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## Woods Hole Initiative's Aim: Science Jobs for Minorities

By HAYES H. DAVENPORT

A sweeping effort to increase diversity at Woods Hole research facilities began last Tuesday, with the signing of the Woods Hole Scientific Community Diversity Initiative, which would increase employment opportunities for minorities in Woods Hole science centers.

The initiative, which is effective immediately, was signed by representatives of the Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole Laboratory of NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Sea Education Association, United States Geological Survey-Woods Hole, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and Woods Hole Research Center.

"The initiative was born of each of the institutions' feelings that there needed to be more diversity in the field of ocean education and research, and that the initiative's power would be greater with all of them in on it together," said Jan Wagner, spokesperson for the Sea Education Association.

The major architects of the plan were John Farrington, vice president for academic programs at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution; Ambrose Jearld, chief of research planning and coordination at the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration; and John Bullard, president of the Sea Education Association.

The initiative originated from a discussion between Dr. Farrington and Dr. Jearld about what they could do to increase minority representation in Woods Hole, when Mr. Farrington became dean of academic programs at WHOI in 1990.

"He's been the real hero in this," said Mr. Farrington of Dr. Jearld, "on both a local and national level. We spoke and tried to think up things we could do together, and he took the real leadership role."

The effort received its biggest boost when SEA and Dr. Bullard created a panel two years ago to discuss how the association could best serve minorities and asked Dr. Farrington and Dr. Jearld to serve on it. "That was the real jumping-off point," Dr. Farrington said. "We saw that everyone was trying to do things independently, and that the whole would really be greater than the sum of the parts."

CEOs and presidents of the other Woods Hole institutions were asked to contribute to a united effort to increase diversity, and plans for the initiative were drawn up several months ago.

According to the memorandum, increased diversity in the Woods Hole scientific community will provide "a greater understanding of environmental and scientific issues."

The most significant provisions of the initiative are the recruitment, retention, and mentoring programs for minority workers and students that will be created in the near future. These programs will encourage more opportunities for primary education, college research jobs, post-graduate work, and lifetime careers for minorities in Woods Hole.

"These are some wonderful opportunities," said Mr. Jearld, "but only time will tell if there are any changes. The main work has been to make these jobs and programs available to all who are interested, so if it helps in that sense, it's done an awful lot."

The creators of the plan also hope to put together an advisory panel made up of employees from multiple scientific institutions that are willing to help and answer questions of any prospective employees or students. "Our major goal is for everyone in the community to be able to realize their full potential," said Mr. Farrington, "and a major part of that is having available people with a strong interest in helping employees and students. Whatever race, disability, or ethnic background, there should be someone around who can help them."

In order to most efficiently bring minorities to work and study to Woods Hole, the scientific organizations of the community will cooperate by recommending some students to other groups in which they might be more interested. "If someone says that they're only interested in biology and not the oceanographical aspects, we'll tell them they should check out the MBL," said Mr. Farrington. Officers on recruiting trips will also be distributing brochures and compact discs aimed at minorities.

The memorandum reads that there are "significant barriers" in the way of true diversity in Woods Hole, and that the community must make a significant effort in order to complete its goals. "This is only the beginning for us," said Mr. Farrington. "We need to get word out, and get some funding behind this, and really make a sustained effort."

"I think it's a huge step," said Mr. Jearld of the initiative. "To have all of these major institutions coming here saying that this is a common interest that we need to address is a very important step."