Even though we can’t celebrate Geoscience Day together this year, it is still important to us that we recognize the hard work our students put in this year. Many students conducted exciting research projects, classes went on field trips, students studied abroad in the Bahamas and so much more. Please enjoy the following Geoscience Day book, which includes photos from the year and recognizes our graduating students, both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as the winners of our awards for 2020. Stay safe and well and we hope to celebrate everyone in person for Geoscience Day 2021!
On behalf of the whole department I want to congratulate you on your success and wish you the best in the future. Once an alumnus, always an alumnus. You will never forget these past four years, and we will never forget you.

Alas, I didn't have the good fortune to know all of you well. On the long list, I will remember Jacob, Matt, Jackie, and Kevin as members of engaged classes I taught, especially their antics on field trips. On the short list, I will remember Sam and Richard as advisees. And on the shortest list of all, I'll remember Richard as an accomplished mapper of stone walls.

We hope you will stay in touch. By summer's end we will have a new website with a special section for alumni.

Wishing you the best:
Thor
Farewell to 2019-2020 Graduate Students From their Advisors

Michael Chojnacki, M.S.
BS, Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania, 2017

Mike arrived at UConn in the fall of 2017 from Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania ready to dive into the geology of Taiwan and that's exactly what we did. In January we headed west for our first field season and it certainly turned out to be an adventure as the field work required “river canyoning” or “river trekking” which basically means hiking up and down rivers. Although this sounds straightforward, and perhaps a little romantic, the rivers in Taiwan are fast and notoriously unpredictable, making trekking extremely dangerous, and we were also planning on collecting geologic data and samples. This was Mike's first trip to Asia and his first river trek and I was impressed with Mike's success. In addition to the challenges of walking up and down the river with ropes and guides, it rained nearly every night and about half the time during the days; yet, Mike’s enthusiasm never wavered. He collected careful notes while cold, wet and shivering, collected carefully oriented samples and came up with ideas for future research and sampling techniques, including the idea of using a modified chainsaw to drill the rocks rather than a hammer and chisel. We will certainly miss Mike and look forward to hearing about his future travels and science adventures.

Jennifer Cooper Boemmels, Ph.D.
Jen began full-time studies for her Ph.D. in January 2017 and will be graduating this August. During her time at the University of Connecticut, she taught GSCI 1050/1051, served as a TA and as head TA for GSCI 1050, served as a TA for GSCI 3030, and helped out in innumerable ways with the field trips for GSCI 4390. Jen’s research for her Ph.D. has focused on improving understanding of the Early Cretaceous intrusive rocks in northern New England, a topic that would allow her to combine her interests in structure/tectonics and petrology/geochemistry. As data from EarthScope’s USArray were collected and analyzed, interest in the postrift development of the eastern North American margin has increased, and Jen’s project has taken on broader significance. Jen has conducted several field campaigns, acquiring samples for geochronological and geochemical analysis and fault-slip and related data for structural analysis. Her results have put the nail in the coffin of a longstanding and popular interpretation for the origin of the intrusions, and they are providing multifaceted support for and new observations of the expression of edge-driven convection at passive margins. Through her research, Jen has developed collaborations with faculty at the University of Vermont and Middlebury College and has benefited from the establishment of the Basin Analysis & Helium Thermochronology Laboratory here at UConn. Her research has been supported by grants she has received from the Geological Society of America, the Vermont Geological Society, and the Burlington Gem and Mineral Club. Jen will begin a tenure-track position as an assistant professor of structural geology in the Department of Earth Science at Southern Connecticut State University this fall. Jen’s enthusiasm for all things geology will be greatly missed.
Rebecca VanderLeest, Ph.D.

Rebecca graduated from the University of Connecticut with a B.S. in Geosciences in 2013. Driven by a natural curiosity to understand and explore the Earth, she earned a M.S. degree from Penn State University in 2015 for her research on the North Canterbury fold-and-thrust belt in New Zealand. In 2016, Rebecca was drawn back to UConn Geosciences by the allure of geologic fieldwork in the Patagonian Andes and unabashed Husky pride. At UConn, her PhD research bridges sedimentary geology, tectonics, and geochemistry of the Magallanes-Austral foreland basin to resolve important changes in the magmatic and tectonic history of the southern Patagonian Andes. Rebecca’s work using detrital geochronology and geochemistry has identified an unrecognized phase of mafic arc magmatism in Patagonia. Additionally, her basin subsidence modeling and thermochronology research lend new understandings into how the South American lithosphere responded to changes in deformation and uplift of the Andes. While at UConn, Rebecca received graduate student research grants from the Geological Society of America, Society for Sedimentary Geology, and the American Association of Petroleum Geologists. She was also recognized by the Provost for excellence in teaching, and was a semi-finalist for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program in 2018. As a faithful Husky, Rebecca has been sited around campus playing clarinet with the UConn concert band and inspiring the next generation of geoscientists as T-Rex at Geoscience Day. Rebecca has accepted a Visiting Assistant Professor position at Oberlin College, starting July 2020. Good luck, Becca – we will miss you!!!
Congratulations to our 2019-2020 B.S./B.A. Graduates!

Spring 2020

Julia Danielson
Nicholas DeSisto
Jacob Frishberg
Matthew Fryer
Conor Hans
Christopher Juliano
Samuel Kelley
Jacqueline Kloos
Richard Manandhar
Christopher Mason
Shannon Motley
Abigail Oplinger
Kevin Sheehan
2019-2020 Awards Winners

The Lucke Award – Outstanding Graduating Senior
Samuel Kelley

Undergraduate Research Award
Matthew Fryer

Nalwalk Award
Rebecca VanderLeest

Graduate Student Research Award
Michael Chojnacki

Graduate Student Teaching Award
Dawn Beamer

Graduate Student Service Award
Sarah Brisson
Elena Robakiewicz

Congratulations!