

Information Letter #20

TO: Faculty and Staff of:
Department of Atmospheric Sciences
Department of Geology & Geophysics
Department of Geography
Department of Oceanography
Environmental Programs in Geosciences
Water Degree Program
Geochemical and Environmental Research Group
Integrated Ocean Drilling Program
Texas Sea Grant Office

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DATE: 26 January 2009

The *JOIDES Resolution* Has Sailed from Singapore!

Great news! As of 0825 hours Singapore time on Sunday 25 January 2009 (6:25 pm CST), i.e. this past Saturday, the *JOIDES Resolution* (JR) left Singapore for transit across the Pacific Ocean in preparation for the first 2009 IODP expedition. The JR is the only drilling platform of the Integrated Ocean Drilling Project, operated by the USIO Alliance on behalf of NSF and the United States. The leaving of Singapore brings to a close more than two years of intensive work to completely overhaul and refit the venerable IODP ocean drilling vessel with new laboratory facilities, enhanced science system capabilities for scientific research and collaboration, new living quarters, and improved drilling capabilities. The project, referred to as SODV (Scientific Ocean Drilling Vessel), cost ~\$130 million to complete.

JOIDES Resolution will transit to Guam during the next 10 days, during which a crew for special sea-trials will test science systems and vessel capabilities. In Guam, a team of renowned researchers, representing 10 years of collective experience aboard scientific ocean drilling vessels, will board the ship and join staff in evaluating the readiness of all science and drilling systems. The first scientific expedition since 2005, commencing on 5 March in Honolulu, will take the ship to the equatorial Pacific to explore and document extreme climate change events during the past 55 million years. The results will deepen our understanding of when time-critical climate events took place and their severity. With the Equatorial Pacific expedition, the newly refurbished vessel will rejoin the IODP Japanese-built *Chikyu* and European-platforms conducting international scientific ocean operations.

The *JOIDES Resolution* is managed by Texas A&M University on behalf of the USIO Alliance (consisting of IODP/Texas A&M University, Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory/Columbia University, and Coalition for Ocean Leadership) with funding from NSF. The actual owner of the ship is Overseas Drilling Limited (ODL) in which Transocean has a 50% stake. The many professionals from Texas A&M University and the Texas A&M Research Foundation who oversaw the JR conversion project in Singapore during the past two years are to be sincerely congratulated. Bill Wasson, TAMRF Vice President for Special Programs, and Bill Ball, Director SODV Conversion at the Coalition for Ocean Leadership, deserve much praise for the successful completion. Also, the Singapore TAMU/TAMRF team deserves accolades, including Dr. Jay Miller, SODV Project Manager, along with Bill Mills, Steve Midgley, Stacy Greer, Mike Sweezy and others who were in Singapore the longest. Praise also needs to be bestowed on the laboratory and science systems design teams, central management team (CMT), and perhaps as many as 350 people who had substantial contributions on the outcome of the SODV, from those who dealt with contracts, finances, scheduling, logistics to those who oversaw the effort from a management viewpoint at the involved organizations (NSF, Coalition for Ocean Leadership, TAMU/TAMRF, and ODL). The ship's crew also did an incredible job and deserves praise.

For a close-up look at the new marvelous scientific ocean drilling vessel, tune in to Daily Reports that will chronicle the JR as she completes her readiness preparations and is run through her paces over the next six weeks.
<http://iodp.tamu.edu/scienceops/sitesumm/seatrials/>.

Research Administration Revisited – FY09

Principal investigators (PI's) in the College of Geosciences may submit research proposals through TAMU Research Services (TAMU-RS) or the Texas A&M Research Foundation (TAMRF). If a PI has an appointment or other affiliation with the Colleges of Engineering or Agriculture, s/he may also have the option to submit through TEES, TTI, or TAES. However, this discussion is focused on proposal submission through TAMU-RS and TAMRF, the most common avenues utilized by PI's in the College. The Vice President for Research (VPR) Office currently charges research administrative costs to the College and returns a portion of the indirect cost (IDC) generated on projects administered by TAMU-RS and TAMRF.

Net IDC returned to the College from the VPR equals total IDC generated minus the charge for the cost of services and a set aside pool for university research initiatives and cost sharing whether a proposal is submitted through TAMU-RS or TAMRF. However, the calculation of the cost of research administrative services (pre-award and post-award) differs greatly. The TAMU-RS cost of services (both direct and indirect) is calculated as a straight percentage of total indirect cost (TIDC) generated. On the other hand, TAMRF's cost of services is calculated on a percentage of total direct cost (TDC).

For proposals submitted through TAMU-RS, the VPR retains 15% of TIDC generated (13% for direct sponsored contract costs and 2% to recover indirect non-core research services costs), and an additional 40% of total IDC generated as a university pool for university research initiatives and cost sharing. The research administrative cost of non-IDC generating projects is subsidized by the IDC generating projects for TAMU-RS projects. The College, and the departments and PI's in turn, will thus realize a returned IDC return on all TAMU-RS projects that generate IDC.

For submissions through TAMRF, proposals could potentially (as happened last year) result in either a positive or negative net IDC returned to the College, depending on the nature of the total direct costs. The details of how TAMRF charges for research administration costs warrant scrutiny. How can there possibly be a negative net IDC return? It occurs because TAMRF currently returns 100% of IDC generated on TAMRF projects to the VPR but charges its customers (including TAMU) for pre- and post- award services on a per project basis based on TDC. TAMRF's cost recovery method (<http://rf-web.tamu.edu/general/rateinfo/rates.html>) has changed for FY09 with subsequent ramifications for indirect cost (IDC) return to the College. The current (FY09) TAMRF service costs include:

- an overall effective cost rate of 5.47% on TDC (down from 6.35% in FY08) for TAMU PI's, a slightly lower rate as compared to other system members because of the high TAMU volume. However, as the rate is charged on total direct expenditures it may result in a negative net IDC on projects with reduced or no overhead.
- a reduced flat charge of 2% of TDC for all scholarships, tuition, equipment and cash balance account expenditures instead of the 5.47% effective cost rate. While this will reduce the cost of such projects, there is still a cost without corresponding IDC.
- no service charge for single subcontract expenditures greater than \$500K; however, subcontract expenditures up to \$500K will be charged at the applicable system member cost rate (5.47% for TAMU). While this will reduce cost for projects with subcontracts greater than \$500K, there will still be a cost of \$27.25K for each \$500K subcontract and full 5.47% cost on smaller subcontracts, which will only generate IDC income on the first \$25K.
- a flat fee of \$755 for processing of each proposal potentially administered as a TAMRF contract or grant. The VPR will pass this cost through to the College, and the College will average these costs across all TAMRF College projects before allocating IDC returns to the departments.

Calculation of net IDC return on TAMRF projects will thus be a multiple step process and may result in a negative (service cost greater than returned IDC) net IDC return on an individual project basis. For this reason, the College of Geosciences will continue its policy to encourage and/or mandate the use of TAMU-RS on most projects based on overall cost benefits.

For TAMU-RS administered projects, the algorithm is: College IDC return = 100% TIDC - (15% TIDC) - (40% TIDC) = + 45% TIDC.

For TAMRF administered projects, the algorithm is: College IDC return = 100% TIDC - (distributed cost of \$755 x # of TAMRF proposals) - (2% of scholarship, tuition, equipment, and cash balance TDC) - (5.47% of TDC single subcontracts < \$500K) - (5.47% of all other TDC excluding TDC > \$500K per single subcontract) - (2% TIDC) - (40% TIDC) = ±\$. Thus, depending on the composition of total direct costs, TAMRF projects may or may not realize IDC return to the College.

The College currently allocates \$2.5 to the unit for every \$1 of net IDC return retained by the College. College PI's will realize IDC return on all TAMU-RS projects that generate IDC expenditures and will never experience a "negative" IDC return for projects administered by TAMU-RS. The College policy will remain to channel proposals based on maximum benefit to cost and cost avoidance.

O&M Saved from a Blaze

Thanks to quick thinking by Sarah and Bob Bednarz, a fire on the north side of the O&M building was rapidly contained on 31 December. Sarah smelled something burning as they were leaving the building and then noticed a fire being whipped up by our infamous O&M wind. With the help of a grad student, they contacted College Station and TAMU Police who arrived at the scene and put out the fire with extinguishers. The fire department responded as well. It is quite probable that the fire started from a discarded cigarette. All who smoke outside the buildings need to be sure to extinguish and dispose of cigarettes properly. According to Texas state law, smoking is prohibited within 25 feet of the entrance to any state building. The Physical Plant Radio Room should be contacted in all emergencies (845-4311).

Fire Extinguisher Demonstrations Planned

The recent fire outside O&M illustrates the need for all to know where fire extinguishers are located in the buildings. Check the building floor plans which are usually posted near the elevators – the red dots are the fire extinguishers. Many labs have extinguishers too; all lab workers should know where the extinguishers are and how to use them. College Facilities Coordinator Maureen Reap is scheduling fire extinguisher demonstrations through Environmental Health and Safety for all who work in Halbouty, O&M and CSA. During these hands-on demonstrations, attendees will have the chance to actually handle and use an extinguisher. Dates and times will follow.

Spring Semester Enrollment

Preliminary first class day data for spring semester 2009 shows that total enrollment in the College of Geosciences stands at 830 students, which is a 12.5% increase over our spring 2008 enrollment of 738. This includes a 42.1% increase in first time transfer student enrollment (from 19 in 2008 to 27 in 2009) and a 144.4% increase in first time graduate student enrollment (from 9 last year to 22 this year). Over the past five years, spring semester enrollment has steadily increased with an overall growth of 15.4%.

Recruitment Update

Student Recruitment Director Sonia Garcia was busy during the fall semester visiting targeted and non-targeted high schools in the state as well as establishing relationships with the Texas A&M Prospective Student Centers and community colleges such as Palo Alto, San Antonio College, and Blinn. She visited more than 21 high schools, including specialized science academies in Houston and the Rio Grande Valley, and had direct contact with 553 prospective applicants as well as junior students. She also met with school counselors, principals, and community leaders to lay the groundwork for future collaboration. In the January 2009 TAMU Enrollment Management Report -- Freshman Fall 2009, the College of Geosciences shows a healthy increase in the amount of total applications and number of admitted students. Compared to this point in time last year, applications have increased from 224 to 311. Similarly, last year the number of admitted students at this point in time was 71 as compared to 116 this year, a difference of 45 students (63% increase). Sonia will begin her spring traveling in February. She will very soon have ready and available a new undergraduate recruitment brochure. Also, she is organizing a college-wide effort for Texas A&M's Aggieland Saturday Open House Event on Saturday 21 February.

Welcome Back Jim Rosser

I am pleased to announce that after accepting a position as Deputy Chief of Enterprise IT Operations Support at the Defense Intelligence Agency and moving to Washington D.C. in late October, Jim Rosser reconsidered his decision. He was re-hired as the College of Geosciences Information Technology Director on 22 December. We are pleased to have Jim back. During his three years as IT director, his team began consolidating common College IT services, revamped all College and department web sites, and built a central data center. Now that he has returned, we look forward to continued program excellence and advancements in IT services.

Ralph Rayburn Texas Sea Grant Scholarship

It has been almost a year since Ralph Rayburn, Texas Sea Grant Extension Program leader, died suddenly at age 60 of an apparent heart attack. Ralph's passion for the coast continues through a scholarship created in his honor to benefit

graduate students in oceanography. The Ralph Rayburn Texas Sea Grant Scholarship, administered by the Department of Oceanography, is nearing its target endowment amount. Anyone wishing to contribute to this scholarship should contact Terry Poehl at Texas Sea Grant (tlpoehl@tamu.edu).

School of Rock 2009 Aboard the *JOIDES Resolution*

IODP and the Consortium for Ocean Leadership will conduct the annual School of Rock aboard the *JOIDES Resolution* 23 June through 5 July. The program, titled "Cores, CORKS and Hydrology on the Juan de Fuca Ridge", is a hands-on, research-based expedition for earth and ocean science educators. The workshop is open to science teachers at all levels, including faculty teaching undergraduates, pre-service, and informal educators. The application deadline is 4 February. Further information is available at http://www.oceanleadership.org/learning/school_of_rock/09.

Distinguished Professor Emeritus Robert Reid Dies

Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Oceanography Robert Reid died Friday 23 January. Bob had an illustrious career at Texas A&M University, joining the Department of Oceanography-Meteorology as an assistant professor in 1951. As one of the first faculty members in the newly formed Department of Oceanography-Meteorology, he was instrumental in building the program and shaping its future. He was recruited from Scripps Institution of Oceanography by Dale F. Leipper, the first department head, who had worked with him at Scripps under legendary H.U. Sverdrup. Bob became an associate professor in 1953 and a professor of Civil Engineering and Oceanography in 1959. He was named a University Distinguished Professor in 1978 and served as head of the Department of Oceanography from 1981 until 1987. He is the only member of the National Academy of Engineering in the College of Geosciences. Although he retired in 1987, Bob remained active by continuing to teach and advise students in OCNG and came to his office in the O&M Building regularly as late as last fall. I had the pleasure of first meeting Bob in 1971 while he reviewed the Coastal Studies Institute/LSU on behalf of ONR.

College of Geosciences on Facebook

The College of Geosciences is now on Facebook. All faculty, staff and students are invited to visit this page and become a fan. The College Facebook page features photos, videos and information about events and activities in our departments, programs and research centers. Several College groups already have pages on Facebook including Geology & Geophysics at Texas A&M University, Environmental Programs - College of Geosciences, and the Geosciences Student Association. We hope members of these groups will also become fans of the College page. While the University's official Facebook page now boasts over 22,000 fans, Geosciences does not necessarily aspire to become that popular. However, we do hope that this will be a dynamic communications link for everyone in the College who uses Facebook. Please direct any questions or comments to Communications Coordinator Carol Trono who administers the page.

Facilities Update

Halbouty

- Radiogenic Lab. The metal ductwork above the hoods in the Class 10,000 lab is rusted and deteriorating after only six months of operation. The cause of the deterioration remains undetermined. Physical Plant will install new plastic ductwork and an in-line air scrubber. The installation will bypass the existing metal runs, thus limiting construction mess and down-time.

O&M

- Suite 702 (office renovation for DiMarco). Construction has been completed. George Jackson and the DiMarco team are in the process of moving.
- Rooms 104-106, and 109 (Environmental Programs). Physical Plant has been authorized by the Dean's office to proceed with this project. Originally planned for completion over the winter holiday break, it now appears that work will begin later this semester.
- Room B04 (College Data Center). Construction has been completed. The IT staff continues to address networking, cabling, and other in-house issues, including plans to move departmental servers to the data center.
- Rooms 207-209 (student laboratories). Near-final plans have been approved for this renovation with work to be done over the summer. The project will go out for bids in February.

Lunar New Year

Today is the first day of the first lunar month signaling the New Lunar Year, the year of the Ox. Happy Lunar New Year!