

Dissertations Initiative for the Advancement of Limnology and Oceanography: DIALOG III and IV

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LONG TERM GOALS

Originally founded in 1994, and now entering its third cycle, the Dissertations Initiative for the Advancement of Limnology and Oceanography (DIALOG) program seeks to (1) facilitate interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and international aquatic science research, understanding and collaborations; (2) reduce the historical, institutional and philosophical barriers that limit the exchange of information among aquatic scientists; and (3) expedite the transition from Ph.D. student to independent researcher.

OBJECTIVES

DIALOG is an educational and human resource program. It targets aquatic scientists and those in related disciplines who have recently obtained their Ph.D. degrees and wish to pursue interdisciplinary aquatic science research. To accomplish its stated goals, the program objectives are to:

- (1) Compile and publish submitted Ph.D. dissertation abstracts to provide a concise overview of current research over the range of biologically related aquatic science.
- (2) Convene a symposium every two years to facilitate interdisciplinary, inter-institutional, and international understanding and collaborations among participants; and
- (3) Develop and maintain a centralized data base for characterization and tracking of recent Ph.D. recipients to better identify human-resource trends and needs.

APPROACH

Using mailings, handouts, and a web site, the program is announced as widely as possible to reach all potential participants. All program and symposium application procedures are accomplished through the web site (www.aslo.org/dialog.html).

1. Dissertation Compilation:

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To be included in the dissertation compilation individuals are asked to complete a brief demographic profile and submit a 1-page dissertation abstract. Citations/ abstracts are compiled and made available through the web page and the citations are also published in the next edition of the *ASLO (American Society of Limnology and Oceanography) Bulletin*.

2. Symposium Participation:

In addition to submitting the demographic profile and the dissertation abstract, if individuals wish to be considered for symposium participation, they are also asked to submit a 2-page CV (with list of peer-reviewed publications); a 1-page answer to the question, "Why do you want to attend the DIALOG symposium?" (will include a description of career goals, interdisciplinary interests, and ways in which participation would enhance professional growth and contribute to the symposium); a half-page answer to the question, "What do you consider to be the most interesting/challenging/ important issue in limnology or oceanography today?" ; and two letters of recommendation. Based on the application materials, a committee of six academic researchers will meet in the spring of 1999 to select up to 40 participants to attend the third DIALOG symposium in October 1999. During the symposium each participant will present a poster and a 10-minute overview of his or her Ph.D. dissertation research, with an additional 5 minutes for questions/discussion. Participants will also form working groups to discuss emerging aquatic science research, education, and policy issues. Funding-agency representatives (see below) will present perspectives on interdisciplinary and international aquatic science research programs and building a successful career.

3. Data Analysis:

Information submitted by program applicants and the results of surveys completed by symposium participants are compiled in a database and used to characterize program participants and to assess trends. Follow-up studies and comprehensive analysis of data will be conducted to assess professional/career progression of participants and the long-term outcomes of the program.

This program is also supported by funding from NASA (Ocean Biogeochemistry Program and Atmospheric Chemistry and Ecology Branch of Mission to Planet Earth Program); NOAA (Coastal Oceanography and National Sea Grant College Programs); NSF (Ecosystem Studies Program, Biological Oceanography Program, International Program, and Office of Polar Programs); and the European Commission.

WORK COMPLETED

NOTE: Work completed in the DIALOG program earlier in FY 98 falls under a previous award (#N00014-97-1-0264) and can be found in the FY97 annual report and in the final close-out report for that award submitted on April 16, 1998. Here we cover work completed under current award.

During September 1998, ca. 200 program announcements were distributed to the heads of departments of academic institutions throughout the world where previous DIALOG participants studied or worked. In addition, announcements were sent to a variety of professional scientific societies for publication, and posters were distributed at a large international aquatic sciences meeting (Societas Internationalis Limnologiae (SIL) annual meeting in Dublin, Ireland) and sent to the 3,800 members of ASLO with a request that they be posted. Also during September 1998 the DIALOG program web site was modified

and updated. For this third program cycle we have already received 56 applicants/abstract submissions. Of those, so far 23 have indicated they wish to be considered for symposium participation.

RESULTS

Results of this third cycle of the DIALOG program are limited since we are in the early stages of new abstract compilation and the third symposium application process. Detailed results of earlier program cycles (DIALOG I and II) can be found in the annual and final reports submitted for award #s N00014-95-1-0197 and N00014-97-1-0264 respectively. Examples of how these results are being utilized by others are found under "Transitions" below.

IMPACT

The most interesting and important questions in aquatic and other sciences today are increasingly interdisciplinary. In addition, we find that our scientific community and society as a whole are increasingly global, interdependent, and interactive. Therefore the very concept of the DIALOG program is pertinent and timely as it facilitates the vital exchange of knowledge, ideas, and science that is necessary in this new scientific climate and global community. The symposium, in particular, brings together scientists, at a pivotal point in their research careers, from across the full spectrum of biologically relevant aquatic science, from a variety of scientific backgrounds, from various institutions, and from different countries and cultures. This dynamic mix then participates in an intensive seven-day symposium where all participants gain an overview of the work of the others and are exposed to different ways of thinking about and conducting research. The collegial bonds and lines of communication formed will remain throughout their professional careers to sustain, stimulate, and enhance their work. The scientific community and the general population can only benefit from the perspectives these "new" scientists bring back to their home institutions (and countries) and then go on to share with their students and colleagues. Based on actual comments from earlier symposium participants we know that the experience significantly changed the way they think, communicate, and approach their research. This group should act as a catalyst to move the entire field in exciting new, interdisciplinary directions which will address the aquatic science issues of the future. The DIALOG program is a long-term investment in human-resources and science infrastructure. As it continues and its scope widens, it will, directly and indirectly, continue to positively impact the aggregate research community and through that, society in general as we increasingly depend on research results for understanding and managing vital aquatic systems and resources.

TRANSITIONS

1) Participants in earlier DIALOG symposia have been involved in interdisciplinary (including some international) research collaborations; an international student exchange program at two institutions; the organization of several workshops and meeting sessions; and the ongoing communication throughout the entire group about research, education and science policy issues via an electronic distribution list. We have also learned that this core group has expanded as information and insights gained through the program are shared with students, postdoctoral associates, and colleagues.

2) The dissertation compilation (available on the web site and compiled into a printed publication after each symposium) has been and is continuing to be used by journal editors and program officers to identify reviewers; by meeting organizers to identify speakers and session chairs; by scientists and administrators to get an overview of the latest research and to identify potential postdoctoral

researchers and job applicants; and by fellow students, researchers, and new entrants to the aquatic science community.

3) The demographic information is providing a profile of the newest entrants to the aquatic science community--their gender, age, ethnicity, citizenship, Ph.D.-granting institutions and subsequent employers, and disciplinary interests. This information should enable a variety of interest groups to better track the aquatic science community (which has been difficult to profile, due to the large number of degree-granting institutions, departments in which an aquatic scientist might reside, and variety of key words under which aquatic science falls in general science databases).

RELATED PROJECTS

None

PUBLICATIONS

Weiler, C.S. 1997. Dissertation Initiative for the Advancement of Limnology and Oceanography: DIALOG II Program Report. *ASLO Bulletin* 6(2):10-14.

Weiler, C.S. 1997. Dissertations Initiative for the Advancement of Limnology and Oceanography (DIALOG II): Ph.D. Dissertation Abstracts and Program Summary.

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