



PART 3

**OCEAN STEWARDSHIP:
THE IMPORTANCE OF
EDUCATION AND
PUBLIC AWARENESS**

CHAPTER 8

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PROMOTING LIFELONG OCEAN EDUCATION



Strengthening the nation's awareness of the importance of the oceans requires a heightened focus on the marine environment, through both formal and informal education efforts. School curricula, starting in kindergarten, should expose students to ocean issues, preparing the next generation of ocean scientists, managers, educators, and leaders through diverse educational opportunities. In addition, because formal curricula only reach students for a limited time, informal education aimed at the entire population is needed to foster lifelong learning.

An education office under the oversight of the National Ocean Council and empowered by federal agency leadership will provide a national focal point to improve ocean-related education efforts, facilitate coordination of ocean-related education among federal agencies, and enhance collaboration among the research community, state and local education authorities, and the private sector.

Strengthening the Nation's Ocean Awareness

A recent national survey indicates that the American public has only a superficial awareness of the importance of the ocean to their daily lives, let alone its importance to all life on the planet.¹ The ocean is a source of food and medicine, controls global climate, provides energy, supplies jobs, supports economies, and reveals information about the planet that cannot be gained from any other source. The ocean conceals the highest mountains and deepest canyons on Earth, as well as valuable cultural artifacts. Exploration of the ocean has revealed amazing organisms straight out of science fiction and entire ecosystems previously unknown to humankind.

But the extent of what we do not know—what remains undiscovered—sparks the imagination. With so much of the marine environment still unexplored, the ocean can be viewed as the final frontier on Earth.

While most people do not recognize the number of benefits the ocean provides, or its potential for further discovery, many do feel a positive connection with it, sensing perhaps that the vitality of the sea is directly related to human survival. This connection can be a powerful tool for increasing awareness of, interest in, and responsible action toward the marine environment, and is critical to building an ocean stewardship ethic, strengthening the nation's science literacy, and creating a new generation of ocean leaders.

Ocean Stewardship

To successfully address complex ocean- and coastal-related issues, balance the use and conservation of marine resources, and realize future benefits from the ocean, an interested, engaged public is essential. The public should be armed not only with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed choices, but also with a sense of excitement. Individuals need to understand the importance of the ocean to their lives and realize how their individual actions affect the marine environment. Public understanding of human impacts on the marine environment will engender recognition of the benefits to be derived from well-managed ocean resources. Because of the connection among the oceans, the atmosphere, and the land, inland communities need to be as informed and involved as seaside communities.

Science Literacy

Ocean-related education also has the potential to stem the tide of science illiteracy threatening to undermine the nation's health, safety, and security. The scientific literacy of U.S. high school graduates is well below the international average.² This progressive loss of literacy weakens the nation's ability to maintain its traditionally strong foundation in science and mathematics. Only 15 percent of American adults now describe themselves as well informed about science and technology issues.³

Children have a natural curiosity about the world around them. By the ninth grade, however, this innate interest has too often faded or been transformed into apprehension—or even fear.⁴ Capturing children's attention early, and continually nurturing their inherent scientific curiosity, is critical to achieving scientific literacy and would be well served by employing the natural, multidisciplinary allure of the ocean as a basis for teaching science, mathematics, and engineering concepts.

This allure could be parlayed into higher achievement in other subjects as well. The influence of the ocean on nearly every aspect of daily life, and the central role it plays in the development of the nation, make ocean-based studies ideal for enhancing student performance in areas such as geography, history, economics, policy, and law. Strengthening science literacy, therefore, encompasses not only natural sciences, but a full suite of social sciences.

Future Ocean Leaders

The nation needs a diverse, knowledgeable, and adequately prepared workforce to enhance understanding of the marine environment and make decisions regarding complex ocean- and coastal-related issues. As far back as 1929, the National Research Council emphasized that advances in ocean knowledge would depend on an ocean-related workforce sufficient in size and ability, with ample educational opportunities at its disposal.⁵ In today's competitive world of knowledge-based, technology-driven economies, with increasing demands on ocean and coastal resources, this need is even more relevant and urgent.

The education of the 21st century ocean-related workforce will require not only a strong understanding of oceanography and other disciplines, but an ability to integrate science concepts, engineering methods, and sociopolitical considerations. Resolving complex ocean issues related to economic stability, environmental health, and national security will require a workforce with diverse skills and backgrounds. Developing and maintaining such a workforce will rely, in turn, on programs of higher education that prepare future ocean professionals at a variety of levels and in a variety of marine-related fields.

Crosscutting Themes

While this chapter is organized into several sections—a collaborative education network, K–12 education, higher education and the workforce, and informal education—problems identified in each of these areas often affect the others. For example, inadequate funding is a concern throughout K–12, graduate, and informal education. Likewise, increased coordination is needed within and among all educational areas. One critical issue is the need to bridge the gap between the research and education communities. Ocean-based professional development for teachers, scientifically sound ocean-based curricular materials, and up-to-date information for the public are just a few of the educational concerns that will depend on strong, vibrant connections between researchers and educators.

Another focus of this chapter is the role of the federal government in education. Although states are the leaders in K–12 education, federal agencies are a critical component of the education community. Ocean agencies will need appropriate direction and resources to fulfill this important role.

Building a Collaborative Ocean Education Network

To achieve meaningful, lifelong learning on ocean issues, the efforts of federal agencies, state and local authorities, nongovernmental entities, and professional societies with roles in education need to be better coordinated.

Participants in Ocean Education

Although not all ocean-related federal agencies have a specific education mission, most have made efforts to reach out to students, teachers, and the public to inform them about ocean issues, sometimes by adding ocean-related components to larger science and environmental education efforts. Agencies that have developed educational programs related to planetary, environmental, and scientific processes include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Navy, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Science Foundation (NSF), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Minerals Management Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey. These programs increase public understanding of the Earth's systems and the environment. While it is valuable for ocean-related information to be included as part of broader environmental and science education efforts, it is also important to support educational efforts that focus specifically on oceans, coasts, and the human relationship with them.

Of course, the U.S. Department of Education has the overarching responsibility of ensuring equal access to and fostering excellence in education across the nation. The department is engaged in a partnership effort with states and school districts to implement education reforms, including requirements that each state meet certain goals in core subject areas, such as science, math, and reading.

Two national-level ocean education programs of particular importance are the Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence (COSEE) and the National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant). COSEE is an NSF initiative, with additional support from the Office of Naval Research (ONR) and NOAA, that has established a number of regional centers and a national office to create a coordinated program for ocean science education. Sea Grant, a partnership between NOAA and U.S. universities, is a national program implemented at the state level to further ocean-related research, education, and outreach.

While federal programs provide many opportunities for ocean-related education, education is primarily a state responsibility, with direct control exerted at the local level.

Therefore, the interaction and involvement of education administrators at the state, district, and individual school levels will be fundamental to the success of any effort to use ocean-based examples to enhance student achievement.

Aquariums, zoos, museums, and other informal education centers also provide the public with opportunities to learn about the marine environment. Teachers rely on these informal venues as another way to educate students about the oceans. The involvement of those who educate teachers, including subject-specific and professional development instructors, is critical to providing teachers the knowledge, confidence, attitudes, and ability to teach ocean-related information.

A number of groups and associations also have a significant role in ocean-related education, including professional societies, such as the National Marine Educators Association (NMEA), the National Science Teachers Association, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Finally, marine labs and field stations can play a key role in college and university education in ocean and coastal sciences. Most students have limited access to marine environments at their home campuses, and marine labs and field stations can provide avenues for direct experience with marine life and marine environments.

Coordinating Ocean Education

Despite the existence of many positive efforts, ocean education remains a patchwork of independently conceived and implemented programs and activities. These efforts cannot provide the nationwide momentum and visibility needed to promote sustained ocean education for students, teachers, and the general public. Within the federal government, there is little discussion of ocean education, even among those agencies with the greatest responsibility for ocean issues. Different programs and funding mechanisms are not coordinated and resources are seldom leveraged. Even within individual agencies, offices that have education components often do not collaborate or communicate.

Existing Coordination Efforts

Existing efforts at coordination have failed to take hold nationally. For example, NMEA is a national organization that brings together individuals concerned with marine-related education. However, it is strictly a volunteer initiative, with limited resources and capacity to develop, support, and sustain national-scale efforts. The Federal Task Force on Environmental Education, chaired by EPA, has had some success in bringing together federal agencies to support joint programs in environmental education. However, these programs tend to be relatively small in scale and scope, with limited attention devoted to ocean issues. The National Science and Technology Council's Committee on Science recently formed a Subcommittee on Education because of a recognized need for improved coordination of all educational programs among federal agencies. The Subcommittee is intended to help reduce fragmentation and duplication and to bring about a coordinated set of programs. While this new body has the potential to unite agency education efforts, it too lacks an ocean focus.

One program that does focus on ocean issues is the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), a statutory collaboration of fifteen federal agencies intended to provide leadership and coordination of national oceanographic research and education programs. Primarily through its grant program, NOPP has provided support for innovative education and outreach projects. NOPP's Ocean Research Advisory Panel recently drafted a national ocean education strategy to improve ocean literacy and science education.⁶ This strategy has great potential, but it has yet to be formally approved or adopted. Further, while NOPP has provided a venue for agencies to jointly fund ocean education activities, it does not provide a coordination mechanism for existing programs.

The sea and its mysteries fascinate most people and this interest can be used to engage students to think about how they are connected to the sea and how the ocean plays a role in our collective future.

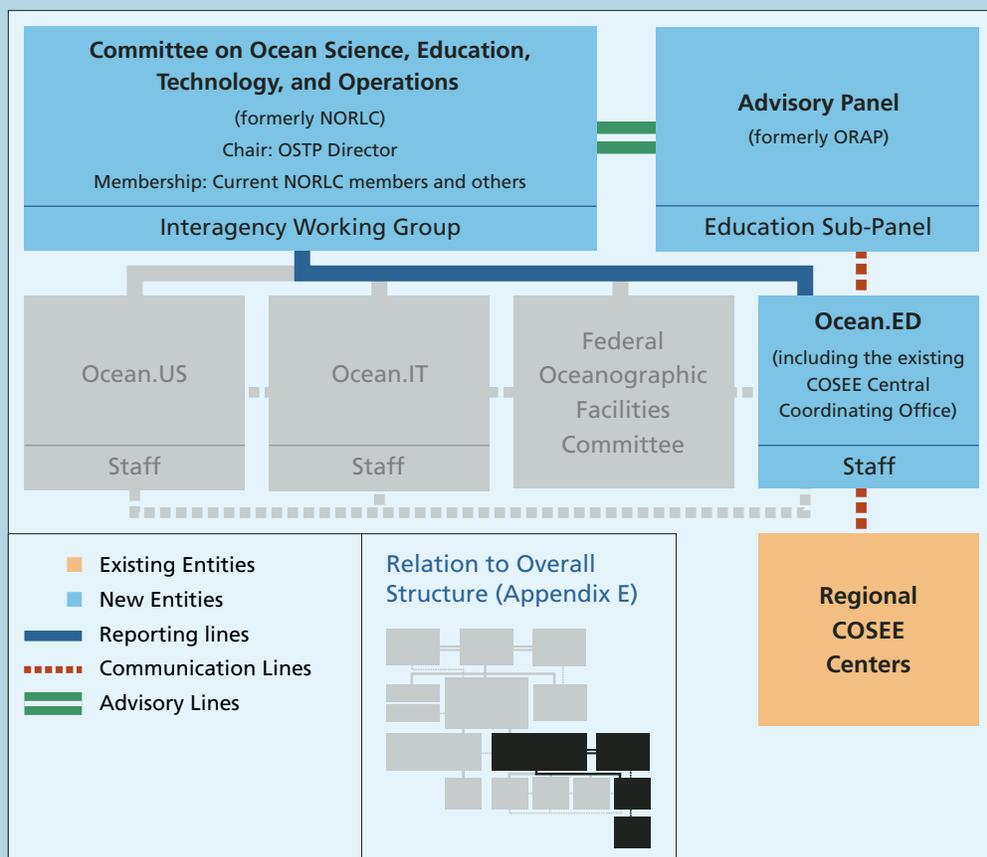
—Jean-Michel Cousteau,
President, The Ocean
Futures Society, testimony
to the Commission,
April 2002

The coordination activities described above, while helpful, do not combine federal resources across agencies in a coherent, planned, and visible way. Without leadership, no common vision for ocean education has been developed, and no path for achieving such a vision has been laid out.

A National Ocean Education Office

As discussed in Chapter 4, the National Ocean Council, to be established within the Executive Office of the President, would serve as the federal coordinating body for all ocean-related activities. NOPP and its associated offices and committees would be incorporated within this structure. By strengthening and expanding NOPP's governing body (currently the National Ocean Research Leadership Council, but reconstituted pursuant to Recommendation 4–7 as the Committee on Ocean Science, Education, Technology, and Operations [COSETO]), and placing it under the National Ocean Council, the original NOPP goal of bringing agencies together on ocean research, operations, observing, and education efforts is more likely to be fulfilled. A national ocean education office would be an integral part of COSETO, serving as the education component of the enhanced NOPP (Figure 8.1). Such an office would coordinate the various federal ocean-related education efforts and perform many of the functions outlined in the education strategy crafted by

Figure 8.1 Proposed Structure for the Coordination of Federal Ocean Education Activities



Shown here are the institutional components that should be established under the Committee on Ocean Science, Education, Technology, and Operations (COSETO, described in Chapter 4) to improve federal leadership and coordination in ocean education. This diagram also illustrates the links between education components and other units under COSETO. Entities shaded in gray are discussed in Chapter 25.

NOPP's Ocean Research Advisory Panel. The education office would work closely with the other NOPP offices and committees, including Ocean.US, the office responsible for coordinating development of the Integrated Ocean Observing System, which includes several education efforts.

A national ocean education office would coordinate and integrate federal agency programs, leverage resources, serve as a central, visible point of contact for K–12, university-level, and informal education partners, and work with state and local education experts and others to develop a vision, strategy, and coherent, comprehensive plans for national ocean education. In doing so, the national office should also interact with the regional ocean councils, as one avenue for ensuring consideration of regional needs.

Recommendation 8–1

Congress should amend the National Oceanographic Partnership Act to add a national ocean education office (Ocean.ED) with responsibility for strengthening ocean-related education and coordinating federal education efforts.

In particular, Ocean.ED should:

- develop a national strategy for enhancing educational achievement in natural and social sciences and increasing ocean awareness, including promotion of programs that transcend the traditional mission boundaries of individual agencies.
- develop a medium-term (five-year) national plan for ocean-related K–12 and informal education, working with federal, state, and nongovernmental education entities.
- coordinate and integrate all federal ocean-related education activities and investments.
- establish links among federal efforts, state and local education authorities, informal education facilities and programs, institutions of higher learning, and private-sector education initiatives, and strengthen existing partnerships.
- report to the National Ocean Council's Committee on Ocean Science, Education, Technology, and Operations.

Recommendation 8–2

Congress should provide funding for Ocean.ED operations and program implementation as a line item in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) budget, to be spent at the direction of the National Ocean Council (NOC). NOAA should develop a streamlined process for distributing Ocean.ED funds to other federal and nonfederal entities based on the NOC-approved plan.

This national effort is not meant to replace other successful programs and activities, but rather provide a mechanism for communication, coordination, and joining of forces. Once created, Ocean.ED will need staff support, sustained funding, and oversight by an interagency committee reporting to the National Ocean Council. While Ocean.ED will focus on ocean-related education, these efforts will have a greater chance of success if they are linked with efforts to improve education in other subjects, including natural sciences, technology, engineering, math, and a range of social sciences. Therefore, participation should extend beyond the current NOPP agencies, including the Department of Education. The new education office will also need an external advisory body to ensure involvement of and communication with professional teaching organizations and other experts.

The ability of a national-level ocean education office to effectively coordinate and promote ocean education efforts depends on every ocean-related federal agency acknowledging education as a priority. NASA and NSF have long embraced this approach, but it has been more difficult for many of the more mission-oriented agencies. Nevertheless, NOAA's strategic plan for fiscal years 2003–8 includes environmental literacy, outreach, and education as a crosscutting priority⁷ and the agency recently created an Office of

Education and Sustainable Development to coordinate its education activities. By passing an organic act for NOAA that includes education as part of the agency's charge, as recommended in Chapter 7, Congress can encourage these positive developments.

Funding and Assessment

In addition to the functions of Ocean.ED outlined above, the office, working through the National Ocean Council process, should help ensure that adequate funding is available to carry out ocean-related education programs and activities. It is also important for the office to work with the education community to develop a process for periodically assessing and evaluating ocean education efforts.

Sustained Support for Ocean Education

Adequate funding will be needed to meet the goals outlined in this chapter, but it is particularly important that funding for ocean-related education be sustained over time (for periods of at least five years) to allow programs to become established, produce results, and identify potential nonfederal funding sources. Continuity of funding ensures that successful education efforts can be continued, expanded, and replicated. Dedicated, secure, sustained sources of support for formal and informal ocean education efforts are needed. Such funding could be distributed through the existing NOPP funding process.

Evaluation and Assessment of Ocean Education Efforts

If ocean-based K–12, informal, and professional development programs are to serve as the basis for enhancing ocean awareness and increasing knowledge among students, educators, and the public, it will be critical to determine the effectiveness of these programs. For professional development efforts, accurate, properly conducted evaluation and assessment is vital to know how to modify existing programs and establish effective new efforts that provide educators with a productive and valuable experience. Likewise, identification and evaluation of best practices for incorporating ocean-based concepts into K–12 and teacher preparation coursework will help ensure continual improvement. Assessment mechanisms are needed to determine whether ocean-based coursework and programs are enhancing students' academic achievement and to promote materials and programs that provide the most enriching learning experiences.

Evaluation and assessment mechanisms are also critical to determining whether public education programs have been effective at delivering their messages. This information, combined with data on the state of public knowledge, provides the basis for program development and modification.

Recommendation 8–3

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Science Foundation, Office of Naval Research, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration should strengthen their support of both formal and informal ocean-related education, including appropriate evaluations of these efforts.

In particular, these agencies should:

- develop, with assistance from Ocean.ED, a cooperative system of dedicated, sustained, multi-agency funding for formal and informal ocean education. This funding should be explicitly linked to the national ocean education plan.
- provide support for development and implementation of ocean-related education materials and activities with a requirement that evaluation mechanisms be included as a component of every program.

Recommendation 8–4

Ocean.ED should develop a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of ocean-related education programs, ocean-based K–12 professional development programs, best practices for incorporating ocean-based examples into K–12 education, and public education programs.

Linking the Research and Education Communities

Collaboration between the research and education communities must be improved if ocean-based information, including ocean data and new discoveries, is to be transformed into exciting and accessible materials to stimulate student achievement and enhance public awareness. Some efforts do exist to make these connections, most notably through the COSEE and Sea Grant programs.

Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence

The COSEE network includes regional centers and a central coordinating office that work to integrate oceanographic data and information into high-quality curricular materials, provide ocean scientists with opportunities to learn more about educational needs and requirements, provide K–12 teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively incorporate ocean-related information into their lessons, and deliver ocean-related information to the public.

Though recognized as a model for enhancing education and bringing accessible ocean-related information to the public, COSEE currently has only seven regional centers, each serving a limited number of schools in its area. The program does not have the level of committed, long-term support required to fully realize its potential.

While COSEE is currently an NSF program, placing it within the National Ocean Council structure as a NOPP program would enable the other NOPP agencies to more easily support it, capitalizing on the tremendous potential to enhance and expand the program. The placement of COSEE within NOPP should not alter the relationships established between the central coordinating office and the regional centers, or among the regional centers and their partners. Before COSEE is expanded significantly in scale and scope, its regional centers need to be evaluated to ensure that they are all addressing educational needs effectively.

Recommendation 8–5

The National Ocean Council (NOC), working with the National Science Foundation, should place the Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence (COSEE) within the NOC structure as a program to be organized and overseen through Ocean.ED. The NOC should also work to expand the COSEE program.

Expansion of COSEE should include:

- tripling the number of regional centers to twenty-one, with each center receiving at least \$1.5 million a year for an initial five year period.
- expanding the reach of each center beyond its immediate participants.
- identifying models for successful partnerships between scientists and K–12 teachers.
- devising strategies to incorporate the expertise of university science education specialists.
- implementing professional development programs for K–12 teachers and university research professors.

The National Sea Grant College Program

The Sea Grant Program was created by Congress in 1966. Sea Grant sponsors research, education, outreach, and technology transfer through a partnership between the nation's universities and NOAA. The program works with university scientists, educators, and out-

reach specialists to study marine and Great Lakes resource management, development, and conservation issues, and then shares that knowledge with coastal businesses, marine industries, government, educators, and the public.

Sea Grant has forged connections between the research and education communities since its inception. Its programs provide K–12 teacher preparation and professional development programs consistent with state education standards, offer hands-on educational experiences for students, and develop research-based curricula and communications materials for students and the public. The Sea Grant network relies on longstanding local partnerships, with many connections to populations that have been traditionally underrepresented and underserved by the ocean community.

Despite its successes, however, Sea Grant is currently an underutilized resource. The existing Sea Grant network could expand its roles and responsibilities, particularly in education and outreach. Such an expanded and strengthened role is not possible with Sea Grant's current annual budget of just over \$60 million. Funding for Sea Grant education initiatives is particularly limited, amounting to approximately 5 percent of the program's budget in fiscal year 2002 (excluding fellowship programs). Although Sea Grant is one of the few major education outlets for NOAA, not all state Sea Grant programs have even one full-time education professional on staff due to funding limitations.

Recommendation 8–6

The National Sea Grant College Program should increase the proportion of its resources dedicated to ocean and coastal education.

The investment in Sea Grant's education programs should be brought in line with its extension efforts. This would enable all Sea Grant programs to employ full time education staff, have direct interaction with COSEE, and have long-term, dedicated resources available for schools and teachers. (A discussion of the need to expand the Sea Grant program overall is presented in Chapter 25.)

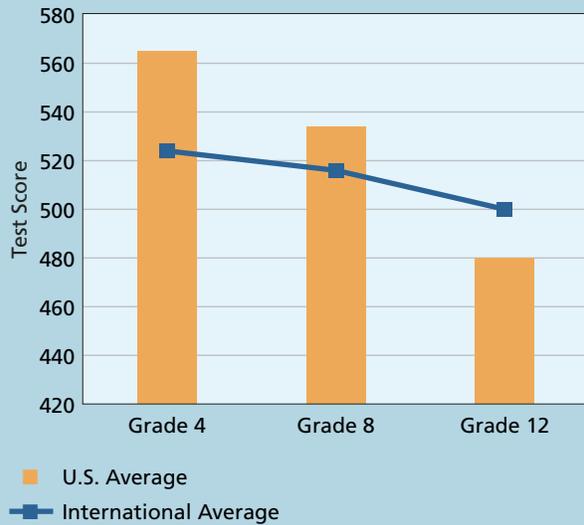
Because both the COSEE and Sea Grant programs play an important role in bringing together the research and education communities, and both operate on national, regional, state, and local levels, there are natural links that could be established between them. While Sea Grant programs currently participate in many of the regional COSEE centers, these two programs could enhance their partnership by developing links in all of the regions in which they both operate. In addition, COSEE and Sea Grant will need to establish strong partnerships with the regional ocean information programs discussed in Chapter 5.

Incorporating Oceans into K–12 Education

International studies show that the United States is not preparing its citizens to sustain and build on the nation's past scientific and technological accomplishments and compete successfully in an increasingly complex and technical world (Figure 8.2). At the same time, a lack of public awareness about the importance of the ocean hampers efforts to develop a balanced approach to the use and conservation of marine resources. Incorporating ocean-based learning experiences into K–12 education can help redress both these deficiencies.

A study of forty schools in twelve states found that integration of environment-based programs into the overall education system increased student academic achievement in a number of areas (Figure 8.3), underscoring the power of using the student's world, including both natural and sociocultural environments, as a conduit for reaching and engaging students.

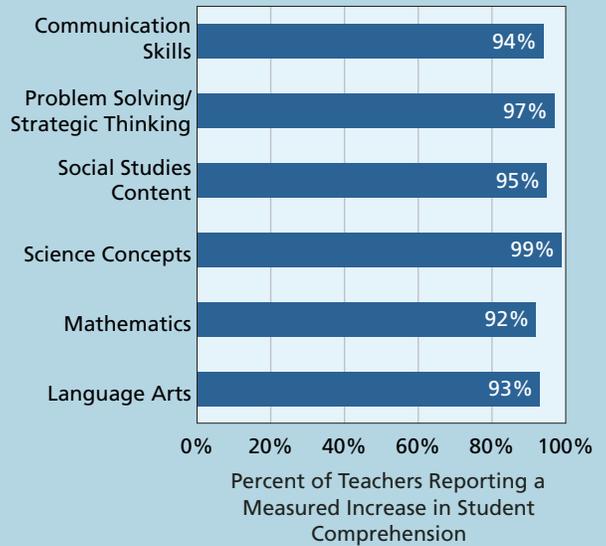
Figure 8.2 U.S. Students Fall Behind in Science



U.S. students in fourth grade score above the international average in science achievement, according to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. However, as students approach their final year in secondary school, the performance in U.S. schools drops well below the international average.

Source: Calsyn, C., P. Gonzales, and M. Frase. *Highlights from TIMSS [Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study]*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 1999.

Figure 8.3 Environment-based Education Boosts Overall Academic Achievement



In a recent study, a high percentage of teachers reported increased student achievement when natural and sociocultural environments were used as a context for learning a range of subjects.

Source: Lieberman, G.A., and L.L. Hoody. *Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrated Context for Learning*. Poway, CA: Science Wizards, 1998.

The enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 reemphasized education—including science education—as a national priority. With the goal of improving educational quality and student achievement, the Act calls for all states to establish standards in various subjects, with science education standards required by the 2005–6 school year. To ensure that students are reaching the goals set for them, the Act calls for science achievement to be tested beginning in the 2007–8 school year. Although its implementation may be challenging, this requirement offers an opportunity to demonstrate how ocean topics excite students about science and other subjects by incorporating ocean-related concepts into K–12 curricular materials and evaluating improvements in performance.

Using Ocean-based Examples to Meet Education Standards

There are two primary sets of science literacy guidelines at the national level: the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s 1993 *Benchmarks for Science Literacy*; and the National Research Council’s 1996 *National Science Education Standards (NSES)*. Despite similar goals of outlining what students should know, understand, and be able to do in science at various grade levels, the *Benchmarks* include ocean sciences and ocean-related issues, while the *NSES* contain few explicit references to the oceans or ocean sciences.

A recent survey of the NMEA membership revealed a clear preference among educators for using the *NSES* rather than the *Benchmarks* when aligning science lessons with instructional standards (Appendix 3). And where statewide science standards exist, they are also typically based on the *NSES*. Thus, the notion of using the oceans to meet science requirements is not commonly incorporated at the state or local level, slowing the adoption of ocean-based curricula in K–12 classes.

Nonetheless, while the *NSES* do not highlight oceans explicitly, they do endorse a new approach to teaching and learning science that emphasizes inquiry-based education as the ideal way for students to gain knowledge and an understanding of the world around them. The oceans are an excellent vehicle for implementing this new approach. The hands-on, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of ocean-based studies lends itself to teaching the basic principles of biology, chemistry, geology, physics, and mathematics in an engaging and novel manner. Principles of the core sciences, many of which are relatively abstract, become more tangible and easier to grasp when introduced through ocean examples.

The centuries-old ties between the marine environment and human experience make the ocean an equally powerful resource for teaching literature, economics, history, and other social sciences. Ocean-based examples focusing on these areas can be a valuable tool for K–12 teachers, not only to enhance student achievement, but to educate young people on the many ways the oceans influence and are influenced by human activities. Both NMEA and the National Geographic Society have made a start at outlining basic ocean literacy concepts that can be incorporated in curricula.

However, the value of ocean-based learning must be recognized within local school districts to create a demand for ocean-related education products. A well-informed network will be needed to advocate inclusion of ocean-based examples in state and local requirements and assessments. This network could begin with organizations and efforts that have established local connections—such as COSEE, Sea Grant, NMEA, and the National Science Teachers Association—to serve as facilitators. A potential model to examine is NASA's education program, which involves translators and liaisons who work directly with teachers and administrators at the local level to produce high-quality, research-based curricula that are tailored to the needs of the school system and aligned with state and national standards. In addition, it will be important for professional teaching and ocean-related societies to encourage their members to become active participants on boards and committees that decide content for statewide science achievement tests.

Because scientists typically do not know what type, level, or format of information K–12 teachers require, and because teachers generally are not aware of how ocean-related data can be used to advance student achievement, collaborative efforts will be needed to develop and disseminate research-based, ocean-related curricula that are aligned with state and national educational standards and meet the needs of teachers.

Recommendation 8–7

Ocean.ED, working with state and local education authorities and the research community, should coordinate the development and adoption of ocean-related materials and examples that meet existing education standards.

Specifically, Ocean.ED should:

- assess existing ocean-based curricula offerings, highlighting exemplary materials that are aligned with national standards.
- promote the creation of companion materials to the National Science Education Standards that are based on ocean data and research findings (including social and economic fields).
- disseminate ocean-based examples and assessment questions that link to the concept standards in physical and life sciences, geography, history, and other topics and that demonstrate the value of oceans in teaching fundamental concepts.
- promote the development of case studies that stress the interconnected nature of the ocean, land, and atmosphere.

Bridging the Gap between Scientists and Educators

The extent to which the nation is able to enhance ocean awareness, boost student achievement, and prepare future generations of ocean professionals depends not only on the teachers and administrators who guide students on a daily basis, but on the commitment of the research community to prepare students to be responsible, knowledgeable, and competitive members of the global society. The National Research Council has highlighted the need for scientists to be fully engaged in the process of K–12 education, noting that teachers and researchers possess different strengths and resources and that they must be equally dedicated partners committed to improving educational opportunities.⁸ As noted above, collaborations are needed in the development of ocean-related curricula, but they are also needed to broaden opportunities for students and teachers to gain first-hand field and research experience.

Teaching the Teachers

Higher expectations for our youth mean higher expectations for teachers as well. Students cannot achieve without instruction by capable teachers who are knowledgeable in the topics being presented (Box 8.1). Thus, improving the quality of science and math education must begin with improving preparation of undergraduates studying to be teachers (referred to as pre-service teachers) and professional development for certified teachers in the classroom (referred to as in-service teachers).

The lack of content knowledge among educators is particularly pervasive on ocean topics. The college science courses taken by pre-service teachers form the basis of their scientific understanding and determine their comfort level in teaching science. Because very few universities provide pre-service teachers exposure to ocean topics,⁹ they remain poorly equipped to incorporate ocean-related concepts into their instruction.

Similarly, in-service teachers have few opportunities to learn about ocean concepts and how they can be introduced into lessons. First-hand, in-depth involvement of teachers in research and field experiences is a proven way to connect science teaching and science learning. The ocean research community is brimming with potential for engaging K–12 educators in the excitement and satisfaction of the scientific enterprise, and the nation's research infrastructure provides significant opportunities for formal preparation, hands-on involvement, and teacher certification. Although several public and private sector programs can provide teachers with research experience in ocean-related topics, access to these programs is quite limited, very few have long term, stable funding, and the different efforts are poorly coordinated.

Box 8.1 The Need for Qualified Science Teachers

A 2000 National Research Council report confirmed that there is a strong relationship between the level of knowledge of science and math teachers and the achievement of their students in these areas.ⁱ Nevertheless, many science and math classes continue to be taught by unqualified or under-qualified instructors. Thirty-nine percent of public school students taking life science or biology classes in grades 7–12 are taught by teachers without even a minor in these fields, while 56 percent of grade 7–12 students in physical science classes are taught by teachers without even a minor in physics, chemistry, geology, or earth science.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ National Research Council. *Educating Teachers of Science, Mathematics, and Technology: New Practices for the New Millennium*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2000.

ⁱⁱ National Center for Education Statistics. *Out-of-Field Teaching and Educational Equality*. Statistical Analysis Report NCES 96-040. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, October 1996.

Box 8.2 COOL Professional Development for Teachers

A partnership between the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve and the Rutgers University Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences generates a wealth of professional development opportunities designed to engage New Jersey teachers and school administrators in using the ocean to enhance student learning experiences. Programs range from field-based workshops to Web-based instructional modules dubbed the COOL (Coastal Ocean Observation Laboratory) Classroom. This partnership is an example of the type of innovative, relevant, and exciting educational opportunities that can be created when the research and education communities work together to bring the latest advances in ocean research into the classroom.

For example, NSF's Research Experiences for Teachers program could be expanded to include ocean-based opportunities and NOAA could build on successful programs such as Teachers-at-Sea and Ocean Explorer. Federal ocean agencies could also provide incentives for ocean research institutions to establish certificate programs for pre-service and in-service teacher preparation and development, and include graduate courses that cover ocean-related concepts and how they can be applied in teaching. To help broaden the impact of such professional development programs, successful participants should be encouraged to serve as master teachers or resource teachers after a period of evaluation. The American Meteorological Society's Project Maury and Project Atmosphere serve as excellent models for achieving this type of long-term impact.

Despite an abundance of good ideas and successful models (Box 8.2), significant obstacles remain in developing lasting collaborations between ocean scientists and teachers. A 1996 National Research Council report found that researchers do not fully appreciate the roles and responsibilities of teachers, and teachers are not fully aware of the duties and functions of researchers.¹⁰ Further, the existing academic culture can be a deterrent to scientists' involvement in education and outreach activities. Although most faculty are expected to participate in research, teaching, and service activities, universities typically provide the greatest rewards for successful research, with teaching achievements a distant second, and little if any recognition for community service.

Federal agencies could help bring about a cultural change by providing incentives for universities to raise the visibility and rewards for faculty interactions with educators. Programs such as NSF's Faculty Early Career Development program and Graduate Teaching Fellows in K–12 Education program address this issue by providing support for involvement in K–12 education among graduate students and young faculty. But the limited size and scope of these programs have restricted their influence.

Effective partnerships between scientists and teachers will require new, long-term arrangements between the academic community and school districts. Large-scale programs such as NSF's Math and Science Partnership, which funds university scientists to work with teachers in areas such as professional development and curriculum enhancement, are urgently needed. The COSEE and Sea Grant networks could be used to coordinate such programs within the ocean community.

Recommendation 8–8

Ocean.ED, working with academic institutions and local school districts, should help establish more effective relationships between the research and education communities to expand professional development opportunities for teachers and teacher educators.

Specifically, Ocean.ED should:

- provide supplemental grants and other rewards to scientists who partner with teachers and teacher educators to include educational components in their research projects.
- establish a grants program for development and implementation of an enhanced core curriculum in science content that incorporates ocean concepts for pre-service teachers. Applicants should be required to demonstrate collaborations and partnerships among education, science, mathematics, and engineering faculty.

Bringing Oceans and Students Together

Field and laboratory experiments offer a natural avenue for students to gain first-hand exposure to science while developing an awareness of the importance of the ocean. Not all students are near, or able to travel to, the shore, but new ocean research technologies represent a tremendous and virtually untapped avenue to overcome this limitation, allowing students anywhere to be involved in real oceanographic investigations. The same remote-access technologies that make advanced ocean research possible can also help students and teachers participate in collecting, analyzing, and distributing ocean data. The benefits of technological advances for science education can help U.S. students regain their position among the best and brightest in the world.

Enabling students to interact with practicing scientists, even if they are thousands of miles away, can help create a lifelong affinity for learning. Mentoring, from teachers, scientists, or near-peers is a particularly valuable component of successful student-oriented programs.

Box 8.3 Today's Kids ... Tomorrow's Ocean Professionals

With regular field trips beyond the resources of most educators and school systems, the KidScience program serves as a model for bringing science to students through dynamic, relevant programs broadcast directly into classrooms. Produced cooperatively by the Hawaii Department of Education and Hawaii Public Television, this live, interactive series offers students in grades 4–8 two distinct types of learning opportunities.

Locally broadcast programs demonstrate hands-on lessons that involve students in a range of research activities and allow them to communicate with their on-screen instructor by telephoning or e-mailing questions throughout the broadcast. A more in-depth examination of selected topics takes place during three-part series that are broadcast not only in Hawaii but also in Micronesia and American Samoa and across the continental United States. These series combine live discussions with experts and pre-taped virtual field trips to expose students to topics ranging from “The Underwater Classroom” to “Living on a Volcano.” Students are also engaged in current events involving ocean and coastal environments through discussions of ocean-related policy questions.



NOAA Restoration Program

Engaging Underrepresented and Underserved Groups

Social, economic, and cultural factors can play an influential role in inhibiting a student's access to education opportunities, especially science-based opportunities. These factors are typically even stronger among minority students and other groups that have been traditionally underrepresented and underserved in scientific fields, including marine sciences. Repairing this broken link will depend on exposing minority students to ocean-related studies early in their education, continuing that exposure throughout their school years, and demonstrating the possibilities and rewards of a career in ocean-related fields.

Enhancing the appeal and viability of ocean-related careers among traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups will not happen overnight. Such efforts will need to address social and cultural issues and must demonstrate the relevance and importance of the oceans in daily life. As highlighted in testimony before the Commission by Wendy Allen, president of NMEA, success depends on clearly demonstrating cultural connections to the heritage and daily lives of underrepresented groups so that a career in an ocean-related field is seen as viable, socially-responsible, and financially rewarding (Appendix 2).

Recommendation 8–9

Ocean.ED should promote partnerships among government agencies, school districts, institutions of higher learning, aquariums, science centers, museums, and private marine laboratories to develop more opportunities for students to explore the marine environment, both through virtual means and hands-on field, laboratory, and at-sea experiences.

Ocean.ED should ensure that programs for students:

- include a broad range of options, from in-school modules, to accessible after-school activities, daylong field trips, and summer programs.
- acknowledge cultural differences and other aspects of human diversity to expose students and teachers from all cultures and backgrounds to ocean issues.

Investing in Higher Education and the Future Ocean Workforce

Understanding the marine environment and meeting our many ocean-related societal needs will require a well-trained, diverse workforce, adequate in number, with expertise across a range of ocean-related subjects. In addition to acquiring scientific knowledge and research skills, the ocean leaders of the future need to engage interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary perspectives, use multiple contexts in solving problems, and communicate complex ideas to a broad audience. Fostering these critical abilities requires diversification of learning opportunities.

Stagnant or declining federal support for ocean-related research has eroded the ability of academic institutions to maintain certain educational programs, limiting the breadth of educational opportunities. For example, there are few vibrant schools of fishery science and management, though advances in these areas are critical to successful fishery management efforts. Likewise, strong graduate educational efforts in marine taxonomy and biodiversity are very limited, though understanding of these topics is a baseline for ensuring scientifically sound management decisions.

The graying trend in the existing federal and academic ocean workforce adds to the urgency of training new ocean professionals. Projections of federal retirements indicate that just over 30 percent of federal employees will leave the workforce in the next decade.¹¹ This trend will result in the loss of a great deal of the intellectual power and

creativity that has expanded our understanding and improved management of the marine environment. The nation will require a human resource base capable of building on advances of the past to solve the problems of tomorrow.

The Leadership Void

There is no lead federal agency to assess, nurture, and maintain a strong ocean workforce, both in numbers and in diversity of skills. As the nation's primary civilian ocean agency, NOAA would seem a natural candidate to fill this void. However, NOAA's involvement in education, which has been limited to grant-specific research assistantships and a handful of policy and industry fellowships, falls far short of the effort needed on a national scale. NOAA provided only 18 percent of federal support for ocean-related academic research programs (on which much graduate student funding depends) for the 2001–2 academic year. This level of support is inadequate given that NOAA is a major employer of ocean professionals. The approach is markedly different at the National Institutes of Health, which works hard to ensure a sufficient and knowledgeable workforce for the health sciences community.

The Navy, predominantly through ONR, has traditionally been a leader in supporting ocean-related graduate student education. However, Navy funding for academic-based basic ocean research has been on a downward trend. This leaves NSF as the primary supporter of ocean science graduate students, providing 36 percent of federal support for ocean-related academic research programs for the 2001–2 academic year. While education is a part of NSF's mission, the agency's proposal-driven approach is not ideally suited to meet identified national needs for ocean-related education and training. Furthermore, NSF graduate student support tends to emphasize the natural sciences and engineering, a component—but not all—of the ocean workforce. (A detailed overview of federal agency funding for academic ocean science programs can be found in Appendix 4.)

Academic institutions also have a responsibility to help meet future ocean-related workforce needs. Redesigned graduate programs can expose students to aspects of the marine field outside their primary focus, for example, by exposing science students to policy issues and policy students to the scientific process. Ocean-related graduate programs are well-situated to develop cross-disciplinary opportunities, partnering with other university programs (such as education, public policy, economics, communications, resource management, and engineering), or with federal facilities and private laboratories.

Drawing Students into the Field

The ocean community must compete with countless other professions in attracting the talent it needs. Success lies, in part, in promoting marine-related career opportunities among undergraduate students from a broad range of disciplines. First-hand experiences in marine fields can be influential in demonstrating the possibilities and rewards of an ocean-related career. Intellectually stimulating and financially attractive options for pursuing graduate studies in an ocean-related field must follow, so a student's developing interest in ocean studies is not overshadowed by other professions that actively pursue, encourage, and support their future leaders.

Ocean sciences have another potentially important role to play at the undergraduate level. Marine science courses can be attractive options for non-science majors who need to fulfill science requirements for graduation, presenting an excellent opportunity to raise general ocean awareness.

Recommendation 8–10

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Science Foundation, and Office of Naval Research should support colleges and universities in promoting introductory ocean and coastal science and engineering courses to expose a wider cross-section of students, including non-science majors, to these subjects.

These agencies should support this effort by:

- providing small grants to assist in course development, equipment purchases, faculty support, and field experiences.
- fostering collaborations between institutions with graduate ocean programs and others with a primarily undergraduate population.

Expanding Graduate Educational Opportunities

How students are funded significantly influences their opportunities to develop research, engineering, teaching, management, and other skills. It can also limit or expand their awareness of the career paths and job sectors available to them. More than 55 percent of ocean sciences graduate students are supported by research assistantships, making the ocean community more dependent on this type of support than other related fields (Appendix 4). For example, in the life and physical sciences, students are supported through a more diversified combination of opportunities including traineeships, fellowships, and teaching assistantships (Appendix 4).

Research assistantships are important for budding scientists and should continue as a major student support mechanism. However, an over-reliance on research assistantships limits students' exposure to cross-disciplinary experiences that could better prepare them for addressing complex marine-related issues.

Fellowships allow top students to select a program best suited to their needs and interests. Traineeships allow graduate students to be assembled in a highly qualified research and learning environment. Student opportunities can also be diversified by getting both funding agencies and academic institutions to redefine what graduate research assistants are allowed to do. The NSF Integrative Graduate Education and Research Training program is an example of one attempt to move in this direction.

Because ocean science is fundamentally interdisciplinary, well-trained ocean professionals can find excellent careers in many areas including engineering, economics, education, law, management, policy, science, and technology. Individuals considering or pursuing graduate studies in a marine field should be aware of these options, and exploration of nontraditional marine areas should be encouraged. It is equally important for professionals educated and trained in other fields to be aware of the exciting opportunities available to them in marine-related fields.

Complementing the need to create an adequate workforce is the need to sustain and enhance that workforce through professional development and continuing education opportunities. Learning does not stop once the formal education process is complete; ocean professionals in all fields must be provided the means and liberty to continually build upon their knowledge and skills throughout their careers. A number of these training programs already exist and could be built on and expanded. For example, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Coastal Training Program provides up-to-date scientific information and skill-building opportunities for coastal decision makers. This program focuses on issues such as coastal habitat conservation and restoration, biodiversity, water quality, and sustainable resource management, and targets a range of audiences, including land use planners, elected officials, regulators, land developers, community groups, environmental non-profits, and coastal businesses.

Recommendation 8–11

Ocean.ED should guide and promote the development of the nation’s ocean-related workforce.

In particular, Ocean.ED should:

- promote student support, diversified educational opportunities, and investment in innovative approaches to graduate education that prepare students for a broad range of careers.
- encourage, with targeted federal support, graduate departments of ocean sciences and engineering to experiment with new or redesigned programs that emphasize cross-disciplinary courses of study.
- set targets for federal stipends for ocean-related education to be competitive with other disciplines.

Workforce Needs

As discussed above, most graduate ocean education has been linked to faculty research, an approach that pays little or no attention to the needs of the ocean-related workforce—which are poorly understood—or to national demographics, which are better understood but not well integrated into workforce preparation.

While the U.S. Department of Labor plays a role in assessing workforce status and trends, currently there is no data collection or analysis of ocean-related workforce supply or demand, including requirements for the maritime transportation system. Only sketchy information is available on how many new ocean professionals are being produced and in what fields. In a recent survey of ocean-related higher education programs, 26 percent maintained no data on initial employment of recent graduates (Appendix 4). Even less effort has been put into projecting the types of professionals the ocean community will require in the future.

Federal ocean funding agencies will continue to operate in the dark without improved information on the status of the ocean-related workforce, with periodic follow-up to determine whether workforce needs are being met. Some of the necessary data can be found through the Department of Labor, NSF, and others, but additional analyses and a tracking mechanism will be needed. The survey of academic institutions conducted by the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education can help in developing this tracking mechanism (Appendix 4).

Excellence in math and science education at all levels should enhance every American’s life opportunities through productive employment, active citizenship, and life-long learning.

—Dr. Sharon H. Walker, Associate Dean, College of Marine Sciences, The University of Southern Mississippi, testimony to the Commission, March 2002

Recommendation 8–12

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Department of Labor should establish a national ocean workforce database and compile an annual report for the National Ocean Council on trends in ocean-related human resource development and needs. This effort should include an information clearinghouse to facilitate career decisions, provide access to career guidance, and enable employers, guidance counselors, and others to develop effective strategies to attract students to ocean-related careers. Ocean.ED should organize an ocean workforce summit every five years to address the alignment of ocean education with workforce needs.

Specific Federal Responsibilities

Each federal agency with ocean-related responsibilities—most notably NOAA, NSF, and ONR—has a responsibility to help ensure a vibrant ocean-related workforce. NOAA should be particularly concerned with creating a pipeline of students in areas it identifies to be of critical importance to the agency and the nation. Opportunities should include both research experiences, especially exposure to mission-oriented research, and experi-

ences beyond the research arena. Student exposure can begin as early as the senior level in high school, continuing through postdoctoral education. A range of programs will help identify and recruit the best and brightest to careers in marine-related fields and ensure a continuing source of essential human capital.

At the graduate and postdoctoral levels, NOAA can support fellowships and traineeships that emphasize interdisciplinary approaches and real-world experiences beyond the university setting, such as those provided by the Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship, the NOAA Coastal Services Center Coastal Management Fellowship, the NERRS Graduate Research Fellowship Program, Smithsonian graduate and post-graduate fellowships, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellowship. NSF's Integrative Graduate Education and Research Training program and NASA traineeships and fellowships offer other models. Within NOAA, Sea Grant plays a critical role in providing graduate-level education opportunities, a role which could be enhanced as part of an expansion of that program.

The Navy has had success in partnering directly with academic institutions, providing support for distinguished scientists who develop laboratories and educate students in areas of fundamental interest to the Navy. NOAA could establish similar competitive marine studies professorships at leading institutions of higher education with a demonstrated commitment to marine programs. Disciplines of interest to NOAA for such professorships might include fisheries science, climate research, atmospheric studies, and marine resource economics, policy, aquaculture, genomics, education, and ecosystem studies. The intent would be to create a cadre of distinguished NOAA endowed chairs at universities around the nation. In a complementary effort, NOAA should consider establishing competitive national awards to recognize excellent teaching in marine-related topics.

Recommendation 8–13

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) should establish a national ocean education and training program, patterned after the National Institutes of Health model, within its Office of Education and Sustainable Development to provide diverse and innovative ocean-related education opportunities at the undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral levels.

Specifically, NOAA should:

- offer students at the undergraduate level experiential learning opportunities in a range of marine fields through summer internships or similar mechanisms.
- support fellowships and traineeships at the graduate and postdoctoral levels that emphasize interdisciplinary approaches and real-world experiences outside the university setting, especially in areas critical to the agency's mission.
- support professorships in fields of particular interest to NOAA.

At NSF, higher education is an explicit part of its mission. At the undergraduate level, NSF's Research Experience for Undergraduates program could be expanded to include more marine-related experiences. At the graduate and postdoctoral levels, opportunities could include fellowships that encourage cross-disciplinary research, interdisciplinary traineeships, and master's degree fellowships. Programs such as NSF's Integrative Graduate Education and Research Training program, Centers for Learning and Teaching, and Graduate Teaching Fellows in K–12 Education could be enhanced and broadened to attract other federal sponsors. Finally, NSF cooperative programs are well-positioned to strengthen support at universities, museums, and other institutions for educational opportunities related to biodiversity.

Recommendation 8–14

The National Science Foundation’s Directorates for Geosciences, Biological Sciences, and Education and Human Resources should develop cooperative programs to provide diverse, multidisciplinary educational opportunities at the undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral levels in a range of ocean-related fields.

The success of the Navy depends on a well-developed understanding of the environment in which it operates. Understanding the ocean environment—including the atmosphere above it, the seafloor beneath it, and the coastlines that encircle it—will always be a core naval requirement. Thus, the Navy should continue its historic role in supporting the education of future generations of ocean professionals.

Recommendation 8–15

The Office of Naval Research (ONR) should reinvigorate its support of graduate education in ocean sciences and engineering. This could be accomplished, in part, by increasing the number of ocean-related awards made under ONR’s National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowship Program.

Strength through Diversity

Human diversity has the power to enrich and invigorate the ocean community with a range of perspectives critical to the overall capabilities of the ocean workforce. Science and management professionals who are part of a particular cultural or ethnic community can help to engender understanding of marine-related issues within their communities and can serve as role models to help young people envision themselves as future ocean professionals. Nearly 90 percent of students enrolled in U.S. ocean-related graduate programs during the fall of 2001, however, were identified as white.¹²

While a number of minority-serving institutions (MSIs) offer degree-granting programs in marine sciences, only the University of Puerto Rico offers a Ph.D.-level program.¹³ This could be a contributing factor to the lack of minority representation among ocean professionals with advanced degrees. In the United States, historically black colleges and universities enroll only 13 percent of all African American college students, but they award 40 percent of the science degrees earned by African Americans.¹⁴ There is great potential for building on this success and developing more avenues for underrepresented and underserved students to pursue advanced ocean-related studies. Member schools of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities provide a similar opportunity for engaging Hispanic students in marine-related careers, as do tribal colleges and universities in the American Indian Higher Education Consortium.

One avenue that should be explored is support for collaborative programs that partner MSIs with research institutions to develop more graduate-level marine science programs at MSIs. One successful existing program that could provide opportunities for additional underrepresented and underserved students is NOAA’s Educational Partnership Program with MSIs. A central element in this and similar programs is the establishment of links between students and minority ocean professionals through mentoring programs.

While efforts should be made to expand opportunities for marine-related study at MSIs, all institutions need to provide an environment of cultural acceptance and instructional dedication to move students from diverse backgrounds forward academically. As part of the effort to strengthen formal and informal education efforts, additional opportunities need to be created for participation by traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups.

Recommendation 8–16

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Science Foundation, Office of Naval Research, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration should encourage increased participation of traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups in the ocean-related workforce. Ocean.ED should coordinate among these agencies and institutions of higher learning.

Specifically, Ocean.ED should:

- ensure that the appropriate mix of programs and opportunities exists to provide underrepresented and underserved groups ample access to and support for pursuing ocean-related graduate education, including opportunities at Minority Serving Institutions and other universities and oceanographic institutions.
- ensure that programs are established through a competitive process and evaluated for performance on an annual basis.

Bringing the Ocean and Coasts to All Americans

While the public has a general sense that the ocean is important, most people lack a full awareness and understanding of the ocean, its health, the benefits it provides, and its connection to the nation’s collective well-being (Box 8.4). This information gap is a significant obstacle in achieving responsible use of our nation’s ocean and coastal resources, empowering public involvement in ocean-related decision making, and realizing support for wise investments in, and management of, ocean-related activities.

Although a healthy marine environment is a prerequisite for our continued enjoyment of ocean and coastal benefits, a recent survey shows that many people consider the health of the marine environment a second-tier environmental concern, overshadowed by the problems of air and water pollution and toxic waste disposal. The American public apparently feels little sense of urgency for safeguarding our coastal and ocean resources. In addition, while most Americans realize the marine environment can be degraded as a result of human activities, they are less clear about the role individuals play in contributing to this damage. Nearly half the public mistakenly agrees with the statement, “What I do in my lifetime doesn’t impact ocean health much at all” (Appendix 4).

Multifaceted Approaches

Such public misinformation points to the urgent need for raising awareness about the oceans. This herculean task is currently being undertaken by a number of informal education facilities and programs, publicly and privately funded, struggling to make headway in advancing public knowledge about the marine environment.

The strength of the informal education community lies in the diversity of methods used. The varied formats, styles of presentation, and depth of detail, coupled with wide-ranging modes of access, result in an array of opportunities for reaching the public.

Box 8.4 The Ocean Information Gap

According to a recent national survey on ocean awareness, nearly 60 percent of Americans do not realize that more plants and animals live in the oceans than on the land; 75 percent mistakenly believe that forests, rather than oceans, are the planet’s major source of oxygen; and 40 percent are unaware of the essential role oceans play in regulating climate.ⁱ

ⁱ Belden, Russonello, & Stewart and American Viewpoint. *Communicating about Oceans: Results of a National Survey*. Washington, DC: The Ocean Project, 1999.

Box 8.5 What Is Informal Education?

The National Science Foundation describes informal education as the life-long learning process in which every person acquires knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values from daily experiences and resources in his or her environment. Informal learning is self-directed, voluntary, and motivated mainly by intrinsic interest, curiosity, exploration, and social interaction.ⁱ

ⁱ National Science Foundation. Informal Science Education (ISE) Program Solicitation NSF 03-511, 2003.



Scipps Institution of Oceanography

Informal education facilities such as aquariums, science centers, zoos, museums, and marine parks, along with other outlets such as national magazines and television programs, local newscasts, traveling exhibits, and Internet sites, are all important contributors to the domain of public education.

U.S. aquariums, zoos, and other informal education centers welcome over 135 million visitors a year to their on-site displays and bring information to millions of additional guests through community outreach efforts.¹⁵ These informal education centers endeavor to be equal opportunity teachers by employing mechanisms and instituting programs to reach traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups. Natural history museums and science centers also provide ocean-related science and cultural educational experiences to millions each year. For example, the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. just initiated a long-term Ocean Science Initiative. As part of this initiative, the museum, in partnership with NOAA, is developing a major new Ocean Hall. Aquariums, zoos, museums, and other informal facilities have a reputation for delivering accurate information about the marine environment and represent a powerful voice in the realm of public education. A recent public poll revealed that aquariums are a highly trusted source of environmental information.¹⁶

In addition to informal education facilities, federal ocean-related agencies conduct public education and outreach. Opportunities range from first-hand exploration of the marine environment at a variety of marine sanctuaries, parks, and reserves to interactive Web sites that follow oceanographic expeditions in real time, to materials that translate scientific discoveries and relate them to everyday life (Box 8.6). Federal agencies also support informal education by funding projects that aim to increase public understanding of scientific, cultural, and environmental issues. (Additional information on a sampling of programs and activities offered by informal education facilities and federal agencies is provided in Appendix 5.)

Coordinating Messages

While the many existing informal education efforts have made progress, they have not yielded the level of national consciousness needed to cultivate a broad sense of responsibility toward the use and conservation of the nation's marine resources. As discussed earlier in this chapter, lack of leadership and coordination, in both message and action, and lack of funding are usually cited as the most significant barriers to realizing the full potential of informal education efforts.

Although all ocean-related informal education efforts have a common goal, they generally lack the coordination, connectivity, and leveraging of resources needed to achieve the greatest long-term impact. While nascent efforts are working to bring about

Box 8.6 NOAA's National Marine Sanctuaries Program as a Vehicle for Public Education

One hundred years after the first national park was designated, NOAA designated the nation's first National Marine Sanctuary. The goals of NOAA's thirteen sanctuary sites range from protecting the breeding grounds of humpback whales to housing the remains of historical shipwrecks. One of the primary features of this program is education and outreach. From Massachusetts to American Samoa, the sanctuary system provides opportunities and avenues for the public to learn about the marine environment through these living classrooms. The desire of the public to experience the unique ecosystems encompassed in the sanctuary system is evidence by the many people who visit the sanctuaries each year, participate in the education and outreach activities, and use the educational products produced.

better collaboration among aquariums and other informal education facilities, additional leadership will be needed to realize a focused and coordinated informal education network for ocean and coastal information. Government agencies, aquariums, academia, professional societies, and all others involved in public education must play a role in coordinating messages on the importance and significance of oceans. Tourism providers are often the best messengers to communicate with visitors participating in ocean and coastal recreation. A team approach will increase the longevity, breadth of delivery, and integration of messages coming from many sources.

Coordination is also needed between the informal and K–12 education communities. Informal education efforts can provide information that is used to develop K–12 classroom lessons and activities. While many aquariums and museums now routinely create programs that are linked to state and local education standards, a stronger connection between informal and K–12 education efforts is needed, and the requirements of K–12 educators and students should be a constant consideration.

Funding for ocean-related informal education is a major concern. At the federal level, there is no dedicated source of funding for ocean-related informal education initiatives. While NSF, EPA, and other federal agencies support some informal education efforts, the programs are relatively small and do not focus on ocean-related activities.

The kinds of aquarium and science center exhibits most likely to have significant impacts are costly to assemble. Without outside public or private support, aquariums and similar facilities are often forced to focus on those topics that draw the greatest attendance, generally marine biology rather than the chemistry, physics, or geology of the marine environment. Reliable support would allow facilities to present a more complete picture of the marine environment and even illustrate the application of scientific understanding in managing ocean resources.

Broad Outreach

Public information needs are as varied as our population is diverse. Some individuals will benefit from detailed information on how specific issues directly affect their jobs or business. Others may need information presented in a language and media tailored to their culture and community. Still others seek advice on how to alter their own activities to support responsible ocean stewardship. This information is as critical for those who live in the heartland as for those who live near the shore.

Informal education requires outreach programs, in partnership with local communities, to make contact with individuals where they live and work, regarding issues that affect how they live and work, in a style that speaks to them (Box 8.7). Local organizations, including youth, senior, and other community groups, can play a pivotal role. They possess knowledge of the community and experience implementing various strategies

to reach desired outcomes. While federal agencies, state governments, and nongovernmental groups partner with communities on such programs, and should continue to promote participation of traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups, increasing populations and limited resources swamp the ability of these programs to reach all who would benefit from ocean-related information.

Information supplied to the public should be timely and accurate. It should also be supported by a system that allows for follow-up and the acquisition of additional information or guidance. The roles of, and relationships among, scientists, educators, and journalists in translating research results for the public are especially critical. Innovative partnerships with media outlets or industries that deal with the public may offer new means to broaden the visibility of ocean issues and increase public awareness. Informal education facilities and the academic community will need to work closely together to facilitate the rapid transfer and translation of the latest scientific discoveries into publicly accessible displays, materials, and programs.

Information delivered through informal education programs, displays, and activities is most effective when it is linked to the positive associations people have with the oceans. Information should be presented in terms of the ocean's role in the Earth system as a whole, including the physical, chemical, and geological aspects of the marine environment, and interactions with humans.

Recommendation 8–17

Ocean.ED, working with other appropriate entities, should promote existing mechanisms and establish new approaches for developing and delivering relevant, accessible information and outreach programs that enhance community education.

In particular, Ocean.ED should:

- work with ocean-related informal education initiatives to better engage underrepresented and underserved populations and communities by using mechanisms, materials, and language familiar to and accepted by them.
- work with informal education facilities to develop the capacity to quickly prepare and deliver new science-based materials and programs to the public and the media to capture immediate interest in noteworthy advances in ocean science.
- engage industry, the commercial sector, and the media in community education and stewardship programs.

Box 8.7 Equal Opportunity Educators

The Splash Zone program at the Monterey Bay Aquarium is one example of an informal education effort designed to reach and engage underserved members of the community. The program was developed in part to enhance Hispanic attendance, membership, and participation at the aquarium, which were far below their proportion in the Monterey area population.

The Splash Zone exhibit on coral reef ecosystems and the rocky shore forms the basis for additional educational activities and materials. Working with local Head Start offices, the aquarium is better able to reach and focus on Hispanic children and their families. The knowledge gained during visits to the aquarium is continued in the classroom. Appropriate activities and curricula are demonstrated to Head Start and other kindergarten through second grade educators during a week-long Teachers Institute. In addition, the program includes outreach to the schools through bilingual aquarium educators and family science nights in the neighborhood community center.

To continue the educational experience of the Splash Zone program, families can take advantage of the Shelf to Shore program. This complementary effort, conducted in cooperation with local libraries in largely Hispanic communities, allows individuals to check out a free aquarium pass for the entire family as easily as they would check out a book.

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