Marine Science

Sand in your shoes and can't shake it out...

For marine science students, a sea of opportunity

By Brenda Mahaffy

Despite the term "marine science" conjuring up images of a well-tuned research vessel gliding along with dolphins at its bow, it is not always smooth sailing on the high seas.

"We have a plethora of students who have been working for the Corps of Engineers," said Linda Foster, director of the University of Florida's Marine and Atmospheric Science Program. Foster said the students often work in areas such as coastal engineering and oceanography. Students are required to complete a number of projects, both theoretical and practical, in order to earn their degrees.

"Marine science is a broad area that encompasses a variety of disciplines," Foster said, noting the field's complexity. "It involves the study of marine biology, oceanography, and other related sciences."

"It's a challenging field," Foster said, "but the rewards are great. You get to work in some of the most beautiful places in the world."

The field includes oceanographers, biochemists, environmental scientists, and economists. It is becoming increasingly important as our understanding of the ocean's role in climate change grows.

For example, oceanographers study the ocean's temperature, salinity, and other properties. This information is crucial for understanding climate change and predicting future trends.

"The field is expanding rapidly," Foster said. "There are many new opportunities for students in marine science. It's a great time to be a marine scientist."
Opportunities abound for marine science studies

Here is a partial listing of primary and secondary schools offering marine science programs in South Florida.

Florida Atlantic University
Department of Ocean Engineering
Boca Raton
954/739-3025
www.fau.edu

Florida State University Marine Laboratory,
J. T. Hansel
850/684-4400
www.fshall.org

Florida State University Oceanographic College
Fort Pierce
(561) 882-2000
www.fscu.edu

Palm Beach State College
Palm Beach County
www.pbc.edu

Palm Beach Maritime Academy
West Palm Beach
www.pbm.edu

University of Miami
Marine Laboratory
10001 Old Cutler Rd.
305/284-3140
www.miami.edu

University of Florida
Herrick Marine Laboratory
201 Marine Science Bldg.
352/392-3101
www.herrick.ufl.edu

PAMIS - Perry Institute for Marine Sciences
Salvador Whittle Research Center
16505 SE 245th Ave.
Jupiter
(561) 741-0101
www.pamis.org

Institute of Marine Resources
Cardinal F. Cardinal Center
3830 NE 163rd St.
Miami
305/465-6280
www.imr.org

People don't seem to know this field to become scientists. Turner laughed. It's a passion. Our students possess a certain gleam. They've gotten used to their jobs, but they can't shake it out.

Children often possess a strong curiosity about how things work, and some are naturally drawn to the ocean and all its mysteries. This curiosity can be nurtured and encouraged, leading to a deeper understanding and appreciation of marine science.
Love for the ocean inspires FAU student along career path

The word "can't" does not exist in Stephanie Brown's vocabulary. "I wanted to do the most challenging thing that I could do in college," said the 21-year-old Texan. "So I chose engineering."

As a competitive swimmer, Brown first attended the U.S. Naval Academy on a sports scholarship. She said the academy was a natural choice because she has four brothers in the Navy. "We're a very patriotic family," she said.

At the Naval Academy, she attended seminars in marine science and oceanography. "We got to play in the wave tanks to test the breakers. It was a lot of fun, and it was hands-on in the water. When it came time to sign her contract, committing to a career in the Navy, Brown opted to pursue ocean engineering."

Brown spent her sophomore year at Indian River Community College. "I heard that they had the best swim team of all the community colleges," she said. So she packed her belongings and drove across country to Fort St. Lucie, a city she had never seen before.

The risk proved worth it. IRC's swim team won the nationals. Brown considers that the pinnacle of her swimming career. She earned her associate's degree in engineering, then "retired" from her favorite sport to focus on her studies. She recently completed her junior year at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. FAU helped her to secure scholarships and grants, based on her academic achievements. She is one of the top three in her class.

Brown is excited about her future: "This summer, I'll intern at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Bethesda, Md. I've been dreaming of this internship for a very long time."

In the fall, Brown will begin her senior year at FAU's SenTech campus in Davie, which she describes as a "fantastic laboratory right on the beach." Once she graduates, she hopes to work for the U.S. Navy as a civilian.

"It would be great to have my family all working toward a common goal. We're all high achievers, and we want to help our country."

Brown said that the Navy also funds specialty training. "I'd love to pursue my master's through their education program. I can go on to learn a number of subjects. There are so many opportunities in marine science and ocean engineering that the sky is really the limit, and I'll never be bored.

"My ultimate goal is to build a ship. I want to see something that I designed in my head become a reality." This former swimming champ is well on her way to reaching her goal. She appreciates the power of good education. For Stephanie Brown, there is nothing that she "can't" learn to do.

By Brenda McLough