Recently we took the opportunity to sit down with Professor Nick Eyles who has been teaching and completing research at the University of Toronto Scarborough for over 36 years and is a well known and loved member of the Department of Environmental Sciences. Growing up in London, England Professor Eyles developed a passion for the outdoors on school geology field trips across Europe. His early interest in how the planet ‘works’ is what led him to Canada and to be the person he is today, a highly distinguished and well-travelled Professor of Geology. Professor Eyles’ research focuses on glacial sedimentology, the study of the formation of sediments and landforms produced by glaciers and ice movements such as that of the last ice sheet to have covered Canada. It is important to work on modern ice sheets to learn how they work. His first research was completed as an undergraduate with a friend doing his Ph.D. research on the Jostedalen Ice Cap in western Norway. This experience was most valuable, and he would encourage undergraduate students to get involved in research going on in DPES, especially by taking part in the various weekend field activities and longer 10-day field camps hosted by the Department such as to Iceland, Costa Rica and the American Southwest. Professor Eyles is an active member in the community and when he’s not teaching amazing courses at UTSC, such as ESSA06 (Introduction to Planet Earth) and other environmental courses on the geological evolution of North America, he is busy giving talks to public groups, working with documentary film makers and writing award-winning books (he is completing his sixth) which as he emphasizes is how ‘one teaches oneself.’ He believes that it is an honour being in his position at the University of Toronto and being stimulated by working with the next generation. He is always impressed with the quality of research being done by DPES undergraduates and is glad to see discussion of a Journal of Natural Sciences finally come to fruition.
Professor Eyles feels that it is important to create connections with your professors early on by volunteering in the laboratory or completing a research course which can be of either one or two semesters in length. Funding is also available to help students complete research projects over the summer. You will learn the skills necessary to formulate a project, collect data from various sources and evaluate it, write it up and hopefully get it published. These are valuable ‘life skills’ in any profession and employers look for people who are self reliant and can get the job done with a minimum of supervision. Building that relationship with professors early on is essential if you plan on continuing your studies in graduate school at U of T or elsewhere, simply need a reference or other advice on possible career options. Having taught Planet Earth for many years, he finds the first-year students who take the time to come and talk after the lecture or during office hours (even if its about soccer, motorcycles or travel!) often go on to graduate school.

Dr. Eyles advises students that want to pursue research as a career to stop unduly worrying about a precise career path and employment. If you are passionate and interested and talented you will be successful, and doors will open to new opportunities that you never imagined possible. The secret is to get involved in the amazing variety of research being conducted in DPES.