COUNCIL FOR SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY PRESIDENTS

Recently the Geochemical Society (GS) began to participate in the Council for Scientific Society Presidents (CSSP, Executive Director Marty Apple, Washington DC) on a trial basis. The CSSP (www.cssp.us) is an organization of presidents, presidents-elect, and recent past presidents of about sixty scientific federations and societies whose combined membership numbers well over 1.4 million scientists and educators in the USA. The aim of the CSSP is to provide a strong support to science and science education. Members of the Council currently include the Geological Society of America and the American Chemical Society, among many others.

The GS joined this group in order to learn about issues related to outreach and public advocacy of science. As a relatively small society, the GS has not traditionally played a big outreach role. The board of the GS decided to find out more about these issues, and so we have been paying the expenses of the president or vice president to attend the CSSP meetings each year.

Past President Tim Drevner attended the CSSP meeting in Washington DC in December 2006. I attended the May 2006 and December 2007 meetings. The meetings are unlike any I have ever attended! In addition to a series of talks by speakers hand-picked by the executive director, we also interacted with elected government officials, congressional staffers, directors of institutions such as the National Science Foundation, and pre-eminent scientists and educators.

I find the meetings intellectually stimulating: it has been especially interesting to learn how science is perceived by non-scientists in the US government who are making decisions that affect students and faculty. I have also used the CSSP as a way to discuss GS problems with other society presidents. I have received advice about audits (we are currently auditing our tax-exempt status), and the GS has not traditionally played a big outreach role. The board of the GS aims to find ways to increase our outreach and public advocacy of science. As a relatively small society, the GS will help us to expand our reach and public advocacy of science. As a relatively small society, the GS has not traditionally played a big outreach role.

Although the CSSP is idiosyncratic, I recommend that the society maintain its membership. I do not believe that our membership in the CSSP will only help US members of the GS. Membership in the CSSP will help us to expand our ideas about what the GS can or should do as a major scientific society in a rapidly changing world.

Susan L. Brantley
President, Geochemical Society

Environmental scientist Gene Likens and Representative Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY, now retired), discuss environment policy and baseball at a CSSP meeting in Washington during Boehlert’s tenure as the chair of the House of Representatives Science Committee.