



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Sea Grant College Program
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

September 3, 2010

Dr. Chuck Hopkinson
Director, Georgia Sea Grant College Program
University of Georgia
220 Marine Sciences Building
Athens, Georgia 30602-3636

Dear Dr. Hopkinson:

On behalf of the Site Review Team (SRT) for the Georgia Sea Grant College Program, I am pleased to transmit to you the enclosed SRT report. The report documents the findings and recommendations regarding program management and organization; stakeholder engagement; and collaborative network activities during our visit on July 13-14, 2010.

Our policy states that you, as the program director, have the opportunity to prepare a response to the SRT report. Both the SRT report and your response will become part of the Program file in the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO). I encourage you to keep the NSGO informed of any activities that are undertaken to strengthen your program so that these actions may be considered by the NSGO at the Final Review.

I wanted also to offer my thanks and to express the gratitude of the Site Review Team for the effort you and your staff put forth to make this review productive and enjoyable. In addition, please express our thanks to the many university officials, administrators, staff, researchers, advisors and program stakeholders who ensured that our review was comprehensive and complete.

Sincerely,

Terrence P. Smith
Program Officer
National Sea Grant Office

Enclosure

Cc: J. Woeste, N. Targett, W. G. Smith, D. Hoskins
L. Cammen, S. Grimes

**Review of the
Georgia Sea Grant College Program**

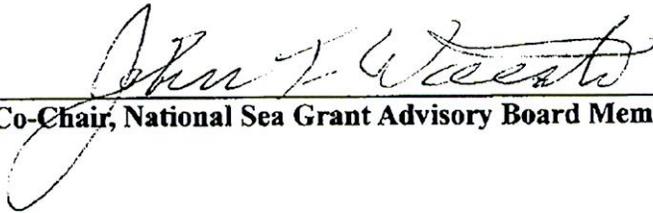
July 13-14, 2010



9/3/2010

Chair, Federal Program Officer

Date



9/1/10

Co-Chair, National Sea Grant Advisory Board Member

Date



INTRODUCTION

The Site Review Team (SRT) review of the Georgia Sea Grant (GA SG) Program took place July 13-14, 2010 in Athens, Georgia.

The SRT members were

Terry Smith (Chair) Program Officer, Georgia Sea Grant National Sea Grant Office Silver Spring, MD	John Woeste (Co-Chair) Chair, Sea Grant Advisory Board University of Florida Gainesville, FL
Nancy Targett Director, Delaware Sea Grant Program University of Delaware Newark, DE	W. Gaines Smith Director, Alabama Cooperative Extension Auburn University Auburn, AL
Dionne Hoskins Director, NOAA Sponsored Programs Savannah State University Savannah, GA	

Prior to the beginning of the SRT visit, and in conformance with National Sea Grant Office and College Program guidelines, Georgia Sea Grant issued a public notice of the upcoming SRT visit and invited interested parties to send written comments to the SRT Chair. The Georgia Sea Grant program also provided the SRT with a Briefing Book, a detailed meeting agenda, and the most recent version of the program's Strategic Plan.

In addition, the Team was provided copies of the SRT Procedures Manual (a process document produced by the National Sea Grant Office), a current annual report for the program from the National Sea Grant Office's database, and the 2005 Georgia Sea Grant Program Assessment Team (PAT) report and program response.

The SRT Chair received one response to the public notice asking for comment. The note was from a Georgia university and suggested that Georgia Sea Grant's proposal review process could be improved. Specifically, the comment suggested using external reviewers and a more formal solicitation/review process. Information presented at the site review and the experience of one SRT member at the most recent technical proposal review indicated that a formal technical review protocol was in place with all reviewers external (to Georgia and Sea Grant). It is the opinion of the SRT that the current protocol/process is well designed and accessible to interested parties.

The SRT meeting took place at the University of Georgia, Athens, where the program is located, primarily in the Fanning Institute, with a visit to the Georgia Sea Grant offices nearby. During the review, the SRT met with the Georgia Sea Grant management staff, officials from the

University of Georgia (UGA), members of the Georgia Sea Grant Advisory Board and some current Georgia Sea Grant investigators. A more detailed agenda is attached to this report.

This document follows the guidelines of the Site Review Team Procedures Manual with respect to organization and content. The SRT reviewed and discussed three broad issues: 1) organization and management of the program; 2) stakeholder engagement; and 3) collaborative network activities. Within each of these areas, this SRT report presents the views of the Georgia Sea Grant Site Review Team. Explanations and comments are organized by issue area and the report concludes with comments, findings, and suggestions.

ORGANIZING AND MANAGING THE PROGRAM

Leadership. The leadership of the Georgia Sea Grant Program has changed with the hiring of a new director. As a result the direction and vision of GA SG has been transformed. Leadership is focused on maximizing impact by catalyzing partnerships between and among stakeholders (internal and external to the University of Georgia). Georgia Marine Extension (MAREX), a traditional partner of GA SG, has significant visibility in its own right and the synergy that is clearly re-emerging between the two will benefit both. The Director of Georgia Sea Grant reports to the UGA Vice President for Research. The Director of MAREX reports to the UGA Vice President for Public Service and Outreach. The university administration is clearly committed to the Sea Grant Program and it was particularly encouraging to see the explicit and progressive relationships between the offices of the VP for Research and VP for Public Service and Outreach. This kind of collaboration is crucial to the partnerships and collaborations that the University seeks to enhance and, of course, has significant impact on the role and performance of the Sea Grant program.

Organization. The GA SG Program has 6 administrative positions including a Director, an Assistant Director, a Fiscal Officer, a staff assistant, and two communicators. Many of these positions are funded as match to the federal funds that GA SG receives. The position of Assistant Director is a newly created one, partly in response to a recommendation by the 2005 PAT¹ that more effort be focused on identifying and tracking the program's accomplishments. The slot is jointly funded by the VP for Research and the VP for Public Service and Outreach. The person selected for Assistant Director had been Communication Director and the Program has hired a new communication leader. Collectively, these changes represent a substantive increase in staffing and, as noted, a significant portion of the cost of this staffing increase is coming from the University of Georgia.

Georgia SG is administratively based at UGA, Athens. MAREX is also administratively based in Athens but has a strong connection to coastal constituents with many agents on the ground in coastal GA including a large facility located in Brunswick, GA and a smaller, but busy, outreach

¹ The Program Assessment Team (PAT) process is no longer used in the Sea Grant system. The PAT was a multi-day visit to the program and a formal quantitative evaluation and had some bearing on a Program's funding.

facility in Chatham County, Georgia. Sea Grant's connection to MAREX and to other coastal entities enables it to leverage funding and infrastructure to achieve a greater impact throughout the state.

The Georgia Sea Grant Program has re-invigorated its Advisory Board. The Board has 15 members chosen from private, government, and NGO sectors. The majority of members of the Board were present and very engaged throughout the site visit. Members are clearly seen as leaders within their specific constituencies and their insights will be beneficial to the Program.

Programmed team approach. The development of the Program's strategic plan exemplifies a new, more collaborative approach. The process ensured that stakeholders and advisory council members were engaged and supported, making outcomes relevant. Within the University, the Georgia Sea Grant program is taking a leadership role in enhancing the visibility of all coastal research and outreach programs. By clustering these programs under a common umbrella, components will be able to not only retain identity but also more effectively leverage strengths in areas where there are natural synergies. As a result, visibility is enhanced although there is still tremendous scope for growth. It is gratifying to see Georgia Sea Grant embrace a leadership role and act as a catalyst and it is exciting to think about what will be achieved as the concept is more fully implemented.

More specifically, GA Sea Grant and MAREX have taken clear and definitive steps to enhance their collaboration and communication. Each director is a member of the other's management team and, in discussions with both directors, it was evident that there is a commitment to work together for the greater good of their respective programs.

Support. Federal financial support for the Georgia Sea Grant College Program has been flat for several years. This, coupled with the economic downturn that has squeezed many state contributions, has resulted in the need for new approaches. But the VP for Research noted that, even as overall budgets have been cut at UGA, support for GA SG has been preserved. This is a dramatic shift from the position that the University articulated about 5 years ago.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

As mentioned, Georgia Sea Grant program developed - in 2009 - an impressive Advisory Board with comprehensive representation from the various interest areas and issues of concern affecting the Atlantic coastal region of Georgia. Members are engaged in identifying, delineating, and describing the priority issues specified in the Georgia Sea Grant College Program Plan for 2010-2013. In terms of procedure, an expert from outside the program engaged a wide array of stakeholders in an in-depth needs analysis — an exemplary process that is offered as a best management practice to Sea Grant programs as well as other extension and outreach organizations. Engagement of the advisory board and the stakeholders resulted in a strategic plan that provides focus to efforts, yet retains enough flexibility to address emerging needs, such as the Gulf of Mexico oil spill and its potential impact on the Atlantic Coast.

The current Georgia Sea Grant College Program Strategic Plan assures that the projects supported by the Georgia Sea Grant program are relevant to the needs of targeted constituents and geographic regions. The four Sea Grant focus areas are developed locally, via needs identified by the Advisory Board. The focus areas are also interconnected to regional issues identified in the South Atlantic Regional Research Plan. Further assuring relevance is a process for recruiting expertise and talent to develop and carry out projects and activities that address identified needs.

Relative to stakeholder engagement

- Stakeholder engagement, strategic thinking and actions, advisory input, relevance, and relationship building must be continuous to be effective. Engagement is a journey and not an event with a beginning and a conclusion.
- Citizen and stakeholder awareness and understanding are critical to the future prosperity of the program. As pressure on public resources continues, decision makers must understand the importance, indeed the necessity, of Sea Grant programs.
- Emerging digital and other technologies will be increasingly necessary components of communication to the various audiences that must know and understand the program. Appropriate communication methods must be targeted for the various segments of society.
- The ability to respond quickly to emerging and unforeseen needs, such as the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, is critical. Change occurs at an increasingly rapid and unpredictable rate. Science-based programs will continue to be significant components in addressing and influencing these changes only if they remain flexible.
- Continual development of relationships with additional agencies, organizations, and groups will bring synergy to those engaged. Potential for a more formal relationship with the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service's local extension educators and facilities in the coastal region should be examined. Currently, collaboration with Cooperative Extension is not direct. Rather it occurs at the local level on a case by case basis. Sustainable development and local leadership development would be enhanced by engaging cooperative extension more fully in programming and managing outreach for the coastal region.

COLLABORATIVE NETWORK/NOAA ACTIVITIES

Productive relationships are developed and fostered through the engagement of a variety of stakeholders, individuals, councils, agencies, organizations, and groups that represent diverse

perspectives and interests affecting coastal Georgia. Representatives from local communities and governments, as well as regional, state, national, and international leaders are included in the groups that GA SG communicates with. Relationships include a number of universities with special attention to historically black colleges and universities. The need for increased public and decision-maker awareness has been recognized and will be addressed by the recently hired Director of Communications. While the public information campaign should be focused in the coastal region, statewide coverage is essential to the future viability and funding of the program.

Georgia Sea Grant works with a significant number of groups in the state and the region on research, outreach, and education. The major partners are MAREX, the Georgia Coastal Research Council (GCRC), University of Georgia's Arch Foundation, the Chatham County Metropolitan Planning Commission, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the South Atlantic Governor's Alliance. Minor collaborators include the Savannah Music Festival, the Chatham Emergency Management Authority, and others. Members of the Georgia Sea Grant Advisory Council suggested that Georgia Sea Grant should continue to engage additional state and federal partners.

Current NOAA partners include the NOAA Coastal Services center, and the Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve, as well as the Sea Grant programs in Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina and Puerto Rico. These partnerships have been used to effectively address regional needs for research planning as well as response to immediate coastal threats, primarily through the South Atlantic Regional Research Plan (SARRP). The SARRP is a highly visible collaborative effort between neighboring Sea Grant programs and the GCRC. And the Georgia Coastal Research Council has helped Georgia Sea Grant meet its mission goals through expanding the local network and making available regional professionals as additional resources.

COMMENTS, FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS

Comments

- A clearer description of the deployment of extension full time employments (FTE's) in the state would have been helpful, such as a map of the state with number of FTE's for GA SG and MAREX (color-coded) to get a sense of where effort is being expended.
- Attendees suggested that Georgia Sea Grant may benefit by continuing to engage more state and federal partners in ways that may benefit Sea Grant. The American Association of County Commissioners, Institute for Georgia Environmental Leadership, and Georgia Municipal Association were among those mentioned.

Findings

- The University administration is well aware of the Sea Grant program and strongly committed to an effective and integrated program. Discussions with the Director and the two University vice presidents affirmed ongoing interactions concerning progress and direction of the program. The joint funding of an Assistant Director position by the two Vice Presidents reflects a tangible commitment of institutional support as well as an interest in fuller integration of the program within the host administrative organization. While the University of Georgia has taken sizable state budget reductions in recent years, the allocation of state dollars from the University budget to the Sea Grant program has remained unchanged. The current level of institutional support for the Georgia Sea Grant college program is commendable.
- The strategic plan grew out of a well organized process of situation assessment, data analysis, and strategic thinking involving stakeholders and scientists. Engagement of an external planning specialist and a group facilitator enabled program administrators to successfully implement a well structured and productive planning effort. The commitment of the program leadership to productive program visioning is noted and the process offered as an example of 'best management practices'.
- The scope of program relationships has substantially expanded under the leadership of the new Director. Interactions with the UGA Archway Partnership office, the Vinson Institute of Government and the Georgia Coastal Research Council add to the base of resources and stakeholder relationships relevant to addressing priority marine and coastal issues in Georgia. Coupled with the Director's vision for a more synergistic joint University of Georgia and Sea Grant effort in coastal programs, expectations are for greater impact and program visibility.
- A new Georgia Sea Grant advisory committee consisting of 15 members, with defined terms of appointment, has been highly engaged in guiding the program both in strategic planning and in tactical approaches to emerging issues. The breadth of the committee's expertise, their relationships and connectedness with agencies and stakeholders, and the willingness to invest in support of good science and the application of that science to marine and coastal issues, demonstrates the effectiveness of the membership selection, internal committee structure and the leadership of the Director.
- The majority of the 2005 Program Assessment Team (PAT) recommendations have been effectively addressed. For those not completed, actions-to-date were reported and specific plans for completing a response to the recommendations were provided.
- Interactions and cooperation with other NOAA programs in the state and region are substantial and growing. Examples include NMFS facilities, Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve, NOAA-Coastal Zone

Management, the Coastal Service Center, and NSF's COSEE program. Representatives of the CZM and the NERR programs are on the Program's advisory committee.

- Leadership contributions to regional Sea Grant efforts have expanded in recent years. Georgia is represented by the Director in the “Southeast and Caribbean Team” and the “South Atlantic Regional Research project”, and the Director and other staff are engaged in the “Climate Change Community of Practice”, a two-state invasive species project, the regional COSEE-SE program and the “Southeast Sea Grant Oceanography Summit”, a response to the Gulf oil spill.
- As mentioned, the development, review and selection of research projects were focused and transparent processes, following accepted practices. In detail, the RFP was distributed to 19 institutions in Georgia, five of which were Historically Black institutions. The proposals submitted were reviewed for relevance to the program goals and potential for outreach and impact. Those passing the first screen were invited to submit full proposals. Each proposal was reviewed by three or four out-of-state persons based on their knowledge of subject matter. An ad hoc committee used the written scientific evaluations and their expertise to rank the proposals. The process was guided by the Director's experience in NSF and other science based program reviews.

Suggestions

- Within the University of Georgia, little attention had been given to the lines of program and fiscal accountability among and between units participating in the Georgia Sea Grant College Program. Clearly delineated and written agreements will serve to avoid misunderstanding and deterioration of working relationships and facilitate the capacity of the Director to fulfill his responsibilities for fiscal and program accountability.
- More specifically, Georgia Sea Grant and MAREX should determine how jointly funded positions and activities are divided in terms of performance and management. This would provide mutually beneficial accountability and allow the two entities to better evaluate their individual and collective efforts.
- Stakeholder engagement was very extensive at the program management level. But, the SRT believes that the establishment of program advisory committees by the local marine extension and marine educators will substantially expand program ownership by the people involved, increase program visibility and provide new opportunities for local program resources.
- While the program has made progress in building relationships within the university, the SRT urges University leadership to move forward with a plan to use the vision and programming strategies of the University to address the marine and coastal issues of the state. From a Sea Grant program perspective, the SRT believes that incorporating the

scientific, outreach and education capacity of additional campus units, including the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, will provide relevant expertise and stakeholder connections to serve University and Sea Grant college interests.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The use of strategic planning and group-facilitating experts in development of the current Sea Grant strategic plan resulted in an effectively organized effort that successively engaged a large number of stakeholders. Comments from stakeholders reflected a strong endorsement for the resulting plan and for the development process they experienced.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Georgia Sea Grant Site Review was well planned and conducted. Many process and management changes have been made by the Program in the last two and half years. Notable among these is creation of a new Assistant Director position and an increase in the overall staff level.

Issues of the role of Georgia Sea Grant within the state of Georgia and the University of Georgia were explicitly addressed and there was clear evidence of a new, committed partnership between the University administration and the Sea Grant program. Crucial to this partnership, and providing potential for increased impact from the program, is creation of the representative and very engaged Sea Grant Advisory Board.

A significantly more explicit partnership/collaboration role between the University of Georgia's Marine Extension Program (MAREX) and Sea Grant's marine advisory services or extension was articulated by the Sea Grant director, the MAREX director and the University of Georgia. In Georgia, where the majority of the population is not located on the coast, but where coastal issues are numerous, complicated and often localized, this joint extension model is very important.

The Georgia Sea Grant Site Review Team thanks the Georgia Sea Grant program, the University of Georgia, specifically the Vice Presidents for Research and Public Service and Outreach, the MAREX director, and the Sea Grant Advisory Board for full engagement and participation in the two-day meeting and encourages Georgia Sea Grant and its partners to aggressively pursue new commitments and collaborative partnerships.

AGENDA

NATIONAL SEA GRANT SITE REVIEW OF THE GEORGIA SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, ATHENS, GEORGIA

DAY 1 - TUESDAY, JULY 13, 2010
FANNING INSTITUTE MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM

8:30 AM	Welcome Site Review Team - Georgia Center Lobby
	Tour of Sea Grant Facilities
9:00	Program Overview - Fanning Institute Main Conference Room Charles Hopkinson (Director GA Sea Grant) and Randal Walker (Director UGA Marine Extension Service)
Mid-AM	Break
10:30	Program Management, Organization and Structure within the University Charles Hopkinson and Management Team
	Management Team and Structure - Sea Grant and Marine Extension Hopkinson and Walker
	Reporting Structure
	Relation to Other Public Service and Outreach Programs
	Budgets and Distribution of Funds
	How Decisions Are Made
	Changes Following Previous Review
	Discussion
Noon	Lunch - Site Review Team, Advisory Board, University Administrators, Management Team Georgia Center Private Dining
1:30 PM	Strategic Planning, Advisory Board Interactions and Integrated Research Project Development Hopkinson and Management Team
	Advisory Board
	Strategic Planning Process David Bryant (Assistant Director GA Sea Grant)
	RFP Topic Selection, Dissemination and Review
Mid-PM	Break
	Full Proposal Development - Programmed Team Approach - Peer Review and Final Proposal Selection - Extended Coordination Hopkinson and Investigators Ron Carroll, Rob Williams, Marsha Black and Merryl Alber
	Discussion
5:00	Adjourn
6:30	Dinner at Local Restaurant - Site Review Team, Administrators, Advisory Board, Management Team

DAY 2 - WEDNESDAY, JULY 14, 2010
FANNING INSTITUTE BOARD ROOM

8:30 AM	Stakeholder Engagement - Fanning Institute Board Room Randal Walker
	Taking the Pulse of Coastal Stakeholders
	Working with Stakeholders
	Case Studies
Mid-AM	Break
10:00	Collaborative Regional, Network, and NOAA/Sea Grant Activities Hopkinson
	Discussion
	Response to Previous Review Hopkinson and Bryant
	Discussion
	Summary and Discussion
11-3:00	Site Review Team Closed Deliberations
Noon	Lunch - Catered in the Board Room for Site Team Advisory Board, Administrators, Management Team Georgia Center
3:00	Site Review Team Report Out University Administrators and SG Management Team
4:00	Adjourn