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NCSE is pleased to announce the winners of the first teacher scholarships on our annual Grand Canyon raft trip: Alyson Miller of Nashua High School North, Nashua, New Hampshire, and Scott Hatfield of Bullard High School, Fresno, California. They will receive an all-expenses-paid eight-day raft [trip through the Grand Canyon](#) [4], guided by two members of NCSE's staff and joining twenty other NCSE members and supporters who purchased seats on the trip. The [scholarship funds were donated](#) [5] by the generosity of NCSE's members.

"This trip will be the adventure of a lifetime for Miller and Hatfield," explained NCSE's Steve Newton, a geologist and one of NCSE's guides on the annual raft trip. "Teachers who work so hard for their students and the science-literate future of America deserve some time to relax on the Colorado River. But we'll be making them work, too. The Grand Canyon is the greatest geology teaching lab in the world, and they'll be able to explore geological processes up close, place their hands on rock layers laid down before the first multi-cellular fossils, and see how plate tectonics, erosion, volcanoes, wind, and waves built up and carved down the landscape. I can't wait to see what lesson plans they develop based on that experience."



NCSE rafters examining Vulcan's Anvil, one of Grand Canyon's geological wonders. Photo by Josh Rosenau, 2014.

As part of the scholarship application, both teachers committed to produce a lesson plan and student assessment based on the trip, which NCSE will make available for other teachers to use.



Alyson Miller has taught zoology, physical science, plant science, physics, and freshmen seminar in Nashua since 2004, as well as middle school earth science and life science. She was named advisor of the year in 2006, and completed her master's degree in 2012. Before entering the classroom, Miller worked in research labs at the University of Mississippi and Emory University, co-authoring over a dozen research papers on topics ranging from a non-human primate model for Parkinson's disease to the effects of drugs like amphetamines, caffeine, and cocaine on non-human primates. This school year, she was selected for an American Federation of Teachers Teacher-Leader grant. She has used that position to investigate a state law in New Hampshire which allows students to opt out of certain topics; a parent tried to opt a student in her classroom out of evolution lessons, and there are reports of students being allowed to skip entire biology courses to avoid topics like evolution and climate change. "Perhaps I'm hypersensitive to the attempts to 'wedge' the teaching of supernatural causation into science classes," she explained in her application, "but I was not going to let this one rest." She is meeting with lawmakers and working with her fellow educators to repeal the bill as soon as possible.



Scott Hatfield has taught biology in Fresno since 2000, and served in the district's music program from 1993 to 1999. He also served as music director and choir director in local

Methodist churches between 1997 and 2006. He joined NCSE in 2006, after attending a talk by Kevin Padian (then the president of NCSE's board) at the urging of a former professor. With that same professor and other colleagues, he established the Central Valley Café Scientifique in 2007, a venue for the public to meet scientists and discuss new research. He has been active in the battles over creationism, a common source of conflict in California's Central Valley. He has appeared on local television and radio programs, sparring with creationists, and he and a student at Bullard won a contest hosted by Discover magazine for a two-minute video they produced explaining evolution. Of course, he also emphasizes evolution in his classroom. "I have yet to meet another high school biology teacher who gives this topic greater emphasis, in fact," he wrote in his application, adding, "Yet I have the least problems!" By introducing key concepts and exploring how science works in less contentious settings, he heads off conflict before it starts.

NCSE's Josh Rosenau, a biologist who guides the raft trip along with Steve Newton, says: "Great science education doesn't end at the schoolhouse door, and challenges to science have to be confronted in the community and the halls of power. Hatfield and Miller show how important it is for teachers — and anyone concerned with improving science education — to speak up for science in churches and legislatures, addressing misconceptions and harmful ideologies before they infiltrate classrooms. We're proud to honor their remarkable work, and that of so many other teachers who share that commitment."

One hundred forty teachers applied for the two seats, providing copies of lesson plans, explaining how they incorporate evolution and climate change in their classrooms, and how they have confronted efforts to politicize or undermine science education. Hatfield and Miller stood out not just for their excellence in the classroom, but also for their efforts to make their communities safer for science and science education.

"We were gratified by the response to this inaugural scholarship, and can't wait to offer more scholarships in future years," says NCSE executive director Ann Reid. "There were so many teachers we wished we could have brought with us, and we're grateful to NCSE's members and supporters who donated to the scholarship fund (to which [donations are still welcome](#) [5]). When communities, scientists, and teachers come together, great things happen."

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