The Colombian Association of Geosciences Students (ACEG), a nonprofit association founded by students, recently organized the first Latin American Geosciences Student Conference (LAGSC) which was held in April. The theme of the conference was “EmergingRegion, New Trends”, chosen in recognition of the increased global investment in the region because of recently discovered reserves.

Jaime Checa, chief geophysicist at Hocol, a Colombian oil company and well-known for promoting the Latin American SEG Challenge Bowl, initially suggested this event because of the significant growth of student chapters in this region and the increase in participation by members of SEG, AAPG, and EAGE. The idea was quickly converted into a shared dream among a number of students who worked hard to make it a reality. Medellín, Colombia, was chosen as the host city. Medellín, also known as the city of the eternal spring, was recently recognized as among the world’s most innovative cities because of, in the words of its mayor, “its urban development, but also Medellín’s innovations of social programs with a high content of equity and social justice.”

The technical program, 6–11 April 2013, consisted of two days of short courses, three days of technical presentations by professionals and students, and a one-day field trip. The topics focused on oil and gas E&P challenges, ore deposits, and industry-led applied research. The 6th Annual Latin American Challenge Bowl also took place during the conference.

The Opening Ceremony was on 8 April at the Medellín Intercontinental Hotel. Seated at the Table of Honor were LAGSC President Martin Reyes; ACEG President and LAGSC Young Professional Advisor Pablo Aguilera; SEG Director at Large Elsa Jaimes; AAPG Latin America Young Professional and LAGSC Technical Director Antonio Velásquez; EAGE representative Bjorn Wygrala; and the Chief of the Geology Department at EAFIT, Geovany Bedoya. Aguilera introduced the guests and thanked the sponsors and supporters: Pacific Rubiales Energy; AUX; OGX; Arce Geofísicos; Halliburton; EAFIT University; National University of Colombia; SEG; AAPG; EAGE; Society of Economic Geologists; SGA; and ACGGP. Representatives from the various international societies then discussed the benefits to students around the world.

The conference attracted 115 participants, both students and professionals, from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, the United States, Venezuela, and Europe. All three days were enlivened with good Colombian coffee during the breaks and delicious Colombian cuisine for lunch (including the traditional local favorite, la bandeja paisa).

The first day of the technical session began with a presentation of the EAGE Student Lecturer by Bjorn Wygrala. He offered a condensed version of the course “Basin and Petroleum Systems Modeling.” The next activity was the Leadership Workshop on Monday afternoon. Elena Stashenko, from the Industrial University of Santander, shared her own experience in transforming a dump into a major research center in Colombia as an example of perseverance. Elsa Velasco, manager of SEG’s University and Student Programs, then taught the participants how to impose their own brand as future leaders of the region. The day concluded with welcoming toasts, and a comedy routine presented by students from the National University of Colombia.

On the second day, Latin American student leaders attended a meeting titled “How do we do it?”, chaired by Velasco. This gave participants the chance to identify the various needs of student chapters in the region.

The other major event of the morning was the presentation by Eduardo Filpo, the SEG Honorary Lecturer for the region, “Image ray time-to-depth conversion and model ray applications.” After lunch, Jose Perello, representing the Society of Economic Geologists, presented “Anatomy and Evolution of Contiguous Porphyry Cu-Mo and Cu-Au Mineralization at Los Pelambres, Chile.”
The final event of the day was the 6th Annual Latin American SEG Challenge Bowl. Teams represented the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM or National Autonomous University of Mexico), Mexican Petroleum Institute, Simon Bolivar University from Venezuela, National University of Cordova from Argentina, EAFIT, and National University of Colombia. The contest was enlivened by the wit of emcee Checa and a traditional group of troubadours who improvised jokes about the behavior of contestants. Juan Sebastian Cervantes and Enrique Arce from UNAM won first place and will represent Latin America in the finals at the upcoming SEG Annual Meeting.

On the last day of the conference, David Johnston presented the 2013 SEG Distinguished Instructor Short Course, “Making a Difference with 4D: Practical Applications of Time-Lapse Seismic Data.” The course covered reservoir engineering fundamentals, 4D seismic modeling, data processing, interpretation, and the future of these and other monitoring tools.

These activities are only a small part of the entire conference agenda. There were 14 other lectures by students and 11 by professionals. “The lecturers were at the forefront of research in the exploration and development of oil and gas and ore deposits. They showed that an emerging region requires new trends in knowledge. Heavy oil, unconventional

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Conference participants comment on the LAGSC

“This kind of conference is a great opportunity to get involved with the world of the international geophysics. The LAGSC was relaxing and there were lots of breaks to talk with other students and professionals.

Before attending, I was afraid to discuss my ideas in front of a crowd of unknown people, but this conference helped me overcome that fear. This is an important skill that I gained from attending and it will help me a lot in all areas of my professional life.

The LAGSC was valuable; it made me change some of the plans that I had regarding my education and my career. It also inspired me to give a speech at the next convention.

I met people from almost all the countries in South America. I developed a nice relationship with many of them and look forward to seeing them again in the future.”

—Alejandro Quizaro, LAGSC student participant

“I would like to encourage students to attend as many student conferences as they can because it is a great experience and an excellent opportunity to grow as a professional. It enables them to learn about technical aspects of the field, and to grow as a person and discover different kinds of people, cultures, and ways of thinking.

Technically, I learned about the unconventional petroleum systems, geologic methods to reconstruct the rock deposition, and how geophysics can help with actual geologic problems. Other topics included learning about opportunities to become an organizer of a conference, the importance of the union between the student chapters, and how I can bring those ideas to my country (Venezuela) to develop a student organization like I saw in Colombia. Many of the things I learned will help me in my field of study and guide me toward topics I could specialize in to be more competitive. On the other hand, by watching the hosts, I learned about how to be a leader, which is an important skill in today’s companies.

The conference helped me broaden my goals, taught me the importance of geosciences in my region, and showed me the great opportunities that I have here in Latin America.

I met a couple from Argentina; they are great people and invited me to a conference in Cordova next year. I also met some Colombian professionals who responded to my e-mails asking for help in my grade work. I met several conference organizers who agreed to advise me in developing a student organization. Finally, I met a couple of people from Mexico who won the Challenge Bowl and I had a great time visiting with them. They are interested in hosting the next Latin America Geosciences Student Conference!”

—Hugo Alejandro Arteaga Vivas, participating student

“As a conference sponsor, I was there mainly on behalf of SEG; however, I had the opportunity to talk to the audience during one of the lunches to explain to the attendees who my company is and where we have exploration activities. Being a sponsor and having our logo exposed in several places also sent the message that my company has a high commitment with students and young professionals. I also had the unique opportunity of participating in the workshops and technical sessions, interacting with the students, and better understanding their hopes, fears, and expectations.

This opportunity will help me create and nurture new business partnerships and collaboration opportunities through initiating many of the enthusiastic and fresh ideas from the students. These students are going to become excellent leaders in the near future.

I was impressed with the work capacity, risk management, and enthusiasm that the students put into the organization of this conference. The satisfaction of contributing to the students’ progress is amazing and I look forward to publicizing their success and motivating other students to follow the same route.”

—Elsa Jeanneth Jaime Romero
resources, and high-resolution geochemical exploration mining were the main topics of discussion. The interest in oil-shale and gas-shale plays has grown strongly in the region and more studies are now collecting data to understand the gas associated with coal and gas hydrates,” commented Antonio Velasquez, the conference’s technical director. He added, “It is necessary to take a conscientious environmental responsibility on exploration and production activities, particularly on vital and sensible areas.”

The conference progressed quickly and the closing ceremony was dominated by mixed emotions, the satisfaction of accomplishment, and planning for future conferences. “LAGSC made an exceptionally great impact on our lives. We now have the motivation to keep fighting for our dreams,” said Andrea Herazo, general secretary. Juliana Ceballos, LAGSC logistics director, added, “This event changed my life. Now I have more confidence that I can do anything I set as a goal.” These reactions show that LAGSC was not just about improving our technical expertise, but also about discovering and mentoring our future leaders.

We hope to see you at the 2nd LAGSC next year in Mexico!  

—PABLO AGUILERA  
ACEG President and LAGSC Young Professional Advisor

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