

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB Geologist Wins National Award

Douglas Burbank, professor of earth science at UC Santa Barbara, has been selected as the 2009 winner of the Don J. Easterbrook Distinguished Scientist Award by the Quaternary Geology and Geomorphology Division of the Geological Society of America (GSA). As part of the award, Burbank will give a lecture at the 2009 annual meeting of the GSA in Portland, Ore., on October 19. Approximately 6,000 scientists are expected to attend.

The award recognizes an individual who has shown unusual excellence in published research, as demonstrated by a series of papers that has substantially increased knowledge in Quaternary geology or geomorphology. Burbank received the award for a suite of papers that concern the way tectonic deformation of the earth interacts with erosional processes to shape the landscape.

In his nominating letter, Eric Kirby, associate professor of geosciences at Pennsylvania State University, said that Burbank is an "unusually creative thinker, able to synthesize information from across the earth sciences and use this to design innovative ways to test emerging conceptual models."

Established in 1999, the award has been given only nine times. One-third of the recipients have come from UCSB's Department of Earth Science. Besides Burbank, Edward Keller and Tom Dunne, both on the UCSB faculty, have been honored.

Burbank has studied the Himalayas and other mountain ranges that were created through movement of the earth's tectonic plates. His talk will focus on several

unresolved issues at large topographic scales and at millennial to million-year time scales. These include the importance of precipitation and how it changes with altitude; temporal and spatial changes in rates of erosion; the relative influence of tectonic versus climatic forcing on erosion rates; and the magnitude and effect of glacial erosion and ice loading and unloading on rates of fault slip.

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