

Press Release

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For Immediate Release
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Trustees Endorse Collaboration on Ocean Observation Initiative

Washington, DC – The Board of Trustees of the Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) endorsed efforts by its Coastal Research leadership team to proactively seek a governance model for the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) – a recommendation first endorsed by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy in 2004 – that includes strong academic/private sector partnerships.

The resolution endorsed at the semi-annual board meeting of the 62-university consortium calls for developing and advancing a “partnership among the academic community, private-sector and government entities to build and operate systems of systems with the objective of delivering best-in-class science and operational service to the American public.”

“It is imperative that we work in close partnership with the private sector and the government funding agencies to deliver a cost-effective, integrated ocean observing system. We need to capitalize on recent advances in our ability to gather, process and render in real time critical data about our environment to a broad spectrum of users,” said Jerry P. Draayer, President and CEO of SURA. He went on to say, “The same infrastructure that enables grand-challenge type research work can be used to alert the public of pending disaster, be it of natural or manmade causes. It’s our responsibility to advance dual and even multiple uses of the public’s investment in expensive resources.”

SURA partnered with two major oceanographic organizations – the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education (CORE) and the Joint Oceanographic Institutions (JOI) – in January 2006 to collaborate on opportunities to develop, integrate and deploy ocean and coastal observing systems and the Integrated Ocean Observing System. IOOS is a U.S. ocean contribution to even larger initiatives such as the Global Earth Ocean Observing System (GEOOS). A signed memorandum of agreement assures that the academic research community is playing an integral and essential role in partnership with federal agencies and the private sector for the design, development, implementation and evolution of earth observing infrastructure.

The group’s first opportunity to work as partners is with a NOAA Request for Quotation (RFQ) dated January 4, 2006, which entails “a conceptual design of IOOS, an estimate of the cost to produce the system based on that conceptual design, and a narrative explanation of the viability of the design.” The parties will develop partnering agreements with private sector organizations pursuing those opportunities where commercial partners are explicitly or implicitly required in response to a funding opportunity. CORE, JOI and SURA commit to draw broadly from their combined memberships to provide “best-in-class” domain experts to IOOS and GOOS planning exercises.

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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.