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GSA TODAY

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GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA
FOUNDATION

BRIDGING DIVIDES:

The Janet Wert Crampton Post-Doctoral Launch Award for Early-Career Geoscientists

At the GSA Foundation, we are proud to advance geoscience education, discovery, and careers in partnership with GSA. Over the years, the community's generosity has enabled GSA to sustain core programs and launch many new initiatives and awards. However, gaps remain. In the current climate, there is an urgent need to support postgraduate geoscientists at the outset of their careers.

Students and early career scientists are a core part of the GSA community. They are volunteers, presenters, mentors, and leaders. In turn, GSA offers unmatched networks, access to cutting-edge science, presentation venues, and a world of Earth science opportunities.

Unfortunately, recent graduates enter a job market in which employers are increasingly unlikely to fund GSA memberships or conference travel. In an era of inflation and uncertainty, many reluctantly pull back—failing to renew their membership in GSA or attending fewer meetings. GSA and the GSA Foundation realized we can and should do more to support them across the school-to-career transition.

Janet Wert Crampton, a longtime GSA member and GSA Foundation donor, recognized that supporting newly credentialed geologists is vital to GSA's present—and future. "Once those plants sprout, they have to be watered," she said.

In July, she established the Janet Wert Crampton Post-Doctoral Launch Award, which will provide US$5,000 in unrestricted funding to new PhD recipients in the geological sciences. Winners will be selected based on records that demonstrate unusual originality, promise, and potential for academic research.

A savvy lifelong investor, Janet established this fund via securities transfers. She noted, "I know how money works, and I want to put money to work and do something useful." The new Janet Wert Crampton Post-Doctoral Launch Award will exist in perpetuity, supporting early career PhDs every year and giving them one more reason to be part of the GSA community.



Figure 1. Janet Wert Crampton. Photo by Werner Schuman



Figure 2. Janet Wert Crampton at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, Colorado. Selfie on a lahar, GSA Summer Field Workshop, GeoTeachers Professional Development Field Workshop, Colorado Springs 2018.

Janet uses other tax-advantaged methods to support GSA. Each year, she uses a qualified charitable distribution, or QCD, from her IRA to contribute to GSA's On To the Future™ Fund. QCDs provide a way for those aged 70.5 or older to further causes close to their hearts instead of owing more to the IRS.

She herself knows about the many paths to which geoscience study can lead. While she initially enrolled at Indiana University intending to study journalism, an introductory geology course sparked a lifelong passion—and changed her life. She earned a bachelor's in geology in 1955 at Indiana University and a master's in geology in 1964 from Mount Holyoke College. Afterward, she enjoyed a wide and varied career as a science teacher, curriculum developer, and geoscience writer and editor. GSA has been a valued home throughout this rich, varied trajectory.

We hope Janet's generosity inspires you to consider making gifts that nurture early-career geoscientists. Some GSA professionals in the early career phase shared firsthand insights on why this fund matters.

"The transition out of a PhD can be uncertain and, in many cases, undersupported, as early career researchers become ineligible for awards for students," said Emily Orzechowski, PhD, GSA's director of geoscience policy and external relations. "This flexible award is a practical response to that problem."



Figure 3. Rebecca Taormina in the field.

Rebecca Taormina, PhD, GSA's manager of strategic program development, is also excited about this new award. She said, "Dedicated resources that help early career professionals build networks, gain leadership experience, and engage with the broader geoscience community remain comparatively limited. The Janet Wert Crampton Post-Doctoral Launch Award helps bridge that gap."

We invite you to join Janet. You can help GSA be a lifelong home for those who value geoscience excellence and discovery.

The GSA Foundation's four dedicated staff members and Board of Trustees will be at GSA Connects 2026 in Denver. We'd love to learn more about your work and your goals for the future of earth science. Please email Sean (sean.obrien@gsa-foundation.org) or Becky (becky.santavicca@gsa-foundation.org) to arrange a meeting, or drop by our booth to see us—and learn more about the difference you can make.

Visit https://gsa-foundation.org/fund/greatest-needs-of-gsa/ **to give today, or scan the QR Code.**

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