

SUSTAINABLE OCEAN SYSTEMS

During the twenty-first century, issues concerned with environmental and energy sustainability increasingly have become the focus of world attention. As one of the premier research and teaching universities in the United States, Cornell has played and will continue to play a leading role in analyzing the environmental and energy problems confronting society. Among the environmental sciences represented at Cornell, those focusing on the ocean have received little recognition within the University. This is unfortunate for two reasons. First, it is unfortunate because any institution committed to tackling global environmental problems and teaching the next generation how to maintain a global perspective cannot neglect the fact that we live on an ocean planet. The oceans play a central role in global climate change, and predicting the responses of marine ecosystems to climate change as well as other human impacts will provide society with many new challenges in the new millennium. The second reason that this lack of recognition is unfortunate is because Cornell currently possesses most of the intellectual resources and facilities necessary to play a prominent role in this area both nationally and internationally.

At this CCSF Topical Lunch Meeting, we will discuss new opportunities in ocean research and education at Cornell, with a special focus on sustainable energy and living marine resources. Cornell and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution recently agreed to co-sponsor a joint Masters of Ocean Science and Technology (MOST) Program, and we can begin enrolling students as early as next summer. This opportunity by itself provides a reason for getting together Cornell's faculty members with marine interests. However, there are many additional reasons to encourage Cornell's marine faculty members to self assemble, including new national research initiatives in ocean observing systems and algal-based biofuels. Cornell has several advantages in these latter two areas, and with energy and environment as top priorities at the University and new deans in CALS and the Engineering College, this may be a unique time in Cornell's history to make the institution recognize the tremendous talent base it has in ocean science scattered around its campus.