ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: 2024 GEOSCIENCE GRADUATES

As the academic year comes to a close, GeoFORCE Texas would like to applaud all our alumni who are graduating. The month of May brings about the end of a chapter for many, and an exciting change for those graduating from both high school and college.

Of those who answered our graduation survey, 41 alumni of GeoFORCE Texas are newly graduated college students, and 39% of those graduates earned a degree in STEM. This past weekend, UT Austin celebrated the graduating class of 2024 at its 141st commencement ceremony. Of the 7,630 bachelor’s degrees that were awarded, two of the Jackson School degree recipients were GeoFORCE alumni: James Sun and Juan Vasquez.

We had the opportunity to hear from these distinguished graduates about their experiences at the Jackson School of Geosciences and the role GeoFORCE played in getting them to where they are today. James Sun, who was part of the Houston cohort, said he did not know anything about geology, and certainly never considered majoring in the field upon high school graduation before the GeoFORCE Texas Program.

“I am thankful not only for GeoFORCE for introducing me to viewing the wonderful world through geology, but for being monumental in my college and professional development throughout my career at UT,” said Sun.

While at the Jackson School, Sun had the opportunity to work on two research projects.

“I am grateful for the wonderful experience working in Dr. Jim Gardner’s experimental petrology lab as well as working with the wonderful team at the Gulf Coast Carbon Center.”

He stated, “I will carry my sense of accomplishment and drive for learning with me to the University of Arizona next Fall where I will work on my Masters in Economic Geology. Thank you to all the friends and mentors from GeoFORCE that have supported me through this incredible journey. Hook ’em!”

Juan Vasquez, a Southwest cohort alumnus, also credits GeoFORCE for his introduction to the geosciences.

Make sure you don't miss out on any of the events going on this summer, internship opportunities, or school year events!
Vasquez plans to join the workforce as soon as possible and, ideally, return to pursue a graduate degree in a few years.

GeoFORCE Texas would also like to highlight the graduates who pursued a degree in a STEM-related field.

Matthew Young received a Bachelor of Science in Ocean Engineering from Texas A&M. Post-graduation, he will be working full-time for NAVSEA as an engineer.

Anne Katula received a Bachelor of Arts in Biological Science from Dartmouth College. She plans to attend the University of Miami, where she will pursue a Ph.D.

Braeden Cardenas received a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science from UT Austin. He plans on getting a Masters in Movement and Cognitive Rehabilitation.

Sierra Ybarra received a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Texas at Austin.

Ailani Sanchez received a Bachelor of Science in Cellular Biology from Shreiner University.

Kristol Perez Choz received an Associate of Science degree in Nursing from Lamar State College Port Arthur. She will be working full-time as a Registered Nurse at Baptist Hospital of Southeast Texas.

Andrew Castro received a Bachelor of Science in Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering Technology from Texas A&M.

Anyka Morquecho received a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and Policy from St. Edwards University. She plans to travel post-graduation, then return to apply for full-time employment in an environmental education field.

Keithan Lee received a Bachelor of Science in Medicinal Physics from the University of Michigan. He plans to attend medical school post-graduation.

Jackson Battle received a Bachelor of Science in Geosciences from Texas A&M. He is planning to be part of a Volunteer Program post-graduation.

Eric Taylor received a Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Texas Tech University. He will be working full-time as an Engineer in Colorado.

Sean Santellanes received a Ph.D. from the University of Oregon in Geophysics/Natural Hazards. He will continue with a postdoctoral position at the University of Oregon.

The GeoFORCE team wishes all our newly graduated alumni success as they transition into the next stages of their lives!
Here are a list of dates to keep in mind for **May** and **June**: 

### MAY

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**Alumni**

- **May 2nd** Educational Staff Training
- **May 11th** UT Austin Graduation!
- **May 22nd** Logistical Staff Training

**9th Grade**

- **June 1st–8th** Austin 9th Grade Academy
- **June 8th–15th** Southwest 10th Grade Academy
- **June 15th–22nd** Austin 10th Grade Academy
- **June 22nd–29th** Houston 10th Grade Academy
- **June 22nd–29th** Austin/Houston 11th Grade Academy

**10th Grade**

- **June 1st–8th** Southwest 10th Grade Academy
- **June 15th–22nd** Austin 10th Grade Academy
- **June 22nd–29th** Houston 10th Grade Academy

**11th Grade**

- **June 1st–8th** Austin 9th Grade Academy

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**STAY CONNECTED WITH GEOFORCE THIS SUMMER!**

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

- @geoforcetexas
- @GeoFORCE Texas Group
- @GeoFORCE Texas
- geoforce@jsg.utexas.edu