



GULF OF MEXICO UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

2016 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

PURPOSE

In order to improve coordination among universities, managers, and other stakeholder groups, and grow university capabilities required to support Gulf of Mexico science and education, university research consortia exist in the five U.S. Gulf of Mexico states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. In 2010, these consortia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formally establishing the [Gulf of Mexico University Research Collaborative \(GOMURC\)](#). As stated in the agreement, the consortia “pledge to collaborate, communicate, and advocate for science and education efforts needed to address Gulf issues.” The agreement mandates that 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.

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2016 STRATEGY

VISION AND MISSION

As described in the most 2016 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.

BACKGROUND- WHY GOMURC EXISTS.

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, climate change impacts, and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill (DWHOS). 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.

ORGANIZATION

In 2016, GOMURC's organization included a part-time Coordinator, part-time Director, a Member Board consisting of representatives from the five Principal Member consortia from the Gulf States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas (Figure 1); these consortia in turn represent eighty research institutions (Appendix A, Figure 2) that are hosts to over 166 marine science, policy and socio-economic programs that work on Gulf ecosystem issues. These consortia include:

- AL: Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (AMESC)
- FL: Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO)

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- LA: Louisiana University Gulf Research Consortium (LUGRC)
- MS: Mississippi Research Consortium (MRC)
- TX: 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 an alternate 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.

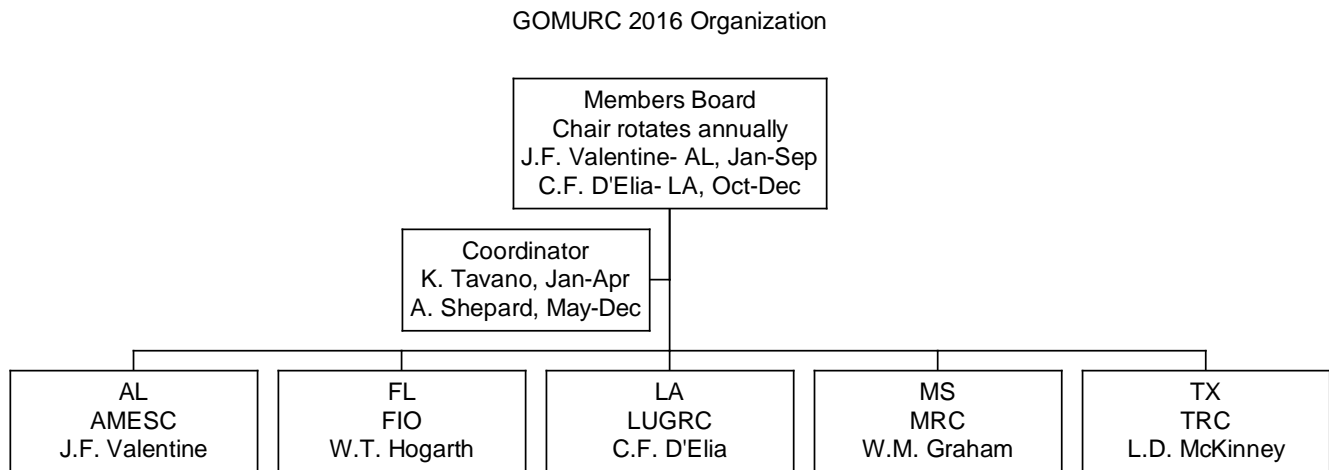
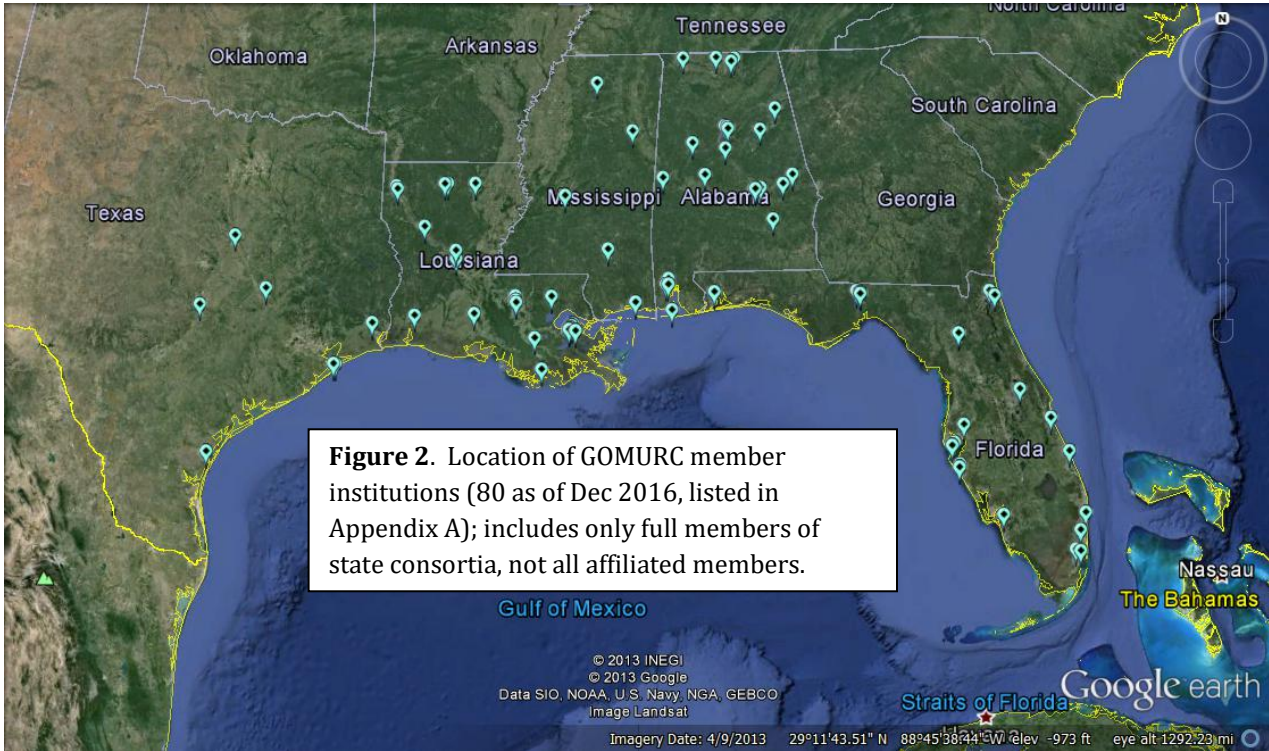


Figure 1. GOMURC 2016 Organization; member institutions listed in Appendix A.

GOMURC is administered by a Coordinator and the FIO support team. Funding for program expenses was provided by grants from the Walton Family Foundation (ended Jun 2016) and Harte Support Foundation (2015-2017). These grants have 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 2016 included: Mexico's Consortium of Marine Research Institutions in the Gulf of Mexico ([CiiMar-GoM](#)); the Gulf of Mexico Alliance ([GOMA](#)), revised and re-signed in Nov. 2016; and the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System ([GCOOS](#)).

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OBJECTIVES

In terms of work plan, the year was split between ending the Walton Family Foundation grant in June and continuing with Harte Support Foundation grant through December and in 2017. The WFF grant outcomes and objectives carried forward from the grant, which began in 2013 (**Table 1**). The HSF grant funded all activities from July to December 2016 and did not mandate specific outcomes or outputs, so activities and outputs in the latter half of the year are also assigned to these same WFF outcomes and objectives.

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

Outcome	Objective
1. Increased capacity in the Gulf of Mexico region for research, monitoring, observing, and modeling required for long-term, sustained health of Gulf ecosystems	1a. Define and advocate for Gulf ocean and coastal monitoring and observing system to support ecosystem restoration and sustainability 1b. Support student education opportunities that help build science and technical workforce required for Gulf restoration and sustainability.
2. Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill (DWHOS) restoration programs based on the best available science	2a. Define and advocate for science-based restoration 2b. Enable collaboration and advisory role of GOMURC universities and NGO partners with restoration programs.
3. DWHOS restoration planning and implementation efforts communicated to and coordinated with all stakeholders	3a. Develop and distribute position papers and presentations on priority issues 3b. Maintain and enhance GOMURC Website (www.gomurc.org) and internet services 3c. Support and collaborate on regional stakeholder activities

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2016 PROGRESS

The detailed 2016 work plan (including actions, progress notes and outputs, by outcomes and objectives in Table 1 and work plan year) is available upon request. Highlighted accomplishments include:

- Feedback to and support for DWH oil spill RESTORE Act restoration plans included:
 - Stakeholder's meetings with Board to provide feedback to: GCERC Council Final Priorities List (FPL), NOAA Science Program's Science Framework, BOEM ecosystem monitoring plans, GOMA priorities, and MS State Expenditure Plan for the Spill Impact Component.
 - Formal comments to Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council on FPL science evaluation process and Comprehensive Restoration Plan approved in December 2016.
 - 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; activity was handed off to the FL RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program to lead starting in early 2016.
- Leadership in regional science and education events:
 - Co-sponsored [Gulf Spill and Ecosystem Science Conference](#), led by the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GOMRI). GOMURC will have sponsored participation of over 160 university students during the 2013-2017 conferences. The GOMURC coordinator served on the Conference Executive Planning Committee for 2014-2016 conferences.
 - Co-sponsored the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) annual meetings in 2013-2016.
 - Developed plans for panel session and partnership meetings during the World Trade Center of New Orleans-led, Gulf States Accord Task Force conference to be held in Campeche, MX, January 2017; conference will engage policy-makers, businesses, and academia in discussion of ways to collaborate in support of a healthy Gulf environment and economy.
- Support for regional and national level efforts to inform environmental policy affecting the Gulf environment and economy:
 - Comments to NRDA Trustees regarding implementation of Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plans in support of NRDA and RESTORE Act restoration efforts.
- Public outreach activities included:
 - Creation and update 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).
 - GOMURC.org web site news blog posted weekly; hits now range from 50-150 per news item by 194 subscribers.

2017 STRATEGY

Considering 2017 is the final year for current GOMURC funding, the Board revised the Strategic Plan to reflect uncertainty beyond 2017 and a broadening of engagement activities. Outcomes and objectives in the 2017 Strategic Plan serve essentially the same vision and mission, with an increase in international collaborative efforts (Table 2). A new part-time Coordinator will begin

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in 2017 and implement a work plan as defined by the GOMURC Strategic Plan and Business and Communications Plan.

Table 2. GOMURC 2017 strategic goals and objectives.

Goal	Objectives
Science for Recovery and Sustainability- work to ensure Gulf ecosystem restoration and resource management are based on the best-available science information and practices	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.
One Gulf Network- engage scientists, engineers and educators from across all bordering Gulf nations	Develop new regional initiatives
	Establish and serve agreements with regional partners including international alliances
Next Generation- educate and train the experts required to handle the science and engineering needs for future generations	Coordinate communications among members
	Coordinate activities to convey GOMURC priorities to decision/policy-makers

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APPENDIX A: GOMURC MEMBERS IN 2016

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.