SEA GRANT TRAINEE GUIDELINES

The Sea Grant Program at the University of Southern California is part of the National Sea Grant College Program, a network of colleges and universities across the nation established to promote the understanding, conservation and development of marine resources through research, education and public service. The program, which receives the majority of its funds from the Department of Commerce, works in partnership with industry, government and the public.

Sea Grant awards traineeships to full-time registered graduate students who are working toward advanced degrees related to the marine or coastal sciences. Trainees are expected to make good progress toward their degrees, to remain in good academic standing, and to participate in approved Sea Grant research projects.

Each year, the USC Sea Grant Program offers qualified graduate students the opportunity to work with principal investigators on Sea Grant funded projects. The projects provide training in the students' major fields, and often provide material for dissertations and theses. The Trainees work closely with faculty conducting Sea Grant research to formulate research methods and implement them.

A Sea Grant Trainee is expected to work as an investigator (not simply a laboratory helper or inexpensive laborer) on the project. The Trainee is not considered an employee, so no hourly requirements are to be set.

OBJECTIVES

The Sea Grant Program strives to identify qualified graduate students in all disciplines displaying evidence of high levels of motivation and the capability to pursue ocean-related research. Generally, trainees seek this opportunity based on the subject area of their own research as well as their interest in ocean science topics.
One of the major objectives of the Trainee program is to foster mutual understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of most ocean research. The Trainee program fosters communication through luncheon meetings which all Trainees and most principal investigators attend. At least once during the year, each Trainee makes a presentation on their Sea Grant project at this meeting.

QUESTIONS & CORRESPONDENCE

All questions and requests for extensions, exceptions to trainee policy, etc. should be emailed to the Sea Grant Associate Director, Phyllis Grifman (grifman@usc.edu). Email correspondence should be sent with the principal investigator copied as this serves as his/her notification of request. In all correspondence, the Principal Investigator should reference the specific year of the project (e.g., year 2), and the account number.

If you have questions regarding Sea Grant traineeships or reports due, please call Ruth Dudas 213-740-1961 (rdudas@usc.edu).

SPECIAL TERMS & CONDITIONS FOR TRAINEESHIPS

Appointments: The Sea Grant Trainee Application is due as soon as the principal investigator determines the trainee and dates of traineeship. The Sea Grant program must receive the signed form and approve the traineeship before work is to begin on project. The form should be mailed or faxed to the Sea Grant Office.

Note: All fourth-and fifth-year appointments and any appointment of less than 6 months require advance approval by the Sea Grant Associate Director. PI must send written justification prior to submission of the appointment form. Requests for exception to trainee policy should be emailed to Phyllis Grifman (grifman@usc.edu).

Stipend: Trainees receive a fixed sum determined by the Sea Grant office in 9 payments during a specified 9-month period. This is paid as a stipend, NOT as salaries, wages, and benefits. The stipend is overhead-free. In some cases, trainees receive a proportionate award for a shorter period.

Taxes: Sea Grant Trainees are considered “Fellows” and are not employees. Therefore, the stipend received is not considered “pay” for services. For tax
questions, trainees should consult their graduate office or an IRS representative. Please do not call the Sea Grant office with tax-related questions.

Required Reports: At the end of each traineeship year, the trainee is required to submit an Annual Progress Report.

Follow-up: Following the end of the traineeship, the USC Sea Grant office may periodically request information from trainees regarding current addresses, occupations, and activities. Questionnaires should be returned promptly.

Publications: Sea Grant PIs and trainees must properly acknowledge Sea Grant’s support in all publications that report results of their Sea Grant research, and Sea Grant must receive a specified number of article reprints for required distribution. For instructions regarding the proper Sea Grant acknowledgment and ordering information, please refer to Sea Grant Publication Guidelines.

Theses/Dissertations: Trainees should send an electronic copy of the abstract of their thesis (or dissertation), title page, and Sea Grant acknowledgment to the USC Sea Grant office.

Questions: If you have questions regarding Sea Grant traineeships or reports due, please call Phyllis Grifman at 213–740–1963 or grifman@usc.edu

You may also contact Ruth Dudas at 213–740–1961 or rdudas@usc.edu