Print

2009 Annual Report: Letter from Laurence P. Madin, Director of Research

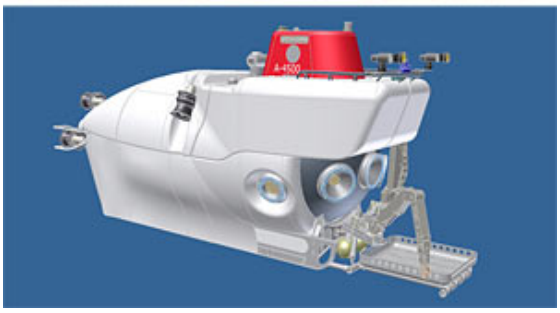
In a year of continued national economic uncertainty, WHOI continued to exhibit the promise of a strong future in both our fundamental research mission and new applications. The economic situation affected research and academic institutions across the U.S., but WHOI fared well overall in 2009. Despite a downturn in unrestricted revenue, our research continued to be exciting, important, productive and well supported.

We received more federal stimulus funding in 2009 than any of our peer institutions. Stimulus dollars to the National Science Foundation benefitted WHOI in many ways. Our lead role in the Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI) had a jump start with $15 million, and two Major Research Instrumentation projects were funded. Even better, there were 37 basic science proposals already submitted to NSF that received another $33 million, reflecting the strength of our proposals across many disciplines and programs.

Two important beginnings were made in 2009—the OOI program and the replacement Human Occupied Vehicle (RHOV) program. Both are major design and construction projects that exceed in scale and complexity anything WHOI has done in the past. Both require new staff, and the hiring of engineers, technicians and project managers began in 2009.

To provide needed space for OOI, we expect to soon begin construction of the new Laboratory for Ocean Sensors and Observing Systems, funded by a grant from the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Besides accommodating the OOI program, the Laboratory will provide expanded space for the Ocean Bottom Seismometer Lab and the Martha's Vineyard Coastal Observatory, and provide a focal facility for development of sensors and instruments across the Institution. We look forward to its opening in the summer of 2012.

These large projects will be an important part of WHOI for years to come, and they have raised questions about the nature of WHOI's future portfolio. What is the effect of large contract-based projects on our basic mission of oceanographic research? Will this new funding, and need for additional staff, space and facilities strengthen the Institution or distract us from our principal focus? Will our criteria and process for hiring and promotion need to evolve? I am confident that WHOI will adjust to and benefit from these new ventures and responsibilities without diluting our independent, curiosity-driven research. These new opportunities arise precisely because of our strong core of academic excellence. They build upon our scientific work. Moreover, WHOI will be the institution best equipped to transform scientific visions into operational realities.



Enlarge Image

Two important beginnings were made in 2009—the Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI) program and the replacement Human Occupied Vehicle (RHOV) program . Both are major design and construction projects that exceed in scale and complexity anything WHOI has done in the past. In the top photo, the first buoy designed for the OOI program undergoes testing at the dock. The bottom image is an engineering drawing showing the most recent RHOV design. (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution)

Related Links

» Director of Research Web Site

WHOI scientists, engineers and technicians will continue to be innovators and creators, generating new scientific knowledge and technologies. As we broaden and diversify our base of support, we help ensure the future growth and stability of the Institution, and strengthen our ability to weather future economic setbacks.

WHOI's future looks both strong and diverse. We will continue to build that future on the foundation of independence, creativity and scholarship that has been our defining culture for 80 years.

Larry Madin

Last updated: March 19, 2010

Copyright ©2007 Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, All Rights Reserved.
Mail: Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, 266 Woods Hole Road, Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA.
E-Contact: info@whoi.edu; press relations: media@whoi.edu, tel. (508) 457-2000
Problems or questions about the site, please contact webdev@whoi.edu