



# Sloan Career Cornerstone Center

## Profiles of Geoscientists



**John Williams**

**Geology Department Chair  
San Jose State University  
San Jose, CA**

### **Education:**

BS, Texas Christian University (Geology)  
MS, Memphis State (Geology)

### **Job Description:**

Geology Department Chair

### **Advice to Students:**

"It's rare now that you work on a big project, that you're The Lone Ranger. It's a team approach."

### **Interview:**

"It's rare now that you work on a big project, that you're The Lone Ranger. One individual simply doesn't have the breadth of experience or academic training to really do the job by themselves. So, it's a team approach. You might be the lead person on it, but I would say that in 90 percent of the times, to be truly effective, you've got to have team members to bring some additional talent to bear on the subject. If nothing more, just to simply be a sounding board, where you can bounce your ideas off that individual to see if they have credibility. Or else to be the arguer on the side, it often ends up being a much better product. If you're working by yourself, you can always convince yourself you're right."

### **Biography:**

Dr. Williams, received a BS (1967) in geology from the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, an MS (1968) and Ph.D. (1970) in geology from Stanford University. The introductory physical geology course at the College of William and Mary stimulated his interest in pursuing an academic program in geology. Upon completion of his Ph.D., he joined the California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG) as a geologist working in the San Francisco office. During his tenure with the CDMG, he worked on a variety of projects from marine to engineering geology. Most of his activities involved the detection and evaluation of geologic factors influencing land use decisions. In 1976, he joined the faculty of the Department of Geology at San Jose State University as an engineering geologist with responsibility to

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develop an engineering geology program, to teach courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels in engineering geology, to direct student research, and to conduct his own research. Most of his research involves seismic hazards and slope instabilities as they relate to land use decisions. He is Chair of the Department and has served in the position for the past 16 years. He has been President of the Association of Engineering Geologists (AEG), President of the National Association of State Boards of Geology (ASBOG), President of the Engineering Geology Foundation (EGF), and Chair of the Examination Committee for the California Board of Registration for Geologists and Geophysicists.

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