

FYE FIELD TRIPS

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The Block Plan at Colorado College gives us students the unique opportunity to apply what we've learned in class to real-world situations and, in our case, geological settings. We've only been in our classes for about two weeks, and we've already been out in the field six days, including an overnight camping trip on top of Mount Almagre!

On our first day of class, we took a fifteen minute drive to the base of Cheyenne Mountain. Without knowing exactly what it was we were looking at, we began exploring the vicinity, observing various rocks, vegetation, and channels. As we continued up the mountain, we realized that the small, seemingly insignificant channels that were distributed throughout the area were actually connected to a huge 5 foot tall channel that only got bigger as the altitude rose.

It was not until later that night when we were working on our lab write ups that we realized what we had been looking at is referred to as an alluvial fan- you can think of this as a paper fan, the handle would be the main stream and the bends in the body its channels where the sediment and water runoff of the Cheyenne mountain stream is deposited.

The next day, after we had been enlightened by this new piece of information, we were prepared to jump right back in and take measurements of everything from rocks to trees to the overall perimeter, which we recorded using our handy GPS devices.



After no less than 7 hours of studying this relatively small 1000 foot radius of land, we knew it like the palm of our hands, or so we

thought. In reality, it wasn't until almost two weeks later that we realized the true power of this incredible geological feature that lies right in our backyard.

After two days of learning involving chalkboards and chairs, which we quickly learned is far from Christine Siddoway's ideal teaching environment, our Geology class was not surprised to learn that we were going on yet another field study adventure: an overnight camping trip to Mount Almagre. We were initially baffled by the fact that this drive would supposedly take three



hours to drive 18 miles. That is, until we saw the road we would be embarking on. We piled into three SUV's and essentially put our lives in the hands of the drivers. After three hours of broken down cars, clearing boulders out of the way, and periodic snack breaks and scenery intakes, we arrived to our campsite. As we looked around at the breathtaking scenery and the bright, shining faces of our professors, it was evident that we had all made the right decision in coming to CC and enrolling in the

Geology FYE.

We set up our campsite overlooking the twinkling lights of Colorado Springs and even



the few towns over.

After eating a big bowl of chili, roasting some marshmallows, and gazing at the stars, we curled up in our sleeping bags and fell asleep. Only a few hours later, we were awoken by the early morning light creeping into the night sky. Our professor, Christine, told us that it was time to wake up, or else we would miss out on the sunrise hike.

So, at 5:30am on a Saturday morning, we groggily emerged from our sleeping bags and set out to the very peak of Almagre, about a mile away from our campsite.

As the sun began to rise and warm our bodies, we finally made it to the top. Everyone found their own rock to lean against and take in the astonishing view. After silently taking it all in and even dozing off for a bit, we hiked back down and began our fieldwork.

We learned about the three types of weathering: physical, chemical, and biological, and searched for real-life examples of each. We were challenged to solve mysteries involving areas of unusual rock types and deposition sites, and learned a lot from each other along the way.

After a few hours of studying our area of interest, we hiked down the road about a mile. We periodically paused to learn about all the types of rocks and rock formations we encountered along the way. Christine would always relate back to our lecture from earlier, making connections between factual information and real-life examples. I think we can all agree that this kind of learning is unparalleled.

We piled back into the three white SUV's and (somehow) made it back down to campus. Now we can't wait for our next stop: New Mexico!

