

# Environmental Consortium of Hudson Valley Colleges & Universities

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## **River Summer Task Force Report**

Steering Committee Meeting 26 September, 2008

### *Summary*

The major activities contained in this report include the weekend at Black Rock Forrest held this spring and the River Summer 2008 program. This past March, we received the good news that the Mellon Foundation had decided to continue funding River Summer for an additional three years. RS08 was the first River Summer of the newly awarded Mellon grant, with RS09 and RS10 to follow. Our objectives for the new project are to refine the project, make creative changes, explore additional topics, and further increase River Summer's impact.

### *Weekend at Black Rock Forrest*

At the conclusion of RS07, participants and program leaders discussed two possible follow-up activities:

1. A wrap up poster session for the summer sessions to show some of the synergies that developed and some of the curriculum transfers that have evolved; and
2. A mini RS experience over a weekend that would allow the program to reach participants unable to commit to time during the summer.

The result was a River Summer Weekend, which ran from Friday evening April 6, 2008 through Sunday April 8, 2008 at Black Rock Forest (<http://www.blackrockforest.org/>), a Green Building field station. The location was designed to be accessible enough for participants to access the event with ease, but remote enough to provide an escape for community building. Thirty-six individuals from 24 institutions participated in the event. The schedule provided several choices for participants, with the poster session being held Saturday evening. The format involved the full group participating in an opening session covering environmental law, an evening discussion on engaging students in field work, and a trip to Constitution Marsh and Foundry Cove. Smaller group sessions allowed participants to choose one humanities topic (The Hudson River School of Art or The Hudson as a Literary Source) Saturday morning, and one science session (Geology, a Tree Survey or stream monitoring) in the afternoon.

The weekend format at Black Rock was well received by participants, and the facility worked very well for many of our non-boat activities, being somewhat similar to SUNY-ESF's facilities that we use in the Adirondacks. The poster session went very well, giving participants a chance to present their River Summer related activities (Note: posters will eventually be available on our web site). While we thought the change in venue/time of the year would draw upon a new pool of participants, the majority of those

attending had previously participated in some aspect of our program. Nonetheless, participants were very excited to rejoin the River Summer learning community. The two main differences between the program at Black Rock and our typical River Summer were a much larger group and running parallel activities.

#### Larger group size

In general, the group dynamics were great; however, during the evening discussions, the usual strategy of having a loosely structured topic was not as successful with a larger group. In follow-up discussions, we decided that a more formally structured discussion activity would have worked better and taken advantage of the collective experience of the group that was assembled.

#### Parallel activities

We had a good mix of activities including a few that were new to our River Summer curriculum. While all participants reported that they were very satisfied, many also noted that they didn't like having to choose between activities and wished that they could have done it all. We also realized that parallel activities can complicate logistics, and that we would have to adopt a different communication strategy.

In summary of the weekend format, it was very well received and everyone enjoyed themselves, learning a great deal. It is noteworthy that we were able to create a safe and collaborative learning environment that was similar to our summer program. When informally discussed with participants, many thought that the Black Rock weekend format would be a great addition to our on-boat activities, but not a replacement as their time aboard Seawolf out on the Hudson was a truly unique experience. The community building was GREATLY facilitated by the fact that almost all the group had participated before in RS and so had a preexisting relationship with the program and to a subset of the larger group. Others are active Consortium Members which also facilitated their connectivity to the group.

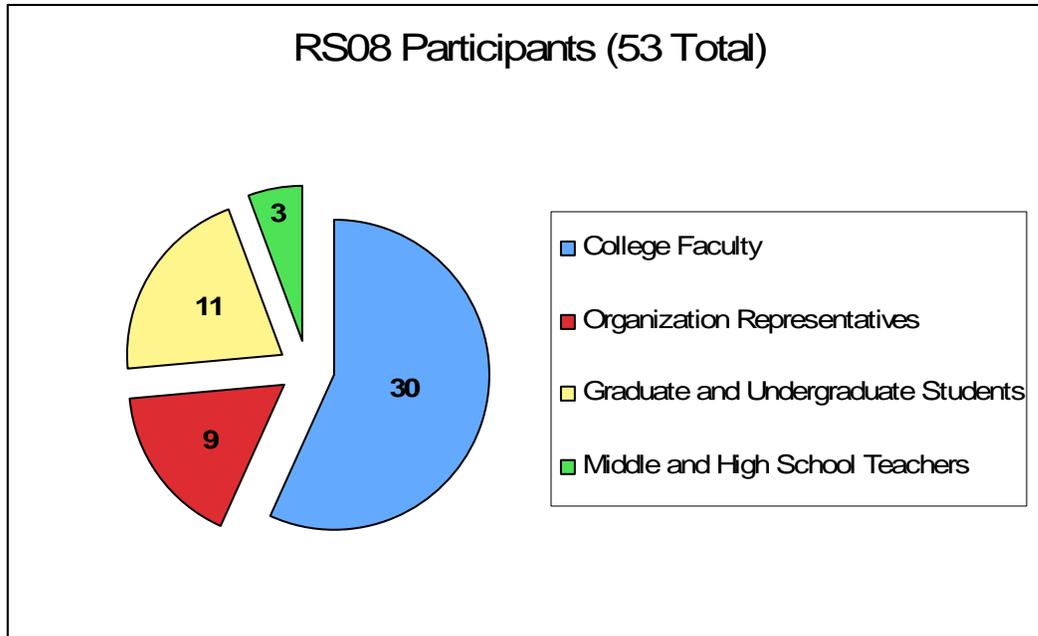
#### *River Summer 2008*

The orientation for River Summer was held on June 20<sup>th</sup> and River Summer 2008 ran from July 19<sup>th</sup> through July 31<sup>st</sup>. A total of 53 individuals from 31 different institutions and organizations participated in this abbreviated 2 module program (see Appendix I: Participant List).

Experiencing the Hudson from the oceanic offshore environment to its source waters in the Adirondack Mountains is a powerful experience. However, thus far, only the program leaders and a few multi-module participants have had the opportunity to travel the river's length. RS08 was comprised of two modules focused on the entire river experience. The modules were lengthened by one day (4½ vs. 3½ days) and began at one end of the Hudson River estuary traveling the 153 miles to the opposite end. Module 1 began with a trip offshore to the Hudson Shelf Valley and ended with a trip through the upper Hudson region and a GIS based environmental justice exercise at Skidmore

College. Module 2 began with a field geology trip through the lower Adirondacks and ended with a marsh coring expedition on Staten Island and an otter trawling off the Rockaways. Appendix II contains the final RS08 activity schedule.

We had a nice mix of college faculty, organization representatives, teachers, and students with the dominant group being faculty (see figure below for breakdown). From our measures of assessment, RS08 was very successful. Participant evaluations were quite positive. See appendix 3 for a summary of the evaluation information.



### ***Program***

RS08 was a new direction for the program. The focus on the journey necessitated that a larger portion of the activities be boat-based and conducted underway. Another distinction was our first program with a single connecting theme. In this case, the theme was Environmental Law, led by Pace faculty, Alex Dunn and Ann Powers, Module 1 and 2, respectively. Also important, were contributions from NYSDEC staff, Steve Stanne and Chris Bowser, Module 1 and 2, respectively. Both of these individuals have years of experience working and teaching out on the river. Although we certainly had spent time on the bow of Seawolf in previous programs, it became truly central to the RS08 program. Many hours spent in transit seeing the landscape and stopping at important locations to have discussions (both legal and historical) were a unique part of this year's program. In my opinion, the new approach was a success. The legal discussions led by Alex and Ann, the slightly longer program, the sense of the journey from one end of the estuary to the other, the wealth of Hudson-knowledge provided by Steve and Chris, all contributed to a positive atmosphere and tight knit learning community. By all accounts this year's approach led to an experience that was highly interdisciplinary. On any single discussion layers of input were collected from the participants addressing legal

considerations, fisheries challenges, historic events, geologic influences and environmental perspectives.

#### *Other Highlights/Observations*

- Of the 53 participants in this year's program, 23 had participated in previous River Summer Programs. However, of the 23 repeaters, 8 participated in a different role or taught a modified program (see participant list Appendix 1). In addition, all of the full module participants were new to this role – none had participated in a full module on the Sea Wolf.
- Down time between Modules very helpful in presenting a more energized and organized program. Often in the past we have found ourselves handling housekeeping issues for one module during the preceding module. This detracts from the overall group dynamics. Building in a day for organization between modules addresses this.
- The journey aspect was amazing but how to integrate it into future programs?

#### *Recording River Summer*

Once again we recorded audio (iPod) and video (Hatcam) as well as obtained a large number of digital photographs. We are in the process of organizing and archiving this information. Rik Scarce and I are continuing to work with the footage.

The Consortium hired a student to work with the ipod recordings the past June.

#### **This fall and spring**

##### *Planning for River Summer 2009 (RS09)*

2009 marks the both 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's and Samuel de Champlain's voyages along the river and lake that bear their names and also the 200th anniversary of Robert Fulton's successful steamboat voyage on the river. From the platform of Seawolf, River Summer 2009 will be uniquely positioned to connect with the many existing programs marking these events. The focus of RS09 will be the history of the region, and an examination of the impact of settlement and development on the New York landscape. Providing a full program during this historic event, RS09 will support a "once in a lifetime" opportunity to develop rich interdisciplinary experiences for faculty to translate into their curriculum. Although many different topics will be covered, RS09 will be the first River Summer organized around a single topical theme (i.e., history). At this point we anticipate shifting back to the local module approach in 2009; however, we may reconsider this after running the river length program in 2008.

- Planning a task force meeting in October

- Looking for history, literature basic humanities partners (i.e., new Task Force members) to work with for the quad this summer.
- Looking for activities already planned that we could integrate into RS09

### ***River Summer 2010 (RS10)***

For RS10, sustainability will be the program's unifying theme. While in 2009 we look back at how the region has developed, in 2010 we will look ahead to understand potential options for the future. Curricular activities will incorporate economics, political science, development, and sociology as well as climate and environmental change. Activities from previous River Summer programs that may be included are walking tours of cities and towns and discussions with town planners, historians and those in charge of development projects.

### ***NYSDEC Curriculum Pieces***

As part of our NYSDEC grant, we will be developing several of the River Summer activities as stand alone Hudson-based curricular components. As River Summer continues we are developing additions to core topics and contacting faculty.

As for the curriculum we have 20 requested - 17 agreed upon - 5 fully completed and 2 close to complete...others we are continuing to progress forward.

#### Completed and available this Fall:

Brian Jensen - Fisheries Biology  
 Carol Rietsma - Marsh Ecology  
 Steve Schimmrich - Geology of the Lower Hudson Valley  
 Dan Farkas - Introduction to Using GIS Mapping Using  
 Marilyn Powers - New Urbanism, the Political Economy of the Hudson River Valley and a Walking Tour Case Study

#### Mostly Completed - in final revisions

Elizabeth Hutchinson - The Hudson River School of Art  
 Michelle Land/Lee Paddock/Alex Dunn - An Environmental History of Law in the The Hudson Valley

#### Still coming -

Tim Kenna - Visualizing estuarine circulation  
 Ted Eismeier - Political Economy of the HV  
 Margie Turrin/Karl Kehde - Community Planning/Brownfield Redevelopment in the HV  
 Susan Fox Rogers - Free Writing  
 Roger Panetta - Panoramas  
 Howard Horowitz - Land Use in the Hudson Highlands  
 Lucy Johnson - Early Man Decision Making Grid Linked to a field guide of the historic uses of Denning's Point

Geoff Brackett – The Hudson River as a Literary Source  
Bruce Selleck – Using GPS and GIS for data collection and display

*Please feel free to contact Tim Kenna [tkenna@ldeo.columbia.edu](mailto:tkenna@ldeo.columbia.edu), if you have any questions or comments.*

## Appendix I: River Summer 2008 Participant List

<b>Name</b>	<b>Institution Organization</b>
Brian Mailloux	Barnard College
Stephanie Pfirman*	Barnard College
Bruce Selleck*	Colgate University
Paul Benzinger	College of St. Rose
Brian Jensen	College of St. Rose
Roger Panetta*	Fordham University/Marymount College
Sharon Williams	Hamilton College
Maryl Nadel*	Iona College
Yourha Kang	Iona College
Frank Nitsche	Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory
Tim Kenna	Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory
Margie Turrin	Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory
Kevin Farley	Manhattan College
Wendy McFarlane	Manhattanville College
Chris Bowser	Marist College
Dorothy Peteet*	NASA-GISS
Alex Dunn	Pace Law
Ann Powers	Pace Law
Alan Molof	Polytechnic University
Brent Turrin	Rutgers University
Marilyn Power	Sarah Lawrence College
Rik Scarce*	Skidmore College
Karen Kellogg	Skidmore College
Judy Halstead	Skidmore College
Alex Chaucer	Skidmore College
Karin Limburg	SUNY ESF
Bob Cassidy	SUNY Ulster CCC
Steve Schimmrich*	SUNY Ulster County Community College
Lucy Johnson	Vassar
Jeff Miller	Vassar
Fran Dunwell	Author/Conservationist
Alisa Frohman	Earth Institute of Columbia University
Steve Stanne	HREP DEC
John Mylod	Hudson River Fishermen
Peter Groffman*	Institute of Ecosystem Studies
Robert Godstein	Riverkeeper
Bill Petronis	US Army Corps
Bob Berrian	US Army Corps
Charles Beckett	Yonkers Wastewater Treatment Plant
Holly Menten-Weil	Barnard College student
Hannah Salomons	Barnard College student
Nicole Robinson	University of Maryland Baltimore County student
Maya Choy Sutton	Columbia University student
Sanpisa Sritrairat	Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory graduate student
David Cruz	Secondary School for Law, Brooklyn student
Mary Rynasko	Skidmore College student

Sara Sciaretta	SUNY Ulster CCC student
Gerald Gilligan	Vassar College student
Laurel Walker	Vassar College student
Jessica Kaplan	Vassar College student
Anne Marie Nowak	Booker T Washington School
Peter Jensen	Dalton School/IT
Argie Miller	Secondary School for Law, Brooklyn

\* Previous participants in new or modified roles

## Appendix II: River Summer 2008 Program

### MODULE 1- Transect from NY Harbor to Albany 7/19-7/24/08

Embark: 79<sup>th</sup> St. Boat Basin

Disembark: Albany

**Saturday 7/19/08 1700 Module 1 participants arrive**

**Orientation by Boat Captain**

**Evening Activity: Pace Law** – “Science, Economics & Law: Policy

Recommendations for Non-Point Source Pollution in the Hudson River”

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**Sunday 7/20/08 Offshore - the New York Bight**

**Free Write Activity during the day.**

**0800-1700 Frank Nitsche- Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory**

Title of curriculum: Acoustic Mapping and interpretation of sediment features in the Lower Hudson River & the NY Bight

**Brian Jensen - College of St. Rose** – Fisheries Biology –

Title of curriculum: Trawling in Marine Waters

**Brian Mailloux (Barnard) & River Summer Staff & Boat Crew -**

Activity: Enterococcus, CTD, Coring, Plankton, Water samples

**1900-2000 - Eve – Roger Panetta - Fordham University**

Title of curriculum: Preserving the Message - Oral Histories

**2000-2100 Activity: All**

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**Monday 7/21/08 Transect to Poughkeepsie**

**0800-1700 Steve Schimmrich, - SUNY Ulster**

Title of curriculum: Geology of the Hudson Valley

**Pace Law – Site locations & Points of Concern** – non-point source pollution policy discussion

**River Summer Staff & Boat Crew -**

Coring, Enterococcus & water samples

**1900-2100 EVE – John Mylod, Hudson River Fisherman**

Title of curriculum: History, Change & Impacts in the Hudson River Fisheries

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**Tuesday 7/22/08 Poughkeepsie to Albany**

**0800-1100 Peter Groffman – Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies**

Title of curriculum: Riparian Ecology & field work

**1200-1700 Brian Jensen - College of St. Rose** – Fisheries Biology –

Title of curriculum: Seining & Trawling in Freshwater

**1900-- Eve – Stephanie Pfirman - Barnard College**

Title of curriculum: Concept Mapping Activity

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**Wednesday 7/23/08 The lower Adirondacks**

**0800-1030 Karin Limburg – SUNY ESF**

Title of curriculum: Watershed Urbanization – assessing impact indicators

**10:30-15:00 (includes break for lunch) Steve Schimmrich, - SUNY Ulster**

Title of curriculum: Introduction to the Geology of the Lower Adirondacks

Title of curriculum: Tour of the Troy Dam – **William Petronis, US Army Corps**

Title of curriculum: PCBs in the Hudson - **Steve Stanne, - Hudson River author, & educator**

**1500-1700 Rik Scarce – Skidmore College**

Title of curriculum: GIS examination of environmental justice issues throughout the Hudson region

**1900-2000 - Eve – Frances Dunwell - 30 year River Conservationist**

Title of curriculum: ‘The Hudson, America’s River’, Columbia University Press 2008 \*

\*This is a recently published book by Dunwell, with all proceeds donated to the conservation of the Hudson River. This years River Summer participants will receive copies of the book.

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**Thursday 7/24/08 0900 Module1 participants final wrap up of project**

- “Science, Economics & Law: Policy Recommendations for Non-Point Source Pollution in the Hudson River”
- Concluding free write
- Evaluation

**1200 Students depart**

## **MODULE 2- Albany to New York Harbor – 7/26-7/31/08**

Embark: Albany Seawall

Disembark: Piermont Pier, Piermont

**Saturday 7/26/08 –**

**1700 Module 2 participants Arrive**

**Orientation by Boat Captain**

**Evening Activity: Pace Law – “Science, Economics & Law: Policy Recommendations for Non-Point Source Pollution in the Hudson River”**

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**Sunday 7/27/08 Lower Adirondacks**

**0800-1700 – Bruce Selleck – Colgate University**

Title of curriculum: Introduction to Geology of the Adirondacks

**Evening – Free Write**

**Transit down to Catskill**

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**Monday 7/28/08 Catskill to Piermont**

**0800-1100 – The Hudson River School of Art**

**Transit begins to Piermont**

**1100-1700 - Lucy Johnson – Vassar College**

Title of curriculum: Native American Settlements along the Hudson River: Why are they where they are? Developing a predictive model

**Pace Law – Site locations & Points of Concern – non-point source pollution policy discussion**

**River Summer Staff & Boat Crew -**

Activity: Enterococcus, CTD, Coring, Plankton, Water samples

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**Tuesday 7/29/08**

**08:00-12:00 Marilyn Power – Sarah Lawrence College & Meryl Nadel – Iona College**

Title of curriculum: The Yonkers Waterfront – an exercise in combining urban communities, political economics, ecology & environmental justice

**13:00-17:00 – Water Quality in the Hudson Harbor  
Yonkers Wastewater Treatment Program – Facility Tour  
Alan Molof – Polytechnic University – Wastewater Management in the Hudson  
River Watershed**

**Kevin Farley – Manhattan College - Water Quality in the Hudson Harbor  
Title of curriculum: Tour of Yonkers Wastewater Treatment Facility &  
Discussion of wastewater management in the Hudson River watershed**

**1900-2100 – EVE – Robert Goldstein – Riverkeeper  
Legal challenges on the Hudson River**

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**Wednesday 7/30/08**

**0800-1200 - Boat Crew - Title of curriculum: Trawling in the marine environment**

**1300-1700 - Dorothy Peteet – Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, NASA GISS**

**Title of curriculum: Tidal Marshes of the Hudson: archives of anthropogenic  
impact, climate change and carbon storage**

**1300-1700 - Eve – Activity**

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**Thursday 7/31/08**

**0900 Module2 participants final wrap up of project**

- “Science, Economics & Law: Policy Recommendations for Non-Point Source  
Pollution in the Hudson River”
- Concluding free write
- Evaluation

**1200 Students depart**

### **APPENDIX 3. High Points from our evaluations 2008 – selected questions**

*1) One of our major goals is for you to transfer what you learn to your home institution. Please list AND comment on activities you participated in that you found most promising for use/adaptation at your institution.*

- **Information gathered from on boat conversations was listed as an important source for information faculty wanted to take back to their teaching .**
- **The ability to capture up-to-date information on things that were current and not available in published format yet was important to several individuals who wanted to bring cutting edge topics to their students.**
- **Others noted just feeling a new level of comfort to answer student questions or to include small pieces of new more peripheral topics in their courses...such as legal aspects of the environment, invasive species, information gathered in coring etc.**
- **Several noted that they felt the program offered them personal enrichment that would energize their teaching.**

*4) What obstacles or challenges (if any) do you face in implementing any of the above activities? (e.g. time, supplies, access to expertise, resources, other)*

- **time constraints**
- **funding issues.**
- **coordination with other faculty to add new depth by bringing in speakers etc.**
- **no access to equipment would like to use**
- **own momentum to make change in an existing class**

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5) Do you currently provide Field Based Learning Experiences in your teaching? Why or Why Not?

- **Many do provide them and note that the few field experiences they include leave a huge impression on the students.**

7) Did you feel the program presented an interdisciplinary curriculum? Where on the continuum?

Very Int. Disc. 1 -----XI -----1 -----1 -----1 -----1 -----1 -----1 Very Disc (all but one person responded that it was on the Very Inter Disc. End of the chart – one said a bit science heavy)

8) Thinking back, what impacted you the most about your River Summer experience, e.g. people, places, connections, conversations, etc?

- **Conversation with people in different fields. Different approaches to the same basic topic.**
- **Spending time with/ and having fun with a group of professionals around a core focus. Teachers are so often on the delivery end of the spectrum – it was nice to be the student!**
- **Exposure to SO MANY knowledgeable people; actually overwhelming in a great way- stretched & saturated.**
- **Just being on the river was a great learning experience.**
- **people and places**
- **The experience of living on the boat, and interacting with people of different disciplines on an informal level**
- **The conversations and the people in the context of place.**
- **Place, Connections, Conversations – so many linkages between program elements**
- **Different approaches to the same basic topic**

9.) Do you think River Summer has affected you in any ways that relate to your life outside of teaching? (e.g. personal, research, etc.)

- **Certainly have made very good useful contacts that will hopefully be productive in the future – for example, I plan on helping with some fish surveys just for the fun of it.**
- **Personally I feel more connected to the river**
- **Much more appreciative of this great resource & know where I want to go back and hike and vacation**
- **A more complete picture of the river, its history & resources**
- **I understand downstate issues more**
- **Plan to get my own kids out on the river**
- **Want to engage my institution more with the river**
- **I feel renewed, and part of a larger community**

11) Please rate the River Summer program as a whole.

**Excellent** (13) **Very Good** (1) **Good** **Fair** **Poor**

12) How satisfied/unsatisfied are you with the time and effort you spent this Module?

**Excellent** (10) **Very Good** (4) **Good** **Fair** **Poor**

Please comment on what was most and least satisfying about the experience.

**MOST**

- **Living on the boat was the most satisfying this go round. It allowed me to become totally immersed in the program....felt ownership over the program in a way I had not as a day tripper.**
- **Learning at a deeper level**
- **All the learning! I appreciated the tremendous effort everyone put into this!**
- **Seeing some of the famous river spots**
- **Learning about new areas that I have no experience in**
- **Being on the SEAWOLF!**
- **The community that developed & idea exchange was great**

**LEAST**

- **Needed more time to complete a few activities – add another 2 hours to the last day**
- **Needed more writing!**
- **Sea sick!**
- **Not enough time to discuss data**
- **Schedule too ambitious**

14) How would you suggest River Summer continue if/when the grant funds expire? How can we make River Summer a sustainable program?

- **College should pay for faculty involvement** MOST SAID THIS
- **Seek an endowment and supplement by asking participating schools to help**

- **If you ask participants to pay at cost it would really limit it! Needs serious foundation support**
- **Consortium pay in some funds and fees supplement**
- **Corporate sponsorship? Although this could change the direction of the program**

15) Any additional comments or suggestions for the program

- **Keep up the good work!!**
- **Invite political leaders (Maurice Hinchey) onto the boat for a program**
- **Thoroughly enjoyed it**
- **The Sea Wolf crew is wonderful – the crew is excellent and add immensely to the event**
- **Is there a bigger boat to offer this experience to a wider audience?**