

## Announcement of the Establishment of the NSF-Funded New England Regional Center for Ocean Science Education Excellence

For many years Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution has been active in formal and informal K-12 education activities. For example, employees, students, and postdocs have been advisors and mentors for local science fair projects; and the Institution offers prizes for the Falmouth public schools science fair, Falmouth Academy Science Fair, and the Mashpee High School Science Fair. WHOI was a founding member and continues to support the Woods Hole Science and Technology Education Partnership connecting the science and engineering efforts of private and public organizations in Falmouth, Mashpee, and Bourne, as well as the public and private schools of those towns. Several of our scientists have been involved with linking their research through the web with teachers and students. WHOI has hosted an annual meeting of the Massachusetts Marine Educators for several years.

Since 2000 WHOI has been providing twice-yearly teacher workshops to bring teachers up to date on recent research in ocean sciences and ocean engineering. These efforts have been supported by a grant from the Ducommon and Gross Foundation and coordinated by Dr. Kate Madin of the Academic Programs Office, Ms. Tracy Crago of WHOI's Sea Grant Program, and Ms. Stephanie Murphy, Manager of the WHOI Exhibit Center.

WHOI will receive funding from NSF to further coordinate and extend these and other related activities. Earlier this year, NSF's Division of Ocean Sciences sought to establish Centers for Ocean Science Education Excellence (COSEE) - a national network responsible for facilitating collaboration and communication between ocean science researchers and educators. WHOI, in association with the New England Aquarium and the University of Massachusetts System, submitted a proposal to create a New England Regional COSEE (NER-COSEE). I am pleased to inform you that the NER-COSEE has been selected as one of seven centers nationwide, and the NEAq/WHOI/UMass proposal has been funded in full for five years.

The Principal Investigators are Dr. Debbie Smith (G&G) at WHOI, Dr. Carolyn Levi and Dr. Billy Spitzer (Joint Program graduate 1989) at the NEAq, and Associate Professor Robert Chen (former WHOI Postdoc) at UMass, Boston. Working closely with Debbie in NER-COSEE efforts at WHOI are Ms. Andrea Thorrold, NER-COSEE WHOI coordinator (Academic Programs), Ms. Tracey Crago, Dr. Kate Madin, and Ms. Stephanie Murphy.

Over the next five years, WHOI and the NER-COSEE partners will work with the ocean science education and research community and with the informal and formal K-12 educators and groups toward the goal of promoting quality ocean science education in the New England region. One of the objectives of the project is to develop an infrastructure of partnerships, methods, and templates to aid scientists in education and outreach efforts.

Initially, NER-COSEE will concentrate on identifying and meeting the needs of ocean science researchers, informal science educators, and K-12 educators by focusing on three core activities:

- \* creating a network of people engaged in ocean science education and outreach,
- \* evaluating workshop models that bring educators and researchers together, and
- \* establishing a resource center to provide support and follow-up as needed.

Future efforts of the partnership will explore the best methods for working with a wider range of audiences including the media, undergraduate educators, and policymakers.

The experience and expertise of the WHOI community will be a tremendous asset as NER-COSEE works to aid scientists in their outreach efforts. There will be many opportunities for involvement; all who are interested are welcomed and encouraged to take part. I am enthusiastic about the creation of the NER-COSEE and anticipate its success in bringing scientists and educators together to advance ocean science research, education, and outreach.

Information and updates will be passed along to the WHOI community as the NER-COSEE develops. An NER-COSEE website will be developed soon. In the interim, if you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Andrea Thorrold ([athorrold@whoi.edu](mailto:athorrold@whoi.edu), x3478).

Congratulations to Debbie, Andrea, Kate, Tracey, and Stephanie for bringing together ideas for the proposal and the NSF NER-COSEE grant award. Congratulations to all at WHOI whose previous efforts and activities over the years provided the foundation for this grant award.

John W. Farrington  
Vice President for Academic Programs and Dean