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UNH Global

Julie Bryce

Professor of Geochemistry (CEPS) - Iceland

In September 2017, thanks to the support of a Faculty Development Award from the UNH Global Education Center, I traveled to Iceland to enhance connections with the Institute for Earth Sciences, to feel out the potential for future student exchange and to participate in an international drilling project based on Surtsey, the newest island in the Vestmannaeyjar archipelago (Westman Islands) off Iceland's Southeast coast.



Fog rolling over the 1973 Eldfell eruption that lapped up and nearly destroyed the town and harbor on Heimaey

Though I entered the field of geology as a graduate student with the goal of studying volcanoes, this trip constituted my longest time in Iceland. I left the gray, foggy morning at Keflavik with excitement about the opportunities of the next week. As I was spending the bulk of my visit in the Vestmannaeyjar archipelago itself, I had few opportunities to align windows with colleagues and staff at the University of Iceland, and I headed there shortly after arrival (but fortunately after some wonderful coffee) to discuss the potential for creating a student

exchange program between UNH and the University of Iceland. Iceland's position as an emerging global leader in sustainable energy and infrastructure, together with its being one of the most

spectacular places in the world to study Earth Sciences, makes it an attractive potential partner for student exchange. My first meeting was at the Institute of Earth Sciences with Professor Magnús Tumi Guðmundsson, where we discussed subglacial volcanoes and talked about ideas on how to move forward a collaboration between UNH and Iceland. I then visited the University of Iceland international office, where, along with another fantastic Icelandic coffee, I had a productive discussion about potential future exchanges between our universities. I then returned to walk the beautiful city of Reykjavik on an amazing fall evening and ended up having plokfiskur, a fish dish that has some kinship with New England's clam chowder. I felt right at home as I ate beneath a 1901 geologic map that was plastered to the wall for decoration.

The next morning I took a scheduled bus from Reykjavik to traverse the volcanic, geothermal and sheep-dotted landscape to the southern coast, where I caught a ferry out to the Vestmannaeyjar



Surtsey volcano, center offshore Heimaey, is the target of a new study fifty years after its emergence from the Atlantic Ocean

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vestmannaeyjar>) archipelago. This amazing island chain is the southern extension of Iceland's Eastern Rift Zone, a region of volcanic activity made famous both by the 1973 eruption of Eldfell volcano, which John McPhee famously chronicled in a *New Yorker* piece (and later in *The Control of Nature*) as well as the 2010 eruption of Eyjafjällajökull that massively disrupted air travel for much of Northern and Western Europe. Though I stayed in the delightful town of Heimaey, the chief reason I headed here was to learn more about Surtsey, a volcano that emerged from the Atlantic Ocean in eruptions that took place between 1963 and 1967. For the next week I took part in the core processing for the SUSTAIN (<https://www.icdp-online.org/projects/world/europe/surtsey-iceland/details/>) drilling program, an International Continental Drilling Project designed to gain insight into how oceanic crust changes in its first half

century. The SUSTAIN project was designed and led by colleagues at the University of Utah and the University of Iceland who were interested both in the types of mineral reactions that transform fragile volcanic glass into more substantive materials (the world's best concretes!) as well as the structure underlying the volcano. The drilling holes (three of which we "post-processed" while I was there) were emplaced earlier that summer, following up on important work carried out in the 1970s by scientists in Iceland and at the United States Geological Survey.



A living roof on Heimaey

Now in these six months since I've returned we have learned more about the 1979 drill core and are awaiting the opportunity to work on samples from the 2017 drill core. My visit to Iceland reinvigorated earlier studies I have carried out on subglacial volcanoes, and now that those are moving forward we will look into opportunities for future collaborations with colleagues at the University of Iceland. If the volcanoes don't get me back to Iceland very soon, I will have to get back to see again the

beautiful landscapes and sample more fabulous Icelandic coffee and amazing prokkfiskur.

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