

Report on the Mid-Year Meeting of the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies (GCAGS)

Board of Directors, 1 April 2017

Hilton Americas, Houston, Texas

Submitted by Jon Bryan, Vice-President of the
Southeastern Geological Society (SEGS)

The GCAGS Mid-Year Board of Directors meeting on 1 April 2017 in Houston, Texas, was educational, productive, and forward looking. Under the able and energetic leadership of President Tom Ewing (Frontera Exploration Consultants, San Antonio), GCAGS appears to be entering an exciting future, with a renewed interest on not only the traditional, petroleum-rich areas of the Gulf Coast (viz., Texas and Louisiana), but the entire Gulf of Mexico Basin, including Mexico and the Florida Platform. Among the GCAGS member societies, there was a genuine interest in the Florida-based SEGS, and a desire to see more communication, interaction, and participation of SEGS in the GCAGS annual meeting. SEGS is a member society of GCAGS. So SEGS members are encouraged to take advantage of the resources and opportunities offered by our parent association, the GCAGS.

The meeting consisted of various GCAGS reports (2016 Convention, Treasurer & Finance Committee, Publications Committee, etc.); reports of the member societies present, with discussion (over a delicious catered luncheon); and an extensive consultation on the future of the GCAGS Annual Convention.

As your SEGS representative, I believe there were several agenda/discussion topics items that may be of special interest to SEGS members. In no particular order, they are:

(1) If possible, GCAGS would like to see some continuity in member society representatives at the Mid-Year meeting. That is, to have the same representative from each member society attend the meeting for at least 2 successive years. This representative need not be the president of the member society. This would indeed facilitate better communication and participation among member societies, and help coordinate Association-wide events.

(2) The GCAGS offers an Outstanding Educator (K-12) award, as well as student and faculty research grants. Application deadline for these nominations or proposals is February 15th. SEGS membership is encouraged to explore the GCAGS webpage for details on these awards, as well as publications, and other information (<http://www.gcags.org/>). (Note: GCAGS once had a matching grant program for member society student grants, but this has apparently been discontinued).

(3) The 67th 2017 GCAGS/GCSSEPM Annual Convention will be held on 1-3 November 2017, in San Antonio, Texas, and hosted by the South Texas Geological Society. The 68th Annual Convention of the GCAGS/GCSSEPM will be held 30 September to 3 October 2018, and hosted by the Shreveport Geological Society. Abstract submissions for the Shreveport meeting begin on 15 December 2017, and extend to 15 February 2018. More details will be posted at www.gcags2018.com.

While it seems unlikely that SEGS would host a GCAGS Annual Convention anytime soon, the leadership of the GCAGS indicated that GCAGS would support an SEGS-sponsored research or field conference should we decide to put on such an event in Florida. They also made it clear that although GCAGS has historically focused on oil and gas, they are completely open to environmental and groundwater research, and the full range of geosciences, and hope that such contributions will increase at the convention and in GCAGS publications. The *GCAGS Journal* for example, has many articles on groundwater, karst, and Gulf Coast stratigraphy that are entirely relevant to Florida geology.

(4) After listening to the various member society reports, it occurred to me how our sister societies differ from SEGS. Most are more narrowly regional than SEGS (e.g., South Texas, Austin, Houston, Shreveport, New Orleans geological societies), have regular social and fund-raising events, and certainly take *fewer* fieldtrips than SEGS. Some member societies have an *annual* field trip, and perhaps a core workshop. Some have monthly meetings, emphasize public service (e.g., working with K-12 students, Boy and Girl Scouts, etc.), and are active at the GCAGS Annual Convention. SEGS clearly emphasizes field trips, routinely offering as many as 4 trips per year, with very few other events. A couple of member society reps asked how we managed to organize and run our field trips. I believe that SEGS should stay the course we are on, and conservatively add activities and special events as we judge necessary and useful. Our student grant program, for example, is an outstanding addition. Perhaps we could coordinate resources for K-12 events, which many of us regularly do in our hometowns. A future core workshop or other training program would be welcome. There are many possibilities. We should not promise the Moon because we are all very busy. But we all desire to see our society advance and improve, and recruit future geologists!

(5) Several GCAGS member societies sell their publications in the GCAGS Bookstore, which is centered in the Texas Bureau of Economic Geology Bookstore in Austin. Given the number of SEGS field guides, perhaps we might consider offering our publications here as well. This would certainly increase our exposure and generate more interest in our work.

(6) There was much discussion on the future of the GCAGS Annual Convention, and a desire for some “rebranding” and change in emphasis. This may have resulted from a continued, downward decline in GCAGS meeting attendance (which, however, is cyclical over many years). This appears to be directly related to the precipitous drop in the price of oil in recent years, fewer independent oil companies, less travel money, rising hotel and convention costs, and other factors (the same concerns were expressed at the AAPG House of Delegates meeting the next day). There was a clear realization that “business as usual” may have to change. But there was genuine interest and optimism to equip GCAGS for the future. This historical geological association has no intention of fading into the sunset.

The major topic of discussion in this regard was the desire to re-organize/re-purpose the GCAGS Annual Convention, with a more inclusive emphasis. Rather than the usual concentration on petroleum-related geology, include a full range of Gulf of Mexico geoscientists—onshore and offshore, environmental, hydrogeology and karst, engineering, coastal studies, etc. So the emphasis would be all geosciences within the Gulf of Mexico Basin. This would hopefully encourage more interest and participation in the GCAGS meeting. This was an exciting discussion, and I hope we can get more Florida geologists involved. There was complete agreement among member societies, but it was decided that this plan needed additional work, and could not realistically be “rolled out” until the 2019 meeting (2017 is set, and 2018 is already being planned). The re-branding would most likely include a new name for the convention, such as ***GeoGulf 2019***.