Hi there!

The Dean of Admissions told me that you are interested in studying geology at Carleton. I am writing to tell you about the Geology Department and to encourage you to contact me if you have any questions.

Geology is a great subject to study because it allows you receive a broad liberal arts education that integrates all the sciences. In geology classes at Carleton, we explore not only basic questions in the geosciences, but also interdisciplinary issues such as climate change, geologic hazards, and resource availability.

An open, informal, and supportive atmosphere of learning and teaching is important to students and faculty in the Carleton Geology Department. We maintain this atmosphere by taking extended field trips twice a year, doing student-faculty research, and encouraging group projects in our classes.

The Carleton Geology Department also emphasizes an active, hands-on approach to learning, spending as much time in the field as possible actually doing geology rather than simply reading about it. In addition to field trips associated with most of our classes and the departmental field trips to different parts of the country, we offer a full-term (10 week) off-campus field program in New Zealand every other winter.

All of the faculty are actively involved in their professional lives. Clint Cowan works on understanding ancient and modern coral reef systems and their implications for deciphering the past history of climate and life. Cam Davidson uses geochronology to better understand the geologic history of Southern Alaska. Bereket Haileab has worked on the tephrostratigraphy of the Turkana Basin in Africa where he uses volcanic ashes to date the early evolution of hominids. Mary Savina studies the surficial and archeological geology of Greece and the Northfield area. Sarah Titus studies how rocks deform in fault systems, such as the San Andreas fault in California, and Dan Maxbauer uses a variety of tools to study past climates recorded in ancient soils in the western U.S. and in lake cores from Montana to Minnesota.

All of us think that working with active geologists is the best way to learn geology. Each year many students participate in research with Carleton faculty, alumni and friends of the Geology Department, or through the Research Experience for Undergraduates program sponsored by the National Science Foundation. We also belong to the Keck Geology Consortium, a national consortium of well-regarded undergraduate geology departments that sponsor student research projects all over the world. There are abundant opportunities to participate in geologic research at Carleton.
The requirements for a geology major include seven courses in geology plus courses in mathematics, physics and chemistry. Every senior completes a substantial independent-study project for their Integrative Exercise or “Comps”. Most graduates continue their formal education beyond Carleton, and the majority stay in geology or some related field such as land-use planning, mineral and energy policy, environmental law, or academia.

At Carleton, we have an outstanding record of educating geologists, and we graduate 20-25 geology majors every year, making us one of the largest departments at a small liberal arts college in the country. If you plan to visit campus, I would be pleased to arrange a personal tour of the Department. In addition, our majors would be happy to write or meet with you. Please let me know if you would like to visit or correspond with geology majors. We also invite you to visit our web page: https://www.carleton.edu/geology/.

Good luck choosing the right college. I know this is an important decision.

Sincerely,

Cameron Davidson
Professor and Chair of Geology