In 1902 public subscriptions of $120 was paid to the University of Adelaide for the purpose of founding a medal in memory of the late Ralph Tate, sometime Professor of Natural Science in this University from 1875 to 1901. The first winner was H.W. Gartrell in 1903 whose thesis subject was "The Port Victor Granite".

The medal is awarded annually to the candidate who obtains the best results in the Honours degree of the Bachelor of Science in the field of Geology.