



Sloan Career Cornerstone Center

Profiles of Geoscientists



Eldon Gath

Engineering Geologist
Earth Consultants International
Orange, CA

Education:

BS, Univ. of Minnesota (Geology)
MS, UCLA (Engineering Geology)
PhD, UC Riverside (Geology)

Job Description:

Engineering Geologist

Advice to Students:

"Almost everybody in this business should start in the field. If you don't understand the field, you will never understand how to make good decisions in the office."

Video Transcript 1:

"The business that I'm in here in Southern California, and in my company, Leighton, in particular, is really driven by the construction industry. We experienced a severe downturn in the housing market, and as a consequence we lost a great deal of business and consequently had to shrink the size of the company."

Video Transcript 2:

"Almost everybody in this business should start in the field. If you don't understand the field, you will never understand how to make good decisions in the office. You have got to be out there and see how things are built, to do the investigations, to do the design work, and to see it under construction. Eventually, as you move up in any career, you become less and less field-oriented and more and more office-oriented. And you need to fight that. Because that is just the wrong way to go. As you lose touch with the field you also lose touch with the reason you're doing the work in the first place, and you lose touch with the reason that - you lose touch with how things are being done now."

Biography:

Mr. Gath received a B.S. in geology from the Institute of Technology at the University of Minnesota in 1978. Since moving to California in 1979, he has been active in post-graduate education, first in engineering geology at California State University at Los Angeles, and most

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currently in the Ph.D. program in geology at the University of California at Riverside, from which he is on a yearlong leave of absence while serving as President of the Association of Engineering Geologists. Eldon planned to be a chemist, but after a bad-lab day came a geomorphology field trip, looking at terraces of the Minnesota River, followed by a campfire discussion of geology and life. That was all it took to forget about the indoor life of a chemist. Not really liking the rocks, minerals, and the mining side of geology, he discovered engineering geology and immediately clicked with its involvement in civil structures and dynamic geologic processes affecting public safety like landslides and earthquakes. Eldon joined Pacific Soils Engineering in Irvine, California in 1980, and then Leighton and Associates in 1984, eventually becoming Director of Geology for their Los Angeles Regional Center, a Principal in the firm in 1989, and on the Board of Directors in 1992.

In January, 1997, he was appointed President of Earth Consultants International, a new affiliated company of Leighton. His projects have ranged from residential subdivision developments for hundreds of homes, city and county General Plan Safety Elements, seismic design and active fault studies for numerous projects, landslide remediation investigations, regional planning studies, and active fault research studies for the U.S. Geological Survey and the Southern California Earthquake Center. He has been active in numerous professional organizations, including President of the Association of Engineering Geologists, and membership in the, Earthquake Engineering Research Institute, Geological Society of America, American Geophysical Union, Seismological Society of America, and the American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

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