

**State University System
The Florida Institute of Oceanography
2008-2009 Budget**

Total Budget Need: \$1.5M

The Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO) was established in 1970 to provide the necessary infrastructure to survey and support Florida's coastal marine science and oceanography programs in education, training, research, public outreach and marine resource management. This centralized approach minimizes expenses by avoiding duplication of research and facilities infrastructure. The FIO Board of Directors, at its June 29, 2007 meeting, affirmed its commitment to this oversight role and established a sub-committee to assess the current infrastructural resources represented within the FIO Consortium, including both land-based and oceangoing capital assets.

The FIO is based at the St. Petersburg Campus of the University of South Florida and co-located with the Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI). Collectively, the FIO consortium generated \$15 million in outside grants and contracts in the last five years. The Research Vessel Suncoaster is the primary ocean platform for grant and contract research programs involving member institutions. The Suncoaster is a 40-year old "drug boat" that was acquired and renovated by the FIO in 1980. The vessel has become increasingly unsustainable in this supporting role because of its hull limitations, lack of scientific storage space, lack of laboratory spaces and a limited number of scientist accommodations. The Suncoaster lacks the capacity for modern multi-disciplinary oceanographic science and technologies.

The FIO is seeking funding for a replacement for the Suncoaster. The initial request is for \$1,500,000 in 2008-09 to assist the FIO in assessing the current state and capabilities represented by all research vessels within the totality of the FIO members; and then designing a replacement for the Suncoaster that is capable of meeting the most critical unmet marine research needs of the state fleet. It is estimated that after the initial planning and design phase, the actual construction of the research vessel can be accomplished for an estimated \$13.5 million.

As indicated, the FIO is an essential component of the marine research capability of several entities besides the State University System, including the Florida Marine Research Institute, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of State, Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Mote Marine Lab, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the SRI-St. Petersburg Marine Research Facility.