

## ***Press Release***

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**For Immediate Release**  
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### **SURA Sponsors Student Awards at Vibrios Conference**

**Washington, DC** – SURA co-sponsored a major scientific conference on ocean ecology and marine health held in Biloxi, Mississippi earlier this month. “Vibrios in the Environment 2010” drew 286 scientists and students representing 28 countries, with SURA support funding graduate student awards and participation.

The cutting edge, scientific sessions included a live feed from a CDC epidemiologist investigating the cholera epidemic in Haiti and lively sessions on post-harvest processing of raw oysters, vibrios and climate change, and the microbial degradation of oil in the northern Gulf of Mexico. The November 7-12 event was held at the Beau Rivage Resort in Biloxi, with local assistance provided by the University of Southern Mississippi, a SURA member.

“We are excited to help with this important scientific event and support graduation student participation,” said Jerry P. Draayer, SURA President and CEO. “The critical study from this conference will not only encourage future study of ocean health and ecology, but will also help inform SURA’s work on a NOAA-funded super-regional testbed project.”

In 1980, leading *Vibrio* researchers working in the area of microbial ecology and public health convened a conference in Louisiana entitled, “Vibrios in the Environment.” Those proceedings, published 1984, firmly established that the *Vibrio* species were indigenous to marine and estuarine environments. As *Vibrio* research increased for the next 30 years, these organisms have often been at the forefront of basic scientific discovery and the global public health debate.

Some prominent issues initiated by *Vibrio* research include discoveries on the viable but non-culturable state in bacteria, identification of ballast discharge as vehicle for pandemic spread, and climate change resulting in an expansion of the seasonal and geographical range of *Vibrio* spp. and their diseases. Post-harvest practices in the U.S. have been employed to reduce or eliminate the vibrio threat from oysters, and rapid diagnostics (QPCR) have been adapted for monitoring practices and PHP validation. The vibrios are still regarded by most marine microbiologists as the dominant culturable bacteria in the ocean, with reason to believe that climate change may increase their presence.

SURA helped underwrite the conference, including graduate student registrations and the Rita R. Colwell Awards for Outstanding Graduate Student Oral Presentation. Rita Colwell, a co-chair of the event, is a former Director of the National Science Foundation. Other event sponsors included NASA, NOAA, FDA, USDA, Chevron and BP.

*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).*