The Geochemical Society is a nonprofit scientific society founded to encourage the application of chemistry to the solution of geological and cosmological problems.

Our founders produced this statement at a time when there was dramatically less scientific understanding of the Earth and its place in the universe than there is today. A number of things have changed to expand our cultural and scientific perspectives since that early vision of geochemistry. The iconic view, returned from Apollo 8, of “earthrise” over the moon was certainly a cultural benchmark. That image put the place of our planet in the cosmos into a different and more humbling perspective for both scientist and nonscientist alike. Over the intervening years, the entire Earth science enterprise has become increasingly sophisticated. We now have tools capable of characterizing natural processes ranging in scale from microscopic and even molecular to planetary. We have space probes sending back data on our solar system and instrumentation giving us insights into the origin of the universe. With this expanded understanding has come increased appreciation of the complexity of the natural processes we are studying. Steffen et al. (2005) put it this way: “The earth behaves as a system in which oceans, atmosphere and land, and the living and non-living parts therein, are all connected.” Or, as John Muir, one of America’s leading early conservationists, said, “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.” Given the remarkable transformation of the field of geochemistry, it is evident that we are doing far more than applying “chemistry to the solution of geological and cosmological problems.” Instead, geochemists are key players in some truly challenging issues facing humanity, issues that are driven by our exploding population numbers, technological advances, and the resulting impact on the planet. So, we perhaps need to rethink our mission (and mission statement) to reflect these new realities and adopt a vision that embraces an expanded role for the Society.

Recognizing these realities, the Society has been working to foster the science of geochemistry and continue to provide value to members. Our most important activity is publishing the benchmark journal in the field, Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta. Through the prodigious efforts of the editor, Frank Podosek, this journal continues its steady increase in importance and impact. The Society’s second major activity, conducted in close collaboration with our partner, the European Association for Geochemistry, is the Goldschmidt Conference. This conference is the premier international forum for communication of geochemical research. We have taken concrete steps to assure that the Goldschmidt Conference retains its status as the leading international geochemical meeting by contracting with a professional meeting-planning organization to handle operational details of North American meetings, thus allowing organizers to focus almost totally on the international scientific program. We have recently joined the American Geological Institute to add our voice to 45 other organizations on subjects of broad Earth science significance. Our financial affairs are now in the hands of professional financial planners. The goal is to be able to grow our funds for use in new initiatives, such as outreach to scientists from economically disadvantaged countries. Currently, we are investigating the possibility of webcasting portions of the Knoxville Goldschmidt Conference to Africa. We are also committed to increasing the diversity of our awardees and officers and engaging the young scientists entering the field.

Our existing strengths and expanding directions represent an evolution that is a continuation of the efforts of several extremely talented and energetic past presidents. I would personally like to thank Judy McKenzie, Tim Drever, and especially Sue Brantley for serving as my mentors, and I profoundly thank our many volunteer officers and committee members who make the operation of the Society possible. Last, I wish Sam Mukasa well as he assumes the leadership of the Geochemical Society. He brings a vision and perspective to the helm that will serve us well. See you all at the Knoxville Goldschmidt.

Marty Goldhaber, GS President 2007–2009

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