



## Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Alabama Center for  
Marine Education and Research

### Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium Executive Committee Annual Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 29, 2022 at 11:00 a.m.

#### **Attendees:**

Mr. Jo Bonner, University of South Alabama  
Dr. Cynthia Warrick, Stillman College  
Dr. Chris Roberts, Auburn University  
Dr. Andi Kent, University of South Alabama  
Dr. John Valentine, Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium  
David England, Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium  
Shelley Stephens, Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium

#### **Absent:**

Dr. John Stewart, University of Montevallo  
Dr. Stuart Bell, University of Alabama

- Meeting called to order by Mr. Bonner, Chair of the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC) Executive Committee.
- Roll call of conference call attendees by Ms. Shelley Stephens.
- Dr. Valentine requested Chairman Bonner to call for a motion to approve minutes from the 2021 MESC Executive Committee conference call. Motion made by Dr. Roberts to approve the minutes; motion seconded by Dr. Warrick. Motion to approve minutes carried by unanimous vote.
- **Fiscal Year 2023 Budget (Document A) –**
  - Anticipated revenues, based on historical patterns and in-hand grants, contracts, and tuition, come to \$27,829,549, with projected forecasting for expenses being \$27,829,549 – a zero-sum budget.
  - The Unrestricted Funds for Operations and Maintenance is at \$7.75 million, the difference between that estimate and appropriation is about \$2.2 million, which we have to cover from IDC among other items.
  - Other highlights of the FY23 budget include:
    - \$5.25 in a supplement that is to be used to renew windows and HVAC in our aging dorms, environmental repairs in the cafeteria, and construct an open-air classroom.
    - There is a projected increase of 15,000 visitors to the Alabama Aquarium, which will result in an increase in auxiliary revenues.
    - Budgeted a 4% COLA for DISL employees.
    - \$500k for contingencies.
    - \$362,507 for debt service; we are close to paying off a bond that provided for emergency infrastructure repairs.

***Motion to accept the proposed FY2023 MESC budget made by Dr. Warrick; seconded by Mr. Bonner, followed by a unanimous vote to accept.***

- **State Audit Report**
  - Due to the State’s Office of Public Examiners being short-staffed, the 2021 audit was not begun until June and we do not anticipate the completed audit until October. Once the audit report is released, we will forward copies to the Executive Committee.
  - As a reminder, the 2020 audit was without any findings and that was the 25<sup>th</sup> consecutive year without any findings.
  
- **Summer School Performance Metrics**
  - **Slide 6** presents the historical growth of enrollment in the summer program. The blue bar represents undergraduate, red bar for graduate. The X-axis is the years for which we have enrollment records; the Y-axis is the number of credit hours.
    - Focusing on the past decade, there has been a significant increase in demand for summer classes, and for the most part, we are at full capacity.
  - **Slide 7** shows the proportional institutional distribution of graduate and undergraduate credit hours among Consortium institutions for the 2022 summer school program.
    - 15 of the 22 MESC institutions were represented
    - Auburn, UA, and USA comprised 55% of these enrollments.
    - Remaining 12 institutions contributed 36% of the credits taken.
  - **Slide 8** shows the distribution of graduate summer 2022 credit hours
    - USA had the largest enrollment (67%) followed by UAB due to their neurobiology course (29%).
  - **Slide 9** represents the distribution of graduate credit hours during the 2021-2022 academic year. UA is also a graduate presence due to two UA faculty in residence on the DISL campus.
  - ***Dr. Warrick raised a question on the need for hybrid courses. Dr. Valentine agreed this was a good point and we should begin exploring this as an option. Dr. Valentine asked the members of the Executive Committee if there would be opposition to opening the hybrid courses to out-of-state students; no objections were raised. Dr. Warrick supported the hybrid course option as a way to help smaller institutions like Stillman augment their general education course offerings with out having to add additional faculty members.***
  
- **Discovery Hall Programs (K-12) Metrics**
  - **Slide 10** During summer 2022, Discovery Hall Programs (K-12) saw 456 participants across their overnight and day camps, high school marine science course, and teacher workshops.
    - Of these participants, there were 32 Alabama counties represented, and participants from 26 states.
  - Outside of summer, DHP conducts programming through the academic year through classroom opportunities to approximately 10,000 students on campus, and another 13,000 students and educators, who do not have the resources to travel to DISL, by means of the BayMobile – a mobile science classroom and laboratory.
  
- **Campus renovation status -**

- **Slide 11** On August 30, we will have the final inspection for our multi-stressor wet lab that will provide the necessary infrastructure to conduct climate change research. This facility will allow for research specifically in manipulation of O<sub>2</sub> concentrations, acidification of ocean water and temperature.
  - **Slide 12** We are clearing the DCM hurdles and are now soliciting bids to construct a 24'x75' pool and accompanying classroom that will replace a 1960's smaller pool that hinders our scientific diving training and ROV classes. As associated classroom will also be a part of the upgrade.
  - **Slide 13** We have completed the design of a 65' aluminum hull vessel that will provide us with the opportunity to conduct research for up to five consecutive days at sea. Right now, we cannot stay out overnight. Aluminum is lighter and faster, and the design will allow us to fill a vessel niche that larger, heavier boats of the region cannot fill.
- **Alabama Center of Excellence**
    - Dr. Valentine reviewed the origin of the RESTORE Act and Alabama Gulf Recovery Council that led to the creation of the Alabama Center of Excellence.
    - RFP 1 was released and resulted in 10 major research grants totaling approximately \$5 million for coastal research.
      - One element of the effort was that PI's on the grants had to come from MESC entities and had to include a Co-PI from a second MESC entity.
      - The theme was current and future multi-stressors, the next slide highlights five of the 10 awards.
      - Over 80% of those funds stayed among MESC PI's.
- **USCG Property**
    - We are now in the sixth year of our effort to acquire the former USCG recreational property. Acquiring this property will allow for future growth in programs. Senator Shelby's office has been working with us and may have a resolution later this year.
- **Alabama Aquarium**
    - One element of our strategic plan is to modernize our 20-year-old aquarium and increase annual attendance to 120,000 annually.
- **IMTA Demonstration Project**
    - DISL is in partnership to conduct a demonstration project that can show that finfish aquaculture can be a viable area of workforce development. We are the lead PI, but are collaborating with Southern Miss, UNH, NOAA, and Sea Grant.
    - Historically it has been agreed that hurricanes in the Gulf make this a bad investment. What we now know is that it is possible to deploy rafts of cages in October and stock them with select species; we can grow algae, oysters, and redfish or tripletail, and have a harvestable crop the following June.
    - Site assessment is ongoing, but the numbers are pointing towards the Fort Morgan area.
- **New Dormitory**
    - Dr. Valentine discussed the need for a new dormitory on the DISL campus to service expanding University Programs offerings for both the summer and academic year.
    - A local political conflict over short terms rentals and rising real estate prices on Dauphin

Island also requiring a serious consideration of a new dormitory.

- **MESC Programmatic Outreach Highlights**

- Since the 2021 Executive Committee call, Dr. Valentine has made presentations to Rotary Clubs in Huntsville, Birmingham, and Mobile.
- DISL hosted visiting groups from Leadership Alabama, Orange Beach Public Schools, the U.S. Naval Academy, and the new Alabama State Docks CEO John Driscoll.
- Dr. Valentine also made visits to MESC Presidents Jo Bonner (USA); Chuck Karr (UAH); Ken Kitts (UNA); Phillip Way, (Athens State); Stewart Bell (UA); and Chris Roberts (Auburn).
- Dr. Valentine continued representing DISL on the Forever Wild Board.
- Dr. Valentine also participated in local, state, and GoM boards, COMURC, LUMCON Strategic Development Plan, MBNEP Executive, and Government Network Committees, and served as Chair of MSALSGC.
- Dr. Valentine also highlighted his continued scientific contributions through co-authoring four referred publications over the last 12 months.

- **Upcoming Events**

- The 10<sup>th</sup> annual Marine Environmental Awards Luncheon will be on October 26, 2022.
- This year's speaker is Dr. David Gallo of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, who led the effort to map the Titanic and the finding of the Air France flight in the Pacific Ocean.
- The Organizational award will go to the Alabama Wildlife Foundation; the individual award will go to Mr. Lee Hammonds of Oakworth Capital.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- There was no old business to discuss.
  
- Dr. Valentine called for any additional comments or questions.
- Dr. Valentine called for a motion to adjourn the call; a motion was made by Mr. Bonner and seconded by Dr. Warrick.
- The call was adjourned at 11:51 a.m.