

The Donor Cycle

Earth Sciences alumni helped launch Sin Senh's career. Now a CEO, he's doing the same for future Binghamton geologists.

By Jennifer Micale

A

master's student in geological sciences, Sin Senh '97, MA '05, was giving a talk when he had an encounter that changed his life.

Several Binghamton University alumni were on campus for a visit — employees of Roux, a professional services firm established 45 years ago that offers a wide array of consulting and project management services to address complex environmental issues associated with air, water, and land, as well as risk management and litigation services. The alumni caught part of his presentation and struck up a conversation.

"We connected, and then I interviewed here. The rest is history," he recounts from the company's Islandia, New York, headquarters, his office filled with greenery. "I've been here for my entire career after Binghamton."

He began as a staff hydrogeologist in 1999 and worked his way through

the ranks. Today, he's the president and CEO and a principal hydrogeologist at the firm. Roux operates 15 offices nationwide and employs more than 450 professionals specializing in environmental, health and safety, and economic fields, including various disciplines in science, economics, and engineering. Roux undertakes large and complex environmental remediation projects, including Superfund sites, chemical and manufacturing plants, petroleum refineries, and distribution terminals.

During his years at Roux, Senh has worked on hundreds of sites within the New York City metropolitan area; these days, he's more likely to find himself in a courtroom as an expert witness on cases related to the fate and transport of pollutants in the environment, the allocation of investigation and remediation costs across multiple parties, and soil and groundwater contamination.

But just like the rain that replenishes groundwater, Senh continues to return to the university that shaped him. He's made annual visits over the past 25 years to recruit for his company; in 2016, he founded the Roux Scholarship in Geology, which supports one master's student in the program each year.

For alumni who benefited from their experience at Harpur College, giving back is a way to support the next generation, whether through time, money, or other forms of support, Senh points out.

The Earth Sciences Department is deeply grateful for his contributions, accomplishments, and faith in the students he has hired over the past two decades, says Distinguished Professor of Earth Sciences Tim Lowenstein.

"Sin is one of a kind. He understands the science side and the business side of the environmental consulting field," he notes. "Most of all, Sin is a people person, who constantly thinks about the well-being of those around him."

Binghamton at Roux

Originally from China, Senh came to the United States in 1982 and grew up mainly in the South Bronx. As an undergraduate, he majored in geological sciences and environmental studies and found Binghamton to be a launchpad into adulthood.

Fun fact: From 1996 to 1999, he lived in a makeshift apartment in the University Union. As the Union's supervisor, he was on call until the facility closed at 2 a.m. each night — complete with a Motorola flip phone and pager. He is grateful for the opportunity; the job helped fund his education, he says.

Until he became CEO, Senh returned to campus every year with a fellow Binghamton alum to give a technical talk on geology. He remains a regular visitor, and over the past five years, he has been a member of the Alumni Advisory Council of the Earth Sciences Department, which offers vital input for the department's future.

Recruitment from Binghamton has been robust. Thus far, more than 20 geology and environmental science alumni have worked for Roux, and a dozen are currently employed by the company.

Program grads are also apt to stay. About 65% of Roux employees begin as entry-level hires fresh from college. Many choose to remain with the company, sometimes for decades. Retention, Senh points out, is one of the company's main pillars of success.

"We're well-compensated, we're challenged every day, we learn something new every day, and we're supported," he says. "We're technical people; if we're not doing something that's interesting and challenging, we get bored. Roux has provided that for me from day one."

When Senh retires from Roux, he hopes to return to the Earth Sciences Department once again — this time to teach future hydrogeologists.

"I want to pay it forward from an education standpoint," he reflects. "At that point in my career, I'll have 40-plus years of practicing hydrogeology. Becoming a technical resource to the department and the students would be a wonderful way to give back." ■

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