



## ***Press Release***

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**For Immediate Release**  
[www.sura.org](http://www.sura.org)

**For more information contact:**  
**Greg D. Kubiak, Chief Communications Officer**  
**202-408-2412 \* [kubiak@sura.org](mailto:kubiak@sura.org)**

### **SURA Awarded NOAA Grant to Advance Ocean, Coastal Observation**

**Washington, DC** – A \$4 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will help SURA evaluate the readiness of marine forecasts, such as flooding from storm surge or seasonal dead zones. Focused along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts, the effort will improve those forecasts for use by emergency managers, scientific researchers and the general public.

The competitive grant was announced June 11 by NOAA's Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS<sup>®</sup>) program for fiscal year 2010 so the university consortium can work with government agencies and researchers to advance information technology and improve understanding of coastal, ocean, and environmental phenomena. IOOS is a tool for tracking, predicting, managing, and adapting to changes in our marine environment.

"Recent advances in science and computing capabilities are leading to improved tools to predict coastal ocean phenomena," said Zdenka Willis, NOAA IOOS Program Director. "This project creates an objective environment to compare the latest models for improved forecasting that will ultimately benefit the daily lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans."

Scientists will work to improve the precision of computer models that forecast chronic issues of high relevance in the Atlantic and Gulf regions – such as flooding from storm surge and seasonal depletion of oxygen in shallow waters. They will also explore methods for effectively delivering model results to regional centers, scientists and managers relying on IOOS. The project is intended to identify the most useful models, as well as methods to translate the resulting information to the public.

"We are excited to embark on this collaborative research project and feel uniquely qualified to partner with the federal agencies involved with IOOS in this important effort," said Jerry P. Draayer, SURA President and CEO. "Improved models will provide better forecast resolution for the Loop Current in the deep Gulf," Draayer added. "By improving our predictability of coastal and deep water circulation, agencies can more accurately assess impacts of oil spills like the tragedy affecting the Gulf today."

Congress kick-started the grant opportunity with the inclusion of funding to support such a project in last year's Consolidated Appropriations Act. The legislation, and NOAA's subsequent Federal Funding Opportunity announcement, called for inclusion of at least 20 academic and research institutions to participate.

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*The Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) is a consortium of over 60 leading research institutions in the southern United States and the District of Columbia established in 1980 as a non-stock, nonprofit corporation. SURA serves as an entity through which colleges, universities, and other organizations may cooperate with one another, and with government and industry in acquiring, developing, and using laboratories and other research facilities and in furthering knowledge and the application of that knowledge in the physical, biological, and other natural sciences and engineering. For more information, visit [www.sura.org](http://www.sura.org).*