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### SGA Board Retreat Summary (Final)

St. Louis, MO  
October 24-25, 2001  
Summary prepared by  
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### Board Retreat

The Board of the National Sea Grant Association held a two-day retreat on October 24-25, 2001 in St. Louis, MO. The purpose of the retreat was to:

- agree on the major roles and responsibilities of the Sea Grant Association within the context of the over-all Sea Grant Program;
- develop a draft set of principles to guide the organization;
- agree on staffing needs for the organization; and
- explore ways to strengthen the capacity of the Sea Grant network.

The following is a summary of the discussions and agreements reached at the retreat.

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### Roles and Responsibilities

Building on previous conversations and written materials, the SGA Board identified a number of major roles and responsibilities that enable SGA to help strengthen Sea Grant and forge a national identity for the Program. These roles and responsibilities are listed below, along with the Board's ideas about specific activities and how they should be implemented. No priority is implied by the order in which these roles and responsibilities are listed.

#### 1. Educate national policymakers about the Sea Grant Program to promote annual appropriations and periodic reauthorizations that support growth of the Program.

**Activities:** Engage in ongoing dialogue with Congressional offices and the administration and coordinate with the Sea Grant National Office to promote Sea Grant in annual appropriation processes and in the Sea Grant reauthorization process that takes place every 3-5 years. Help coordinate activities at the state level to promote development of Sea Grant programs.

**Implementation Responsibility:** This work will be led by the SGA President and Board and SGA's External Relations

Committee, but all SGA delegates are expected to participate in ways outlined in the SGA business plan prepared by the External Relations Committee. These activities are also the major responsibility of SGA's lead staff member as outlined in the business plan.

**2. Enhance the level and quality of communication within SGA and across the entire Sea Grant network.**

**Activities:** Initiate communication within SGA and the broader network on a wide range of policy and program issues. Seek input from the membership, share information across the network, and communicate actions and results. Make effective use of the SGA website for internal communication. Complete work on the draft communication strategic plan.

**Implementation Responsibility:** Specific implementation strategies and responsibilities in this area will be outlined in the communication plan that is being developed. SGA will see that the plan is presented at a future SGA meeting and will coordinate a process to review and adopt this plan.

**3. Serve as the voice of the Sea Grant network in communicating with federal agencies, NGOs and university related programs.**

**Activities:** Reach out to Sea Grant's primary audiences at the national level to provide information about the program and explore partnership opportunities to leverage research results and pursue other shared goals.

**Implementation Responsibility:** This work is carried out by the SGA Board and staff, with support from individual SGA members as needed, and is addressed in the draft communication strategic plan.

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**4. Raise the visibility of Sea Grant Program capabilities among a variety of constituencies.**

**Activities:** Develop publications, a branding identity, a quality website, educational events and other activities designed to raise the visibility of the Sea Grant Program among a wide range of stakeholders and constituents.

**Implementation Responsibility:** Responsibilities for increasing visibility will be outlined in the communication strategic plan being developed.

**5. Coordinate the development of Sea Grant network positions on policies and procedures related to development and operation of the Sea Grant Program.**

**Activities:** Seek clarification of the responsibilities of the Leadership Council in this area. Use ad hoc groups to develop position papers on policies and procedures of concern to members and bring these forward to the Leadership Council in a manner similar to that used with the National Strategic Initiatives paper. Assess success of the policy and procedure development process over the coming year and propose changes as needed to the Leadership Council.

**Implementation Responsibility:** SGA representatives to the

**Implementation Responsibility:** SGA representatives to the Leadership Council will take the lead in seeking clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the Council. The SGA Board will work with members to identify policy and procedure issues of interest and appoint ad hoc groups to prepare position papers to take forward at Leadership Council meetings.

**6. Define broad Sea Grant network priorities for research, outreach and extension.**

**Activities:** Continue to use Theme Teams to develop research, outreach and extension priorities for the Sea Grant Program and complete the in-depth whitepapers on identified themes. Work with the National Sea Grant Office to complete "state of knowledge" reviews in Theme Team areas that highlight work completed and needs for additional research, outreach and education. Work with partners to seek funding for identified priorities by publicizing successes and needs in priority areas.

**Implementation Responsibility:** The SGA Board appoints representatives from individual Sea Grant programs to serve as co-chairs of Theme Teams. The Board will initiate a partnership between SGA and the National Office to complete "state of knowledge reviews" and other activities designed to take Theme Team work to the next level.

**7. Provide a rapid response mechanism on behalf of SGA on issues that arise at the national level.**

**Activities:** Respond on behalf of SGA members to issues and opportunities that arise at the national level and require a rapid response. Continue to work with the National Office to minimize the number of decisions that need to be handled in the "rapid response" mode so more thoughtful responses can be provided, recognizing that at times this cannot be avoided.

**Implementation Responsibility:** Continue the current SGA practice of having the President receive requests and confer with the Board. The President and Board will seek input from all SGA members if time permits. The Board will make a decision, provide the SGA response, and communicate any actions taken to the full SGA membership.

**8. Provide forums for sharing information across Sea Grant programs and provide orientation and mentoring for new directors.**

**Activities:** Sponsor Sea Grant Week every other year to provide opportunities for interaction between representatives of individual Sea Grant programs, the National Office and the Review Panel. Sponsor a biennial awards program. Provide opportunities for formal and informal sharing on a variety of topics at SGA meetings. Develop an orientation package for new Sea Grant Directors that includes SGA by-laws, background on the Sea Grant Program, information on the roles, responsibilities and principles that guide SGA, and ways to become involved in SGA work. Provide workshops and informal mentoring for new Sea Grant Directors as appropriate.

**Implementation Responsibility:** A different SGA member hosts Sea Grant Week every two years, with assistance from the rest of the Sea Grant network and the SGA staff. The SGA Board is responsible for SGA meetings, the awards program, and orientation for new Sea Grant Directors, with assistance from the SGA staff.

**9. Provide opportunities and create mechanisms to integrate all Sea Grant program elements, including research, communication, extension and other activities.**

**Activities:** Formalize relationships between communications, extension and other standing and ad hoc committees and SGA. Open SGA meetings to officers of those committees and have SGA delegates assigned to work with the committees. Bring specific committee proposals like the communication strategic plan forward at SGA meetings for discussion and adoption.

**Implementation Responsibilities:** The SGA Board will design and oversee the coordination effort. All SGA delegates are expected to participate in and support the coordination activities.

In addition to these nine roles and responsibilities the Board agreed SGA should consider the following new role, with the understanding it would be done in ways that do not compete with individual Sea Grant programs.

**Possible Role: Seek grant funding for SGA to support surveys, conferences, workshops and similar kinds of activities on issues of interest at the national level.**

**Activities:** Explore the desirability of having SGA seek direct grant funding for educational and outreach activities at the national level that will support and advance the development of the Sea Grant program.

**Implementation Responsibility:** The SGA Board will work with SGA staff to explore possibilities and bring a proposal to the membership for consideration.

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## **Draft Principles**

In discussing draft principles to guide the organization, the Board identified two major categories of principles: principles to guide decision-making and principles to guide operation of SGA. It was agreed the draft principles would be presented at the November 2001 SGA meeting and brought forward for adoption at the March 2002 meeting. Once adopted, these would become the core principles defining and guiding the organization.

### **Principles to Guide Decision-making**

The Board proposed the following statements be used by the SGA Board, staff and association members to guide decision-making. No priority is implied in the order in which they are listed.

1. Integration and coordination of the work of all Sea Grant partners--the National Sea Grant Office, including NOAA and its advisors, the Sea Grant Programs, including their universities and consortia, and all stakeholders, including

matching funds partners--are necessary to maximize the effectiveness of the program.

2. Integration of research, outreach and education components enables Sea Grant to make a unique contribution to addressing coastal, marine and Great Lakes issues.
3. Multi-disciplinary teams with broad stakeholder participation should be used to set priorities for Sea Grant Program activities.
4. The roles and responsibilities of the National Sea Grant College Program should be elevated within NOAA to allow both Sea Grant and NOAA to be more effective.
5. The true strength of the Sea Grant Program lies in core activities as reflected in the size of base budgets and operations.
6. All Sea Grant Program funding increases should be based on merit.
7. The Sea Grant Program is a science-based purveyor of information, not an advocate for specific positions or organizations.
8. A major key to the success of the Sea Grant Program is the integration of top down and grassroots efforts at the national, state, regional and local levels.

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#### **Principles to Guide SGA Operations**

1. SGA elects officers and a governing Board to provide leadership for the organization as outlined in the SGA bylaws.
2. The officers and Board of SGA are empowered to carry out the business of the organization according to the SGA by-laws.
3. The Board may be empowered by members to represent SGA in a variety of settings and negotiations not specifically identified in the by-laws.
4. The elected leadership will consult with members on decisions regarding major issues, unless time constraints make this impossible. (Examples of different types of decisions will be provided for clarification at the time these principles are presented for adoption.)
5. The Board will keep members informed on Board activities and actions.
6. SGA will encourage diversity in personnel at all levels of Sea Grant network organizations.
7. All new Sea Grant funding opportunities pursued by SGA or individual Association members should have the potential to be beneficial to the entire network.
8. Each SGA member will carefully and consistently support the success and well-being of the entire network and adhere to the adopted principles of the organization.

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## Staffing

The Board discussed the staff needed to help SGA carry out its roles and responsibilities. They agreed the roles and responsibilities outlined in the business plan developed by the External Relations Committee were still relevant, even with anticipated staffing changes. They discussed options for securing SGA office space in Washington, DC. Based on these discussions, Board members agreed on the following.

- The business plan developed by the External Relations Committee will be revised as necessary to reflect staffing changes and will be used to develop specific job descriptions.
- SGA will hire a full-time professional staff person as soon as possible.
- SGA will hire a half time administrative assistant, who could be shared with another compatible organization to create a full-time position.
- SGA will attempt to negotiate an agreement with CORE whereby SGA would rent office space and make arrangements for CORE to provide staff related support services such as payroll, benefits, etc.
- SGA will retain responsibility for providing direction, oversight and assessment for SGA staff members.
- SGA will develop contingency options in case agreement cannot be reached with CORE on space and staff related support services.

The SGA President and Chairman of the External Relations Committee will be responsible for moving forward with staff hiring, negotiations with CORE, and making the necessary revisions to the business plan.

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## Capacity Building

Retreat participants agreed that building the capacity of Sea Grant and the individual Sea Grant programs is a goal that runs through all of the roles, responsibilities and principles of SGA. In discussions about capacity building, Board members identified some of the things SGA already does that contribute to strengthening the capacity of the program. They also identified additional things SGA might consider doing and ways to increase member involvement in SGA activities.

### Existing Capacity Building Activities

Seeking additional core funding for Sea Grant programs.

- Working with the National Sea Grant Office to set program standards.
- Helping individual programs work more effectively with members of Congress.
- Participating on Program Assessment Teams (PATs) for other programs.
- Sharing ideas at SGA meetings and during Sea Grant Week about how to improve Sea Grant programs.

### Other Capacity Building Ideas

Develop a policies and procedures manual for SGA and its members.

- Include more formal sharing of individual program activities and successes at SGA meetings.
- Develop a roster of SGA members willing to travel to other programs to provide assistance in specific areas.
- Identify Sea Grant programs with expertise in specific areas that can serve as a resource to other programs.
- Encourage key staff members to visit other Sea Grant programs to share ideas.
- Involve new Sea Grant Directors as observers in PATs. (This will require clarifying the national policy on observers and making a case for the value of including one or two new directors as observers.)
- Use Theme Teams as a mechanism to increase coordination and visibility of Sea Grant research, outreach and education activities.

### Ways to Increase SGA Member Involvement

- Improve the orientation process for new members, highlighting opportunities for involvement through SGA committees, Theme Teams, etc.
- Clarify benefits of SGA participation and consider rewards/incentives for contributions to SGA activities.
- Make more direct requests for involvement/participation by individual members.
- Be realistic about what it is possible for representatives of small programs to contribute.

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