

GOMURC 2015 Annual Progress Report



**GULF OF MEXICO UNIVERSITY RESEARCH
COLLABORATIVE**
(www.gomurc.org)

2015 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

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PURPOSE

Research university consortia from the five U.S. Gulf of Mexico States came together in 2010 to form the Gulf of Mexico University Research Collaborative (GOMURC), a unified voice for academia and science-based decisions affecting the Gulf States, Gulf coastal and ocean ecosystems, and its nationally important natural resources. While the Gulf States long ago realized that there is strength in numbers by forming state-wide university consortia, a similar regional alliance also makes sense considering the nature of ecosystem-wide stressors such as hurricanes, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill (DWHOS), and climate changes. Ecosystem stressors and efforts to understand, mitigate and restore impacted resources transcend geopolitical boundaries.

Universities provide the research capabilities required for an ecosystem approach to managing Gulf natural resources and train the work-force of tomorrow that must deal with mounting stress and economic hardships. Engaging students in crisis response through hands-on experience is a valuable learning tool. After the DWHOS disaster, universities were among the first responders to assess damages, monitor impacts, and determine the nature and fate of spill event materials. These investigator, program and institution-driven efforts, and early results sometimes conflicted with industry and government efforts.

In order to improve coordination among universities, managers, and other stakeholder groups, and grow university capabilities required to support Gulf science and education, leaders of university research consortia in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in late 2010 formally establishing GOMURC. As stated in this originating MOU, the consortia “pledge to collaborate, communicate, and advocate for science and education efforts needed to address Gulf issues.” The agreement mandates that

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progress reports be prepared and [posted on-line](#) for each Calendar year, which includes strategic objectives and organization for the report year, highlighted accomplishments, and priority objectives for the coming year.

2015 STRATEGY

VISION AND MISSION

As described in the most recent Strategic Plan approved by the GOMURC Members Board, GOMURC's *vision and mission* include:

GOMURC VISION

Gulf of Mexico will be understood scientifically and used economically in a way that ensures sustainability of its natural capital.

GOMURC MISSION

A multi-state university-based research consortia collaborating to promote scientific knowledge, workforce development, and understanding that informs natural resource management decisions at state, regional, national and international levels.

ORGANIZATION

GOMURC's organization includes staff, a Member Board, and Gulf research universities (Figure 1 and 2). GOMURC has five Principal Member consortia representing the Gulf States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, representing a total of 80 institutions in 2015 (Appendix A, Figure 2), and host over 166 marine science, policy and socio-economic programs that work on Gulf ecosystem issues. These consortia include:

- Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (AMESC)
- Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO)
- Louisiana University Gulf Research Consortium (LUGRC)
- Mississippi Research Consortium (MRC)
- Texas Research Consortium (TRC).

As defined in the GOMURC By-laws, the GOMURC Board includes a representative from each Principal Member consortium (Figure 1). A Board Chair from one of the Principal Members is assigned based on an annual, rotational schedule prescribed in the By-laws. Chair duties include: preside over Board meetings; call Board meetings at least two times each calendar year; call for other meetings as needed or when requested by two other Principal Members; and oversee the GOMURC Coordinator in carrying out the annual work plan. Each Principal member can designate up to 3 alternates to serve as voting Board members at meetings in their absence (one per meeting). Ex-officio, non-voting members may also be nominated and approved by the Board, and engage in Board meetings.

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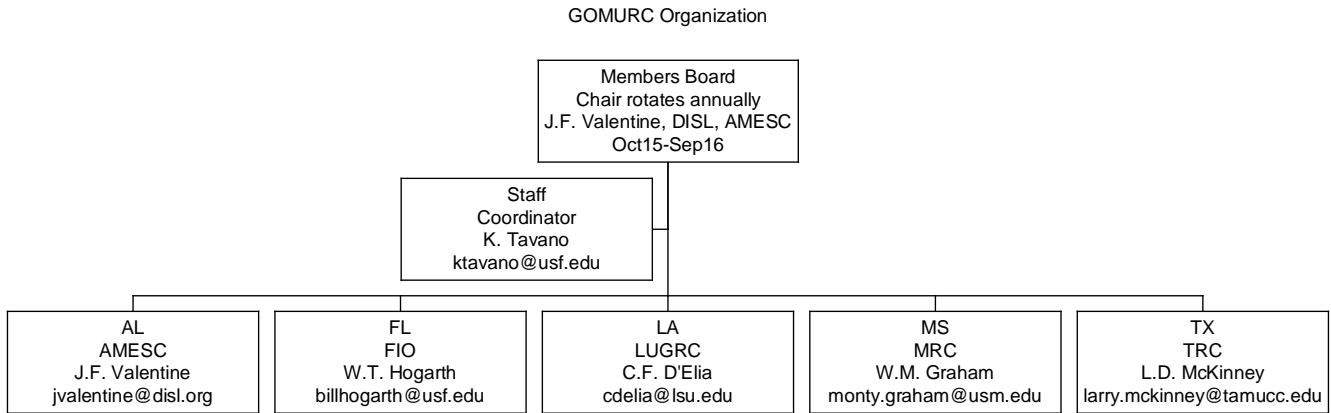


Figure 1. GOMURC 2015-16 Organization; member institutions listed in Appendix A.

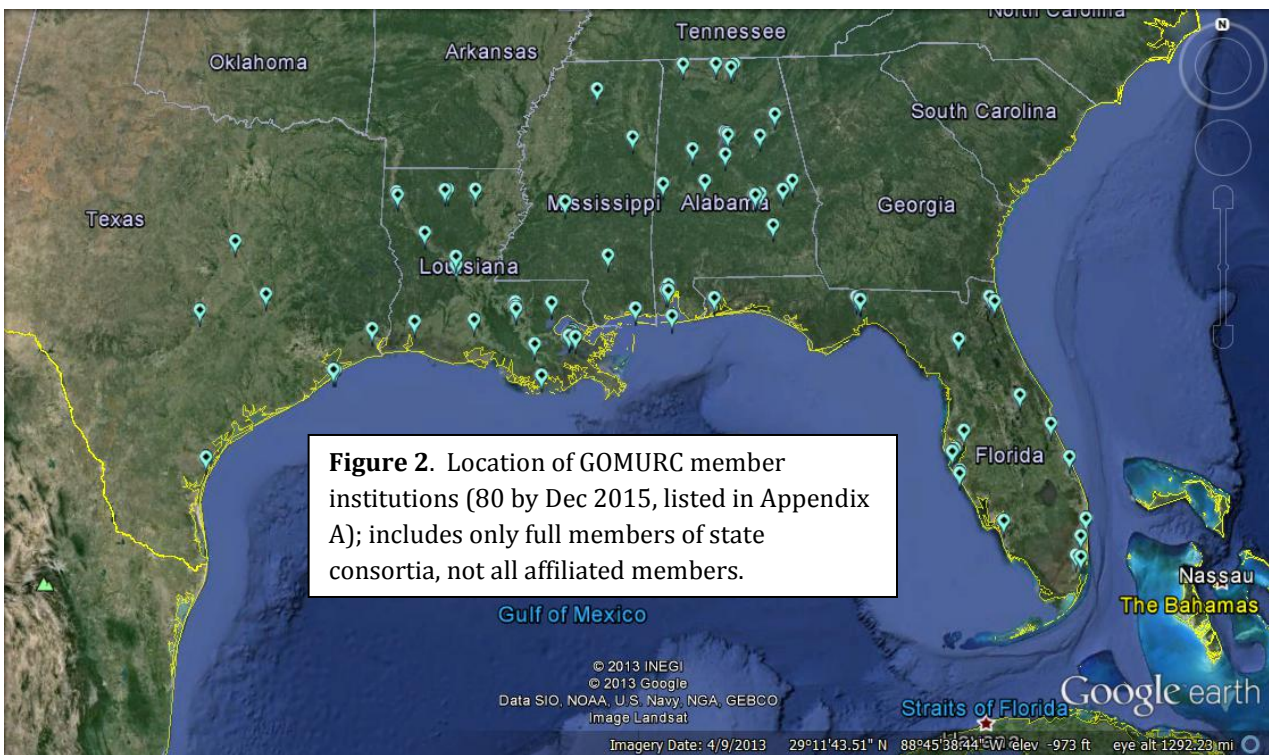


Figure 2. Location of GOMURC member institutions (80 by Dec 2015, listed in Appendix A); includes only full members of state consortia, not all affiliated members.

GOMURC is administered by a Coordinator and the FIO support team. Funding for program expenses was provided by grants from the Walton Family Foundation and Harte Support Foundation. These grants require specific objectives and deliverables. The Coordinator position was located at FIO, St. Petersburg, FL, from 2011 through 2016.

With Board approval, ad hoc advisory teams comprised of representatives from GOMURC member universities and other outside expertise as required, are used to address specific regional initiatives. GOMURC also utilizes Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) agreements with regional partners to promote coordination and collaboration. Active agreements in 2015 included: Mexico’s Consortium of Marine Research Institutions in the Gulf of Mexico ([CiiMar-GoM](#)); the Gulf of Mexico Alliance ([GOMA](#)); and the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System ([GCOOS](#)).

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OBJECTIVES

GOMURC goals and objectives (Table 1) for 2015 and 2016 include: **advocacy** efforts intended to actively espouse GOMURC mission priorities and capabilities; and **coordination** activities meant to enable collaboration among Gulf science, management and education communities.

Table 1. GOMURC goals and objectives intended to serve the vision and mission statements.

Goal	Description	Objectives
1- engage members in spill response and restoration	Engage members in Deepwater Horizon oil spill restoration effort, including science, technology, education and regional planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate activities to support science-based restoration programs and integrated information management. Advocate for ecosystem and project-level monitoring and observing program. Advocate for engagement of members in restoration programs.
2- prepare for future disasters	Improve members' response readiness for future disasters, including improving access to members' assets and integration with other responsible organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for members' disaster response capabilities and engagement Advocate for modeling for predicting events and ecosystem impacts and coordination of related activities.
3- develop new initiatives	Identify and engage members in new priority initiatives that promote Gulf environmental and economic health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate science education programs for university students. Advocate for initiatives that address priority threats to Gulf ecosystem and economic health
4- network	Improve communication and collaboration among members and with outside partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate communications among members Coordinate activities to convey GOMURC priorities to decision/policy-makers Coordinate regional partnerships to support a healthy Gulf environment.

2015 PROGRESS

A detailed progress report (tasks, actions, progress notes and outputs, by goals and objectives in Table 1 and work plan year), is available upon request. Outcomes included:

- Feedback to restoration plans included: RESTORE Act NOAA Science Program's Science Framework; National Academies of Science, Gulf Research Program's Strategic Vision; RESTORE Act Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Science Evaluation process; and Treasury Departments Final Rulemaking for the RESTORE Act.
- Co-sponsored [Gulf Spill and Ecosystem Science Conference](#), led by the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GOMRI), in Jan 2015, and committed to sponsor 2016 conference; GOMURC will have sponsored participation of over 80 university students during 2013, 2014 and 2015 conferences. GOMURC director served on Executive Planning Committee for 2014-2016 conferences. GOMURC also co-sponsored Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) annual meeting.
- The GOMURC entity enabled us to participate in national level efforts to inform policy, for example, comments were submitted via Senator Vitter for the Senate hearing, "Five Years After Deepwater Horizon: Improvements and Challenges in Prevention and Response" to

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reinforce our priorities including the need for and value of the academic community as first responders to disasters.

- Development of the Centers of Excellence Network (CENet) to provide improved communication and collaboration among the emerging RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Research Grant Programs throughout the Gulf of Mexico. This activity was handed off to the FL RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program to lead starting in January of 2016.
- Outreach activities included creation of Prezi presentations to promote: 1) [value of Gulf ecosystem services and contributions of academe to related science](#); and 2) [Gulf-wide ecosystem monitoring](#) to support restoration and sustainability via implementation plan offered by the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System Build-Out Plan (V2.0).

2016 STRATEGY

Funding from previous awards all end in 2016. Winding down includes reduction of staff support to one part-time (0.25 FTE) coordinator (A. Shepard) as of May 2016. A new strategy for determining the Collaborative’s funding and priorities in 2017 and beyond will be developed by September 2016. Strategic goals and objectives (Table 1) will be addressed through coordination and advocacy activities used to evaluate performance (Table 2).

Table 2. Priority actions for 2016 by goals and objectives (Table 1).

Objective	Planned Actions
G1-Coordinate activities to support science-based restoration programs and integrated information management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track and share status of restoration programs and projects, and provide public scoping feedback as needed.
G1-Advocate for ecosystem and project-level monitoring and observing program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support GCER Council projects that promote ecosystem monitoring • Continue support for development of GCOOS Build-out Plan and advocate for related support from restoration funders • Support collaboration with GCOOS and GOMA to advocate for ecosystem observing and monitoring program in support of Gulf restoration and sustainability (co-sponsor GOMA all-hands meeting in 2016, which includes related efforts).
G1-Advocate for engagement of members in restoration programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate on and monitor various restoration programs' meetings and plans • Promote need for science-based restoration and critical role of Gulf research universities (co-sponsor 2016 GOMOSEs conference).
G2-Advocate for members’ disaster response capabilities and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote access to Incident Command System, conceptual models, and related response resources, and successful response efforts.
G3- Coordinate science education programs for university students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor participation of university students during 2016 Gulf Spill and Ecosystem Science Conference.
G4- Coordinate communications among members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support gomurc Board monthly webinars/teleconferences (schedule, draft agenda, host, and resulting action item notes) • Host ad hoc Board meetings via webinars open to all members with focus on high priority issues • Maintain GOMURC web site and contacts list.
G4- Coordinate activities to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and distribute outreach materials (e.g., Prezi presentations

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Objective	Planned Actions
convey GOMURC priorities to decision/policy-makers	on Gulf restoration programs and ecosystem monitoring via GCOOS BOP, ad hoc ppts for Board chair, and one-pagers) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write and administer GOMURC News blog.
G4- Coordinate partnerships to support a healthy Gulf environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Renew MOUs and support activities with CiiMar-GOM (Mexican universities consortium), GOMA and GCOOS• Promote engagement of GOMURC members in GOMA's restoration efforts including DWH Project Tracker and Restoration Monitoring Community of Practice.

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APPENDIX A: GOMURC MEMBERS IN 2015

Institution	Member
Alabama A & M University	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Alabama State University	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Athens State University	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Auburn University	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Auburn University at Montgomery	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Birmingham Southern College	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Dauphin Island Sea Lab	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Grambling State University	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Huntingdon College	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Jacksonville State University	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Judson College	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
MS/AL Sea Grant	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Samford University	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Spring Hill College	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Talladega College	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Troy State University	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Tuskegee University	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
University of Alabama	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
University of Alabama at Birmingham	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
University of Alabama at Huntsville	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
University of Mobile	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
University of Montevallo	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
University of North Alabama	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
University of South Alabama	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
University of West Alabama	Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Eckerd College	Florida Institute of Oceanography*
Florida A&M University	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Florida Atlantic University	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Florida Department of Environmental Protection	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Florida Gulf Coast University	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Florida Institute of Technology	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Florida International University	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Florida Polytechnic University	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Florida Sea Grant	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Florida State University	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Jacksonville University	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium	Florida Institute of Oceanography
New College of Florida	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Nova Southeastern University	Florida Institute of Oceanography

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Smithsonian Marine Station at Fort Pierce	Florida Institute of Oceanography
University of Central Florida	Florida Institute of Oceanography
University of Florida	Florida Institute of Oceanography
University of Miami	Florida Institute of Oceanography
University of North Florida	Florida Institute of Oceanography
University of South Florida	Florida Institute of Oceanography
University of West Florida	Florida Institute of Oceanography
Centenary College of Louisiana	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Dillard University	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Louisiana College	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Louisiana State University at Alexandria	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Louisiana State University at Shreveport	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Louisiana Tech University	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON)	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Loyola University	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
McNeese State University	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Nicholls State University	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Northwestern State University	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Our Lady of Holy Cross College	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Southeastern Louisiana University	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Southern University and A&M College at Baton Rouge	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Southern University at New Orleans	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Tulane University	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
University of Louisiana at Lafayette	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
University of Louisiana at Monroe	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
University of New Orleans	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Xavier University	Louisiana University Gulf Research Collaborative
Jackson State University	Mississippi Research Consortium
Mississippi State University	Mississippi Research Consortium
The University of Southern Mississippi	Mississippi Research Consortium
University of Mississippi	Mississippi Research Consortium
Baylor University	Texas Research Consortium
Lamar University	Texas Research Consortium
Texas A & M University - Corpus Christi	Texas Research Consortium
Texas A&M University	Texas Research Consortium
Texas A&M University- Galveston	Texas Research Consortium
University of Texas- Austin	Texas Research Consortium
University of Texas Medical Branch-Galveston	Texas Research Consortium

*- FIO also includes 7 other non-full members.