

GEOFORCE MONTHLY

Changing lives since 2005



Richard Kilburn instructing the Houston 9th grade cohort this past summer

SUMMER STAFF HIGHLIGHT: RICHARD KILBURN

"You cannot dream of becoming something you do not know about. You have to learn to dream big. Education exposes you to what the world has to offer, to the possibilities open to you." —Sonia Sotomayor

The overall mission of GeoFORCE Texas is to inspire the next generation of leadership in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. We aim high, carefully piecing together incredible field experiences and supporting programs, then meticulously working to plan logistics year after year. We select the very best Texas students and execute a similar process to identify like-minded staff across the country to support their learning and exploration. With an impressive resume, glowing recommendations, and a hearty testimony for supporting the development and curiosity of youth, there was no question that Richard Kilburn would be a phenomenal GeoFORCE instructor.

Last summer he instructed for the GeoFORCE Houston 9th Grade academy. It was his first-time teaching in an academic setting, but far from his first time working with students. For five years, Richard cheered and coached for the National Cheer Team of Jamaica. He credits his coaching experience for his ability to instruct and explain concepts.

"Teaching academically surprisingly wasn't that different. You need structure, a flow, energy, and of course knowledge of the subject matter. Those translatable skills essentially made instructing my first academy pretty seamless."

Kilburn found teaching the GeoFORCE students incredibly rewarding. He mentions that at a younger age he wanted to be a teacher and within his years of coaching, found a passion for instructing.

As an instructor for the GeoFORCE Texas academies, Kilburn is proud to be a role model for students of color who may not otherwise have someone to look up to. Fortunately, he experienced instruction and classroom leadership by Black educators in Jamaica, so he had role models that looked like him.

"Having them made me know that I could do it and that I could be successful! Unfortunately, there isn't much representation of Black folks in the geosciences; it's disproportionately populated by White scientists. Even in Jamaica, I had several White professors. Here at Scripps, I have had White professors for the majority."

Make sure you don't miss out on any of the events going on next summer, internship opportunities, or school year events!

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 geoforce@jsg.utexas.edu



Members of the STRPL Lab L-R:
Carlene Burton, Richard Kilburn, Dr. Vashan Wright, Jhardel Dasent

Kilburn is an international student originally from Kingston, Jamaica and his journey through geoscience is one of passion and persistence. He became interested in geosciences in high school.

“My best friend at the time got the highest score on our first semester exams and was gifted a book by the teacher. I really liked the geography subject and wanted a book too, but was told I had to make the highest in the class to be awarded one. I studied hard and got the highest! Funny enough, the book is called California Earth Science and now I’m doing a Ph.D. in Earth Science at the University of California.”

After high school, Kilburn attended The University of the West Indies, Mona where he obtained a Bachelor of Science in Geology. Post-graduation, he began working for a mineral exploration company, but left his job when he decided to pursue his Ph.D.

Studying in the United States was always something Kilburn wanted to do. He was often encouraged to apply abroad and felt that it would be a fulfilling experience that would increase his opportunities of becoming successful. He

previously applied to university in the US but cost and timing factors prevented him from pursuing his dream, but he never gave up. Kilburn’s determination paid off when he applied for his Ph.D., which he was accepted into with full funding, removing any previous cost barrier.

“I actually only applied to one school,” Kilburn said. “It was completely different from applying to schools in Jamaica. It was a difficult process applying to attend a school state-side; the applicant must take great care to attend to every single part of the application process.”

Kilburn is currently working on a Ph.D. in Geophysics at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, California and although his classroom populations resemble that of most other learning spaces in American higher education, his experience at has been unique. He is part of the [Scripps Tectonorockphysics Lab](#) (STRPL for short) led by [Dr. Vashan Wright](#). Everyone in the lab is not only Black, but also Caribbean.

“It’s really awesome! It’s comforting to have a space where I can be my full self and relate to others in my language and typical expressions and not have to code switch.”

Dr. Wright, along with his lab and collaborators from other universities, created an NSF-funded project called [URGE](#). URGE, standing for Unlearning Racism in Geoscience, teaches Geoscientists how to develop policies that improve accessibility, justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion. [Dr. Rowan Martindale](#) led the University of Texas Jackson School of Geosciences’ participation in URGE, creating a “megapod” of faculty and staff who read, listened, and worked with each other to unlearn the systemic normalities of racism in geoscience, academia, and our country.

“The URGE program differs from many as it’s not just a “journal club”, but each pod develops deliverables ranging from compiling information about the equity (or lack thereof), policies, and resources at a Pod’s home institution to drafting new codes of conduct or hiring practices at the institution.” wrote Dr. Martindale. “Although our department is still just in the early stages of discussion and structural reform (as most are), The URGE program has provided the catalyst, staining, and roadmap for making these improvements. If URGE has fostered the same changes in even a tenth of the Pods, we will see a significant transformation of Geoscience education and Geoscientists. Vashan’s URGE program is truly revolutionary!”

Kilburn enjoys being involved in projects that make a difference, which is one of the reasons he decided to continue his participation in the GeoFORCE program. Kilburn will be returning to instruct the Austin 9th grade this summer and has high expectations that this summer will be a great one! He encourages students to believe in themselves and follow their dreams.

“I’ve always held my dreams close to my heart and followed them with fullness and my best intentions. Being able to dream and also work to achieve these dreams are not only fulfilling but also highlight valuable qualities such as perseverance, passion, and grit. ”



[Apply to the AGU Bridge Program!](#)



Interested in graduate school?

The AGU Bridge Program offers access to a free common graduate school application shared with 45+ graduate geoscience departments across the U.S. Students from historically marginalized groups are encouraged to apply.

[Submit an application](#) by 15 March 2024.

IMPORTANT DATES

Here are a list of dates to keep in mind for **February** and **March**:

FEBRUARY						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

MARCH						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Future Students

Alumni

Current Students

Feb 15th Summer Registration Opens

Mar 15th Summer Registration Closes

Feb 16th JSG Student Research Symposium

Mar 15th AGU Bridge Application Closes

Feb 20th Roux Associates Pop-Up Career Fair

Mar 27th GeoFORCE Longhorn Social Event

Feb 21st GeoFORCE Longhorn Social Event

**LOOKING FOR AN INTERNSHIP THIS SUMMER?
CLICK [HERE](#) TO CHECK OUT OUR JOB BOARD!**

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