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Beicip-Franlab Partners With UM Engineering

Software gift unearths tremendous insights for research

MAY 28, 2015 BY KATIE MORRISON

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Sam Loree (third from left), CEO of Beicip, Inc. in Houston, Tx., is thanked by UM representatives for a recent gift of sophisticated software designed for geological research and oil and gas exploration. Also pictured, from left: Kevin Gardner, UM Foundation development director for Engineering; Louis Zachos, professor of Geology and Geological Engineering; Gregg Davidson, chair and professor of Geology and Geological Engineering; Alex Cheng, dean of the School of Engineering; Greg Easson, director of the Mississippi Mineral Resources Institute and professor of Geology and Geological Engineering.

University of Mississippi graduate students in geology and geological engineering will have a competitive edge in their research and future job potential, thanks to software gifts from an international oil and gas consultancy and software solutions provider.

Beicip-Franlab, a French company operating internationally with offices in Houston, Texas, has donated licenses, training and support for their *OpenFlow™ Suite*, a software platform which allows users to perform modeling and simulation exploration of geologic formations and reservoirs. The total value of the gift exceeds \$3 million.

Sam Loree, CEO and general manager of Beicip, Inc., connected with Greg Easson, UM professor of geology and geological engineering

and director of the Mississippi Mineral Resources Institute (MMRI), as Loree sought additional research to strengthen the company's model and analysis of oil and gas potential along the Gulf Coast. Thanks to UM alumnus Julius Ridgway of Ridgeland, Miss., a veteran of the oil and gas industry, UM and the MMRI house a wealth of donated geophysical oil and gas well logs, now known as the Ridgway Data Center.

Beicip-Franlab wanted access to the collection for their exploratory work on the Tuscaloosa Marie Shale (TMS), a boomerang-shaped geologic formation that spans southeastern Texas, south-central Louisiana and southwest Mississippi. A few conversations later, a partnership was born that would be part of a revolutionary collaboration among oil and gas entities that has the potential to vastly impact the state of Mississippi economically. Scientists estimate the TMS contains seven billion barrels of oil, but as the processes necessary to extract it are much more complicated than the technology available in the 1950s and 1960s when the data was first collected, new models are necessary to help optimize extraction.

At least six companies are involved in exploring the TMS for oil and gas potential, and while that is not unique, their cooperative spirit is.

"Many oil companies are hesitant to explore Tuscaloosa Marine Shale but others are excited," said Loree. "The companies that are participating have folks who are friends from their past, professional or academic days, and are talking with one another. It has been enlightening to sit in these table discussions because typically companies are, for the most part, very private. We've not experienced open collaboration and communication like this in the past."

As 70 percent of Beicip-Franlab's work is in consulting, partnerships are crucial.

"When I joined Beicip-Franlab, the company was at a turning point and Beicip, Inc. was being restructured in North America," Loree added. "Connections like this one with the University of Mississippi are a result of this reorganization and have helped us continue working with universities."

Loree also sees the donation as an investment toward the viability of the industry down the road.

"There aren't a lot of new people coming in to do this kind of research; that's another reason why we want to donate this software," said Loree. "We have a gap in qualified people to build these models. You can't find many 30-year-olds doing this work. Companies are hiring their retirees as contractors because they are so hard to replace."

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Campus Briefs

Students Learn 'Real Politics' in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve's

Forbes magazine's latest rankings of the 15 most valuable college majors include geology at No. 7 and petroleum engineering at No. 9, further pointing toward the lucrative and rewarding careers available for graduates in this field.

"I have always believed in donating software to universities," said Loree. "Departments of geology and engineering don't have the budget for software of this sophistication. And in the end, it helps our business strategy. If students already have training and know how to use it, the companies that hire them will value this experience and this can lead to additional business for Beicip."

Easson appreciates the ability to give students access to the most recent technology on the market.

"The Beicip-Franlab *OpenFlow™ Suite* provides our students with the latest and greatest tools for research," said Easson. "As graduate students in the Department of Geology and Geological Engineering gain experience with the software, they are able to answer more complex research questions and better understand the geology, burial history and petroleum occurrence of a basin. This improves the quality of their research and the student's ability to find employment in the highly competitive petroleum industry."

Current UM graduate student Chris Kunhardt from Baltimore, Md., is appreciative of how *OpenFlow™* will impact his thesis work.

"This software package is a game changer in that it will allow me to create three-dimensional models and visualizations to effectively look at how the Tuscaloosa Marine Shale was deposited and how it has changed over time for my thesis on the depositional environment, burial history and organic material preservation," said Kunhardt. "Through *OpenFlow™* I can efficiently utilize the vast library of well logs located in the Mississippi Mineral Resources Institute to achieve this goal."

And while the software donation will remain a value to the School of Engineering, it is the multi-layered effects of the gift that are also appreciated.

"Sam Loree and Beicip-Franlab have given our School of Engineering a gift like no other: access to some of the top modeling, simulation and analysis software in the world," said Alex Cheng, engineering school dean. "The value of this gift to our faculty and students is unmatched; it will aid in field research and allow our graduates to tell prospective employers of their experience with sophisticated industry tools. When private businesses and higher education partner, we can achieve great things."

To join Beicip-Franlab in supporting the UM School of Engineering, individuals and organizations may send a check with the fund noted in the memo line to the University of Mississippi Foundation, 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655 ; visiting <http://www.umfoundation.com/makeagift/>; or contacting Kevin Gardner, development officer for engineering, at 662-915-7601 or kevin@olemiss.edu.

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