



My NSS experience began in 1993, while at Western Kentucky University, happening upon organized caving while growing up four miles from what is now the Wells Cave Preserve; karst landscapes are foundational to my identity. Learning to survey in Mammoth Cave with the Cave Research Foundation and trailing Art Palmer in his Cave Geology course merged my caving passion and professional life, nucleating a career in karst studies.

My arc in caving is not unique—I grew up in rural Kentucky, broadened my horizons in college and among cavers, and adopted them as my extended family. My caving passion leveraged world travels and personal growth, and through that experience I expanded my perspectives on culture and tolerance into progressive social ideals. More recently, I have come to realize that those experiences were a product of my privilege and that my ideas were only progressive with respect to my childhood standards. My social sphere was not as diverse physically or intellectually as I once thought.

This personal growth parallels that of the NSS. The past few years has widened rifts in my caving family. Discussions of diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI) have fueled disputes among an aging and declining membership. Young cave-curious people are not interested in our internal politics that create structural biases and exclude. Our lack of targeted outreach perpetuates a virtually white demographic—the NSS is not racially diverse. What is needed is a complete rethink of what we are, what we stand for, and how the NSS leadership can best advocate for the exploration, study, and conservation of cave and karst resources.

I can help bring that leadership to the NSS Board through a translational vision for the future structure of the NSS in support of the NSS Diversity Committee. Currently, I am helping to develop DEI plans for my workplace and the Association of State Boards of Geology. The former is part of a five-year strategic plan that engages staff with underserved communities, the development of an anti-racism statement, and the recruitment of summer internships for minorities, with the agenda of expanding pipelines for opportunity in the geosciences.

A second leadership role that I can bring is advocacy and communication. In addition to my public speaking, teaching, and media appearance record, I am a strong supporter for scholarly communication. The *NSS News* and *Journal of Caves and Karst Studies* have international reputations for expertise and professionalism that must be maintained, and I would diligently campaign for budgetary support.

A third leadership role is organizational and project management. Being all things to everyone can be taxing to a society with a scope that includes sale proceeds, membership administration, event hosting, land management, and advocacy. The Executive Committee, Board, and various committees are often beyond their financial and personal means. With the parallel growth of related professional societies and conservancies, I can help the NSS rethink what it can and cannot effectively manage and what is best served by strategic partnerships, an executive director, and professional event management.

Selected professional vita:

- Graduate degrees from the University of Missouri and the University of South Florida
- Mendenhall Postdoc at the U.S. Geological Survey
- Fulbright Fellow at the Universitatea Cluj-Napoca in Romania
- Tenured geoscience faculty (55 peer-reviewed papers, 10 monographs, 14 book chapters, 172 conference abstracts)
- Chief Editor, *Indiana Journal of Earth Sciences*
- Senior Research Faculty, Licensed Professional Geologist, and Assistant Director at the Indiana Geological and Water Survey
- Manage 22 scientists, advise graduate students, oversee a \$2.7M state appropriation, and procure annually a \$1.5M portfolio of state and federal grants
- Interface with university, industry, and government leadership, and legislators in Indiana and in Washington DC

Selected caving vita:

- NSS Board Member from 2006-2009 and Executive Vice President from 2009-2010
- Founder of the Kentucky Speleological Survey in 2001 and served as its President
- Chaired the Wells Cave Preserve Committee at foundation
- Served on the Kentucky (2001) and Florida (2008) NSS Convention Committees, leading efforts on guidebooks, sessions, and trips
- Leader for cave survey projects in Kentucky, Florida, and international locations with awards in the NSS Cartography Salon
- Manage monitoring and sampling programs in caves and karst aquifers