

DISSERTATIONS INITIATIVE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF LIMNOLOGY AND OCEANOGRAPHY: DIALOG II

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LONG TERM GOALS

The Dissertations Initiative for the Advancement of Limnology and Oceanography (DIALOG) was founded in 1994 to facilitate interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and international aquatic science research, understanding and collaborations.

OBJECTIVES

The DIALOG II program targets biologically oriented limnologists and oceanographers who completed their last Ph.D. requirement between September 1, 1994 and March 31, 1997. The program objectives are to:

- (1) Compile and publish the submitted Ph.D. dissertation abstracts. The compilation provides a concise overview of current research over the range of biologically related aquatic science.
- (2) Convene a symposium to facilitate interdisciplinary, interinstitutional, 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.

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APPROACH

Program announcements were distributed to the heads of departments of the ca. 1,300 academic institutions throughout the world which subscribe to *Limnology and Oceanography*. In addition, announcements were sent to a variety of professional scientific societies for publication, and posters were distributed to the 3,800 members of the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography (ASLO) with a request that they be posted. To be included in the program and dissertation compilation, individuals could complete a brief demographic profile and submit a 1-page dissertation abstract. Applicants for the symposium submitted a demographic profile; 1-page dissertation abstract; 1-page description of career goals, interdisciplinary interests, and ways in which participation would enhance professional growth and contribute to the

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symposium; 2-page CV; and two letters of recommendation. Based on the application materials, a committee of 6 academic researchers selected participants.

WORK COMPLETED

203 applications were requested, 99 dissertations were registered, and 87 symposium applications were received by the May 1, 1997 deadline (compared with 138, 80 and 67 for the first program).

The 99 completed applications came from 28 countries: USA (47), Argentina (1), Australia (2), Brazil (2), Canada (5), China (1), Egypt (2), France (1), Germany (6), Greece (1), India (4), Israel (1), Japan (2), Nepal (1), Netherlands (1), Nigeria (1), N. Ireland (2), Pakistan (1), Poland (1), Russia (6), Spain (2), Switzerland (1), Sweden (2), Ukraine (1), United Kingdom (3), Venezuela (1), Zimbabwe (1). Of those, 53% were female and 47 % were male; and 60% were limnologists and 40 % were oceanographers.

48 symposium participants were selected from among the 87 applicants, with 43 attending. With so many qualified candidates, many factors in addition to excellence in research were considered and many worthy individuals had to be turned away to maintain the "critical size" for fostering long-term interactions. Selection was based on scientific training, dissertation topic and execution, interdisciplinary experience and interests, letters of recommendation, and program balance.

The symposium took place October 12 - 17, 1997 at the Bermuda Biological Station for Research. Participants made both oral and poster presentations of their Ph.D. research and participated in small working groups to consider current and emerging issues in aquatic science education and research.

RESULTS

The DIALOG Program is a long-term investment in human-resources and science infrastructure. Direct and indirect results should benefit the aggregate research community as well as our society, which increasingly depends on research results for understanding and managing aquatic systems and resources. The DIALOG symposium reaches approximately 40 young PI's at a pivotal point in their research careers. Based on their comments, the symposium changed the way participants think, communicate, and approach their research. The science community and the general population will benefit from the perspectives these new PI's bring back to their home institutions and share with their students and colleagues. This group should act as a catalyst to move the entire field in exciting new, interdisciplinary directions. In the words of one participant, "As the 'Global Village' continues to grow and research funding continues to shrink, it is imperative that we strive for more cooperation and collaborative research approaches to address future science needs and directions... [because of DIALOG] it will be easier to form collaborations that cross international and [other] borders." (James L Pinckney) The DIALOG program has indeed served as a catalyst for the community and the network of interactions should continue to expand and interconnect in ever-changing ways as new colleagues, students and ideas are added to the mix

IMPACT

The most interesting and important questions in aquatic and other sciences are increasingly interdisciplinary. And, with recent breakthroughs in electronic communication, our community is increasingly a global one. The DIALOG program brings together scientist from across the full spectrum of biologically relevant aquatic science. Individuals bring a variety of scientific backgrounds from various institutions across the country and abroad. The intensive seven-day symposium ensures that all participants gain an overview of the work of each participant and are exposed to different ways of thinking about and conducting research. The collegial bonds formed should sustain them throughout their professional careers. While the full impact of the program will probably not be reached for many years, there have already been many impacts. Among other things, several interdisciplinary (including some international) research collaborations have been started, an international student exchange program has been set up at 2 institutions, several workshops and meeting sessions have been organized, and the entire group continues to communicate about research, education and science policy issues via an electronic distribution list. This core group has expanded as information and insights gained through the program is shared with students, postdoctoral associates, and colleagues. In addition, the dissertation compilation has been used by journal editors and program officers to identify reviewers, by meeting organizers to identify speakers and session chairs, by scientists and administrators to identify potential postdoctoral researchers and job applicants, by scientists to get an overview of the latest research and new entrants to the aquatic science community. Finally, 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 data bases).

TRANSITIONS

Not applicable to this project

RELATED PROJECTS

None

REFERENCES

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