wouldn't lock me away in a lab or office everyday.

A colleague of mine, Brian Burnham described geology by saying “The Mountains are our classroom”. I couldn't agree with him more, as I found myself climbing the Guadalupe Mts. of New Mexico over spring break in order to produce three dimensional models of a canyon, we used cutting edge laser and photogrammetry based techniques.

All the classes I had taken over the past year had taught me how to observe minute details that to the untrained eye would be overlooked. I noticed during this trip that I was identifying fossils, analyzing structural patterns, and determining complex relationships in the field. It was a moment of epiphany in which the world, my education, and future all began to click together.

The geologists at UTD tend to be a close knit group, with a core of dedicated students and engaging professors. Geology at UTD may be a small

department, but it is a great one that has been a part of the university since its foundation. Alumni of the department of geosciences have walked on all seven continents and have even traveled to space; for a geoscience major, not even the sky is the limit.

Geology is the study of our Earth in all its complexity and detail, but being a geologist is more than that. It is learning about our past from the rock record and determining our future from past events. It is about going camping with close friends, and living stories that we would love to tell our grandchildren someday. Geology is about leaving the four walls and a desk behind, and doing our work in the mountains, underwater in the Marianas Trench, or even hundreds of miles above the earth orbiting in space. It is about adventure, camaraderie, and the never ending quest for knowledge and stuff. ■

Alex rocks. Everyday. He wants to know why you don't. Discuss this article at amp.utdallas.edu!