

# Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences

For students interested in studying the world beneath their feet or other worlds farther away, the Department of Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences provides the tools for understanding the processes that shape our planet and other bodies within the solar system.

Understanding the Earth system is also the key to addressing many environmental challenges, including climate change, water supply and energy issues. Earth, environmental, and planetary scientists are uniquely poised to help solve some of society's most pressing problems. Because planets are complex systems, Earth, environmental, and planetary sciences is, by necessity, an interdisciplinary field. It applies biology, chemistry, physics and math to the investigation of topics such as early life on Earth, the structure of the Earth's deep interior, the nature of contaminant transport, and the surfaces of other planetary bodies.

For students who have developed a passion for the basic sciences and who are looking for a way to study these sciences outside of traditional disciplinary boundaries, Earth, environmental, and planetary sciences is an ideal choice of major. The department offers majors and minors in Earth Science, Environmental Science, and Planetary Science. All programs offer a range of customization that allows students to focus on topics with the greatest relevance to their academic interests and career plans.

All students have the opportunity to participate in faculty research programs; however, this participation is not required. Many of our students take advantage of these varied research opportunities, which provide them with valuable experience for future employment or for graduate school. Each year, several scientific papers and abstracts are co-authored by undergraduate students, and undergraduate students have presented papers at many national science meetings.

## Department Policies for Majors and Minors

**Minimum grade performance:** A grade of C- is the minimum acceptable performance for each unit of credit for each required course, including those in mathematics, chemistry and physics. Courses with grades of D may fulfill the College's 120 total units requirement, but they do not meet the departmental requirements. A grade of C- is also the minimum acceptable performance for each unit of credit for any course required as a prerequisite to enrolling in advanced or sequential courses.

**Transfer credits and the School of Continuing & Professional Studies:** Course work completed at another college or university must have prior approval of the department to be used to fulfill major requirements. Courses taken at the School of Continuing & Professional

Studies normally may not be substituted for courses required for an Earth, environmental, and planetary sciences major. Written consent from the director of undergraduate studies is required for any such substitutions to apply and must be sought before the course is taken.

**Graduate-level courses:** All Earth, environmental, and planetary sciences graduate courses (i.e., courses numbered 500 and above) are open to advanced undergraduates with permission of the specific course instructor.