

# Lock Haven University

## Official Release

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Science students receive awards at LHU convocation  
Distinguished speaker explains how geology reveals earth's history

Lock Haven University held its 51st Annual Science Convocation in Ulmer Planetarium on Friday, October 28. Students received awards for academic achievement in biological sciences, chemistry, geology, physics, and nanotechnology. Twenty-eight students received new or continuing nanotechnology scholarships funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The tradition began in 1961 when the departments of biological sciences, chemistry and geology and physics met for the inaugural Annual Science Majors Mixer. In 1971, the name of this annual event was changed to the Science Convocation and it grew to recognize both student and faculty achievement and to celebrate the rapport among faculty and students.

“The Annual Lock Haven University Science Convocation is a wonderful opportunity to spotlight science each fall by recognizing our students’ successes and celebrating their accomplishments with their families,” said Dr. Loretta Dickson, chair of the Science Convocation Committee. “This year’s talk showed how the study of geology can have wide-reaching applications. The speaker also showed how geology can open up opportunities for international travel and study.”

The keynote speaker for this year’s convocation was Dr. Allen M. Gontz, associate professor and undergraduate program director with the Department of Environmental, Earth and Ocean Sciences at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. Dr. Gontz is an alumnus of Lock Haven University where he completed a Bachelor of Science in Applied Geology and a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Biology, Concentration in Ecology in 1999.

Dr. Gontz’s talk was entitled “A Geologist’s View of the Earth’s History – One Grain at a Time.” Explaining that geology is “a history of place,” Dr. Gontz described how analyzing sand particles can enable geologists to “work backward” to discover how coastlines have changed – information which can be used to identify early human settlement patterns, to locate and identify shipwrecks, and to determine the rates of

evolution of language and cultures.

Dr. Gontz's research has taken him to Iceland, Antarctica and the depths of the North Atlantic. He will spend his upcoming sabbatical doing research in Morton Bay on the east coast of Australia. "It's all an adventure," he said about his career as a geologist. Addressing the students in the room he added, "And the adventure for you starts right here, where it started for me."

"The record of the earth is all there, under our feet," Dr. Gontz said. "You just need to know how to read the story, how to speak the language." He noted that it's common for people to say, "Nothing is written in stone." "Obviously," he said, "they're not geologists."

The Science Convocation was chaired by Dr. Dickson and arranged by the departments of biological sciences, chemistry, and geology and physics.



*Left photo: Dr. Allen M. Gontz explained that the surface of the earth is "a huge textbook" that geologists can read to unlock earth's history. LHU's 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Science Convocation recognized student achievements in biological sciences, chemistry, geology, physics, and nanotechnology. Award and scholarship recipients gathered for a group photo following the ceremony.*

Lock Haven University is a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), the largest provider of higher education in the commonwealth. Its 14 universities offer more than 250 degree and certificate programs in more than 120 areas of study. Nearly 405,000 system alumni live and work in Pennsylvania.

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