



2003 URE OMSS

Undergraduate Research Experience in Ocean, Marine and Space Science



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Fisheries Stock Assessment Team NOAA/Jackson State University, Dr. Paulinus Chigbu

The Fishery Stock Assessment Course is a five week course to be taken by selected students at Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi. The course is offered to several students from a plethora of backgrounds ranging from undergraduate to graduate students and including such majors as Computer Science, Applied Mathematics, Environmental Science, and Marine Biology. It is made available to students from an array of schools nationwide. This particular year, the course is comprised of students from North Carolina, Virginia, California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and Mississippi.

Each week, a different presenter, usually from the Woods Hole Laboratory in Massachusetts, comes to lecture to the students about various topics concerning fishery. Such lecturers include Dvora Hart, Mike Fogarty, Steve Cadrin, Ralf Riedel, Jon Brodziak, and coordinators Dr Paulinus Chigbu and Herald Ambrose. Topics included the following: population modeling, biomass-dynamic models, estimating abundance-fishery dependent methods, natural and fishing mortality, gear selectivity, stock and recruitment, and simple age/full age structured models. Each presenter distributed assignments that were to be completed by every student. Students were able to work individually or in groups on the given assignments. At the end of the course, students were required to give oral group presentations and individual written reports on the final project which was composed of the material learned throughout the summer. Upon successful completion of the class, students will have the opportunity to receive hands-on experience and utilize the information that they learned from the course. Students are sent to several laboratories across the United States where they will be involved in the actual internship and will work closely alongside a manager/mentor at one of the regional laboratories. This year students will be interning at the Woods Hole regional laboratory in Massachusetts, the Miami laboratory in Florida, and the Pascagoula regional laboratory in Mississippi. Other regional laboratories are Milford, Connecticut; Beaufort, North Carolina; Seattle, Washington; and La Jolla, California.

The FSA course at Jackson State has been a wonderful opportunity for me and I encourage other students to apply and get involved. The course not only provided me with general information of fishery, it also provided me experience as well as a way for me to tie in the information I learn with what I see. During my five week stay here, I had the opportunity to visit the Museum of Natural Science and go trawling in Biloxi, Mississippi. At the museum, I was able to go and see some of the aquatic animals that had been discussed in class. This gave me a much more accurate perception of marine life. Trawling was another unique experience, a first experience. The all day event allowed students to see the process of catching fish and the analysis behind trawling in specific areas of the water.

In the beginning, I was skeptical about becoming a participant in the program due to my limited knowledge and experience in marine sciences; however, I could not have had a better experience. The course ties together the areas of mathematics and marine science and many of the students only had a background in one of the areas. This allowed the opportunity for great teamwork. For me, this has been a great accomplishment due to my meeting several great people and learning a great deal about a new topic/area that I was very unfamiliar with. In the future, I hope that the program will be extended to several other universities and offered to many other students so that they will have the chance to have the wonderful experience that I have had.





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