



Sea Grant Association

On the Proposal to Transfer the National Sea Grant College Program from NOAA, U.S. Department of Commerce to the National Science Foundation

**Position Statement
February 5, 2002**

Situation

The Administration, via the President's FY2003 budget proposal to the U.S. Congress on February 4, 2002, proposes to transfer the National Sea Grant College Program from NOAA to the National Science Foundation. The recommended appropriation to accompany the transfer is \$57 million, a reduction from the FY2002 appropriation in NOAA of \$62.4 million.

Sea Grant's Mission

The National Sea Grant College Program was created by federal legislation in 1966. As part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Department of Commerce, the National Sea Grant College Program engages the nation's top universities in conducting scientific research, education, training, and extension projects designed to foster science-based decisions about the use and conservation of our coastal, marine, and Great Lakes resources. Sea Grant's mission of enhancing the practical use and conservation of these resources to create a sustainable economy and environment is achieved by:

- Conducting priority-driven and peer-reviewed research to solve environmental problems and create economic opportunities through partnerships with coastal residents, businesses and industry, and local, regional, state and federal agencies.
- Transferring scientific research results to these constituencies and others through its nationwide extension program.
- Providing training opportunities for K-12 teachers to bring the sciences into the classroom and for undergraduate and graduate students to be mentored by senior researchers.
- Informing the public about marine and coastal issues through its communications and education programs.

The 30 university-based Sea Grant programs serve as the core of a dynamic national network of more than 300 participating institutions involving more than 3,000 scientists, engineers, outreach experts, educators, and students. The Sea Grant network addresses key issues and opportunities in areas such as aquaculture, aquatic nuisance species, marine biotechnology, seafood safety, fisheries management, coastal business and development, coastal habitat, water quality, and coastal hazards.

Sea Grant's Focus = Results + Performance

Most decisions that affect the coastal environment are made locally, and, through Sea Grant, the Federal government has the ability to partner with state and local constituencies to address national problems at state and local levels. Moreover, many coastal issues cross state jurisdictions and need to be addressed regionally. In addition to its state-based infrastructure, Sea Grant has created a system of regional networks that organize multi-state responses to regional/ecosystem-level problems.

Sea Grant is indeed an issues- and results-based program, with remarkable achievements over its 35-year history. Sea Grant's three-pronged, integrated approach of applying scientific research, education and training, and technical assistance and outreach focused on marine, coastal, and Great Lakes issues along America's coast truly represents "Science Serving America's Coast." By basing all its activities on strong rationale, meritorious science, and application of results, Sea Grant has contributed greatly to the economic and environmental sustainability of America's coastal resources and the education of its human "capital."

All Sea Grant research, outreach, and education efforts are subject to a consistent scientific peer-review process across all state Programs. During 2000/2001, 2,249 proposals were submitted across all Sea Grant competitions. Following a

rigorous peer review process, 520 projects were funded, a success rate of 22%. The turnover rate in principal investigators was 70% from the previous biennium. Over 300 institutions have received Sea Grant funding since 1995. All Extension, Communication and Education programs are proposal-based and peer-reviewed. In addition, the National Sea Grant College Program has implemented the most rigorous four-year external review process ever conducted for a government sponsored university-based program. This performance review evaluates each of the 30 Sea Grant programs on its management, strategic planning processes, the significance of results produced, and how results are received and used by our stakeholders.

Sea Grant represents a terrific federal value. Sea Grant Programs are required to match \$1 in non-federal funds for every \$2 of federal investment. Actually, revenues spent on Sea Grant activities nationwide from all sources totaled \$108 million for fiscal year 2001; the appropriation that year was \$62.25 million. This highly leveraged investment in Sea Grant is crucial to ensure appropriate federal, state, local, university, and private-sector efforts to support and enhance our burgeoning coastal economy while conserving and protecting the natural resource base upon which it depends.

Sea Grant Association Principles Regarding the National Sea Grant College Program

The Sea Grant Association believes that integrity of the National Sea Grant College Program must be maintained:

- Sea Grant must remain a partnership program among the nation's premier universities and laboratories, federal, state, and local governments, the private sector, and the public. Sea Grant's partnerships make it stronger, reduce costs, and address real world problems and opportunities.
- Sea Grant must continue to utilize an integrated approach involving peer-reviewed research, directed education, and technical assistance and extension to identify and deliver needed products and services to citizens, industry and government. Sea Grant's extension and education programs maximize the value of its research.
- Sea Grant must continue to focus its resources on the nation's diverse coastal, marine, and Great Lakes economic, environmental, and education needs. The huge pressures of coastal population growth in the United States will only increase the demand for Sea Grant's products and services.

Sea Grant Association Position on the Proposed Transfer

The transfer of the National Sea Grant College Program to the National Science Foundation is proposed in the President's FY2003 budget. At the same time,

- Congress passed Public Law 105-160 in 1998 to authorize the National Sea Grant College Program through FY2003. This legislation was passed with the *unanimous* consent of Congress. Over 100 members of the House of Representatives and over 20 members of the Senate co-sponsored the legislation. The bi-partisan support for this legislation continued Sea Grant as a part of NOAA within the U.S. Department of Commerce.
- Recently introduced reauthorization legislation (H.R. 3389) for the National Sea Grant College Program is pending in Congress. This bill will continue the program for five years based on its current structure, conduct and performance, and within NOAA.
- The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, appointed by the President in December 2001, will be issuing major recommendations within 18 months that affect all ocean-related federal agencies, including NOAA, its status as a federal agency, and the placement of its programs, both within and outside of NOAA.

Therefore, the Sea Grant Association believes that:

- No change should be considered in mission, structure, and function of the Sea Grant program, and the location of the National Sea Grant College Program, pending the completion of these processes.
- For Sea Grant to be successful, it requires a host in government that allows for partnerships among academia, government, industry and the public, that allows for the combined use of research, education and outreach, and that focuses on education, the economy and the coastal environment.
- Sea Grant also must be positioned in that host unit at an adequately high position to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency.

No government program has the depth and breadth of partnerships and accomplishments for the dollar that Sea Grant does.

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