

University of California, Los Angeles

By: Jerry Chen, President UCLA CalGeo Student Chapter

My name is Jerry Chen. I am currently a third year Civil Engineering student at the University of California, Los Angeles. Over the past eight months, I have had the privilege of serving as the president of the UCLA California Geotechnical Engineering Association Student Chapter. During my involvement with the CalGeo Student Chapter, I have witnessed it shape the college experience of our members through projects, field trips, info-sessions, and social networking events. I am, therefore, excited about this opportunity to share with you our story, of what is it that we do, and what lies in store for the future of the student chapter here at UCLA.

The CalGeo student chapter aims to provide students with the well-rounded, practical experience that they need to become more impactful members of the geotechnical engineering community. This increase in exposure offers industrial and practical contexts for the students in class academic coursework. Every quarter, we therefore aim to host at least two speaker and field trip events. These events traditionally cover a wide variety of different topics to provide students a much broader context. Field trips this year, for example, ranged from tie-back construction to mud rotary drilling. On the other hand, on top of the usual info-session events that we host regularly, we also had a speaker come in and talk about the damage caused by the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake in Japan. These kinds of exposures provide students with not just the contexts of their in class coursework and the professional connections needed after graduation, but also foster a sense of excitement and responsibility for geotechnical engineering through exposure to the potential real life issues.

Our second goal this year is to generate exposure to the general student body here at UCLA. Despite how critical of a field geotechnical engineering is, it remains as one of the least known and understood ones. As a personal anecdote, it was not until I discovered CalGeo halfway through my first year here at UCLA that I learned about, and became excited by, geotechnical engineering. To provide similar exposure to a wider audience of students, CalGeo at UCLA this year has been hosting social events to attract new members. In Fall Quarter, for example, the Annual Fall Barbecue was a huge success resulting in the turnout of over 80 students. We also collaborated in hosting social, community service and mentorship events with other civil engineering clubs on campus to further increase exposure. These have had a tremendous impact on the membership state of our chapter, with the turnout at info-sessions having almost doubled since last year. Students are coming to understand the importance of geotechnical engineering as well as the benefits of being a member of the student chapter here.

I am thrilled by the direction that we, as a student chapter, are heading in. As we further strengthen our publicity campaign and increase the quality of the events we host, I truly believe that this surge in interest in our club will be part of a steady long term trend. The service we deliver is unique; no other club on campus provides the quantity and quality of events like we do for the field of geotechnical engineering. Going into my last quarter as president of this student chapter, I look forward to the changes and progress that we will make in the upcoming years.