

“Towards an Evaluation of Marine Affairs Education”

Robert A Fischer III

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3:30 PM, Robinson Hall 203

Abstract:

In my second seminar presentation for the marine policy masters program I will be presenting the introductory proposal for my thesis project on evaluating graduate marine affairs degree programs in the United States. The seminar will focus on the various methods I plan to employ in conducting this research, as well as more general information on how to approach this type of problem and research design.

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy in the 2004 report on the current status of and the future direction of U.S. ocean policy highlights, in chapter 8, the importance of evaluating all levels of ocean education both formal and informal. The impetus for undertaking this project comes from a lack of information on the effectiveness of graduate marine affairs programs. My research question is: Are the current graduate programs in marine affairs/ marine policy effectively preparing graduate students to enter into a dynamic professional world with the necessary skills and knowledge?

My main research instrument will be a mail survey sent out to a large number of recent marine affairs graduates. The survey will ask them basic information relating to their first and current professional positions, their general program course, thesis/dissertation topic, and funding or fellowship options. The most important part of the survey will be a more open-ended section where respondents are asked to evaluate their program's strengths and weaknesses as far as it was able to equip them with the necessary skills to work effectively in the marine affairs area. In seminar I will present a draft of this survey for comment and discussion.

Secondary research includes information on the programs I have selected including curriculum requirements, current course lists, available fellowships and internship activities, and current student population information. This data will serve as a foundation on which to base my analysis and discussion of the alumni responses. Also, I plan to conduct semi-structured in person or over telephone interviews with various figures of the marine affairs education community including deans and program directors to better get a sense of what the intentions of the programs are and how the administration and faculty see the goals of a solid marine affairs education.

One of the biggest challenges of this project is to ascertain just what are the criteria for an effective program. This will, therefore, be a theme of my talk because I am hoping to use the discussion session as a way for my faculty and student peers to participate in the design and scope of this project.