

School of Marine Science at VIMS welcomes new students

(August 25, 2010) The School of Marine Science (SMS) at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science welcomed incoming graduate students to campus during a 2-day orientation session before the start of classes on August 25th. The 27 new students represent the second largest class in SMS history.

Eighty percent of the incoming students are from outside Virginia, and 4 hail from foreign countries. Students earned undergraduate degrees at colleges and universities throughout the U.S., as well as in Mauritius, China, Taiwan, and Thailand. About half of the new students will work toward a master's degree, while the remaining students will seek the Ph.D.

Dean of Graduate Studies Iris Anderson says the incoming class is particularly noteworthy for the wealth of experience that they bring to their studies. "Every one of our incoming students has already conducted significant marine research in the field or lab," says Anderson. "We look forward to their contributions to our academic and research programs."

Among other positions, incoming students have served as

- a project manager for Reef Conservation, Mauritius, a non-profit dedicated to conserving the marine environment of this Indian Ocean island,
- an assistant professor at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand
- a lieutenant in the US Coast Guard, and
- a project coordinator for the Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Other new students have previously studied marine invasive species at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center on San Francisco Bay; ocean acidification at the Kodiak Fisheries Research Center in Alaska; and coral-reef genetics in Fiji and the Solomon Islands for the American Museum of Natural History.



Matriculating class of 2010: Front Row (L to R kneeling): Robert Miller, Jenna Spackeen, Jenna Luek, Qubin Qin, Chia-Yu Wu, Justin Birchler. 2nd Row (L to R): Brandon Conroy, Anna Murphy, Josh Stone, Wes Hudson, Emily Loose, Sean Charles, Gar Secrist, Ben Marcek, Jacob Spreitzer, Matt Freedman, Carissa Wilkerson, Megan Wood, Katie May Laumann, Cielomar Rodriguez. 3rd row (L to R): Brittani Koroknay, Kathleen Donaldson, Jennifer Elliott, Rebecca Wright, Cassandra Glaspie, Lauren Nys, Hadley McIntosh, Itchika Sivaipram.

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VIMS Dean and Director John Wells says “like all matriculating students, the members of the incoming class bring an infusion of new ideas and enthusiasm that helps maintain the high quality of research and academics at VIMS.” The new students bring VIMS’ total student population to 104 individuals.

In addition to their orientation to life on VIMS’ main campus in Gloucester Point, the students will also join VIMS faculty on a weekend trip to the VIMS Eastern Shore Laboratory in Wachapreague, where they will be introduced to the area’s unique coastal-bay and barrier-island ecosystems.

The School of Marine Science at VIMS is 1 of 4 graduate schools of the College of William and Mary. During their tenure at VIMS, students work closely with faculty advisors to conduct studies of marine environments ranging from estuaries to the open ocean, with special emphasis on providing solutions to help address the many challenges facing coastal ecosystems.

Anderson says a hallmark of the academic experience at VIMS is the opportunities that students have to work with the local community. “Many of our students end up working with citizens, marine industries, and policy-makers throughout Tidewater and Virginia,” says Anderson. “They bring a lot to the local community, and also learn a lot from local knowledge of Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.”

The School of Marine Science at VIMS has awarded more than 800 Master’s and Ph.D. degrees in marine science since 1943. VIMS graduates occupy leading roles in academia, government, and industry. VIMS alumni include a recent appointee to the President’s Commission on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, the CEO of one of the leading environmental consulting and engineering firms in the northeastern U.S., and a lead designer of the Smithsonian’s new Ocean Hall, among many other leadership positions.