

Hollings Alumni Spotlight: NOAA Corps Officers

Have you ever considered a career with the [NOAA Corps](#)? Several Hollings Undergraduate Scholars have progressed into exciting careers with the NOAA Corps after completing their degrees. These Hollings alumni have had the opportunity to build a strong foundation of scientific and leadership skills while advancing mission critical research and traveling the world's oceans. NOAA Corps Officers are trained in ocean sciences, meteorology, engineering, as well as other NOAA-related fields, and play a critical role in NOAA's scientific and environmental missions.

The NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps, or 'NOAA Corps', is one of seven uniformed services of the United States. Tracing its history back to the Survey of the Coast established by President Thomas Jefferson in 1807, today's NOAA Corps Officers operate specialized research vessels and aircraft, facilitate research projects and conduct diving operations. Applications for the next class of NOAA Corps Officers are due July 1st, 2015 and Basic Officer Training begins in January 2016.

Danial Palance- Hollings Class of 2011

As a Hollings intern, Dan worked at the NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Woods Hole, MA, under the direction of Jim Manning, developing remote sensing technologies for tracking ocean currents and biological activity in lobster traps. The projects were part of a program called eMOLT (Environmental Monitors on Lobster Traps), which Manning founded. The first part of the project involved redesigning passive GPS-tracked ocean current drifters to be more environmentally-friendly by using biodegradable materials. Dan worked with a standard "Davis" style design called the "Eddie drifter" pictured below.



(Photo credit: NOAA)

Within the first week of the internship, the research group deployed the current drifters concurrently with tagged sea turtles off the Carolina coast. The drifters became entrained in the Gulf Stream and traveled across the Atlantic. Over the course of the summer, they modified the "Eddie" design to make it more environmentally-friendly and cost effective. The new design, coined the "Dan drifter", was the least expensive, easiest to produce and most environmentally-friendly of the Davis-style drifters the

NEFSC had experimented with. Excluding the transmitter and fishing gear flotation, all parts could be procured at local hardware stores and lumber yards. The second part of the internship involved retrofitting a basic point and shoot camera with a water proof case to act as an in-trap monitor for lobster traps. Dan obtained high resolution imagery and proved that the design was feasible, it just required an extended battery life source.

While interning at NOAA NMFS, Dan crossed paths with several NOAA Corps officers. He also had the opportunity to tour *Delaware II* before her decommissioning, *Gloria Michelle*, and *Henry B. Bigelow*. These tours aboard NOAA research vessels, in addition to his desire to serve others and preference for a career outside of the typical 9-5 office job, were the driving forces that led Dan to apply for the NOAA Corps. Dan was selected for Basic Officer Training Class 123. He completed training in May of 2014 and joined the NOAA ship *Rainier*, a hydrographic survey ship based out of Newport, Oregon, which conducts operations in coastal Alaskan and Pacific Northwest waters. Since joining *Rainier*, Dan has sailed from Oregon, the San Juan Islands of Washington, through the inside passage to Kodiak, AK, the Aleutian chain, and the Arctic Circle using high resolution multi-beam and side scan sonar to acquire bathymetric data to update NOAA's nautical charts. Dan has had the opportunity to work with all of the Corps officers that inspired him during his Hollings internship in Woods Hole, and even sailed on *Henry B. Bigelow* for the majority of the autumn bottom trawl survey in 2014. Dan also did a brief stint on *Oscar Dyson*, sister ship to *Henry B. Bigelow*.



(L) Bringing RAINIER up to sea speed. (R) NOAA Ship RAINIER sitting at anchor in Security Bay, Chatham Strait, Southeast, Alaska. Photo credit: NOAA.

For his next steps, Dan hopes to pursue a land assignment that combines the hydrographic knowledge he's acquired aboard *Rainier* with the fisheries work he did during and after college. Then, he hopes to return to the *Henry Bigelow* or one of her sister ships for his next sea tour. Dan also hopes to find time to earn an advanced degree and perhaps one day work as a small boat captain on a university owned research vessel, instructing students in both science and ship handling.

Christopher Pickens - Hollings Class of 2012

Chris Pickens was a 2012 Hollings Scholar and graduated with a double major in biology and geology from Oberlin College. As a Hollings Scholar, Chris interned with the phytoplankton monitoring program at the NOAA Kachemak Bay Laboratory in Seldovia, Alaska, under Kris Holdereid. He spent many days out on small boats doing phytoplankton tows, CTD (conductivity, temperature, depth) casts and water sampling in the Gulf of Alaska to investigate



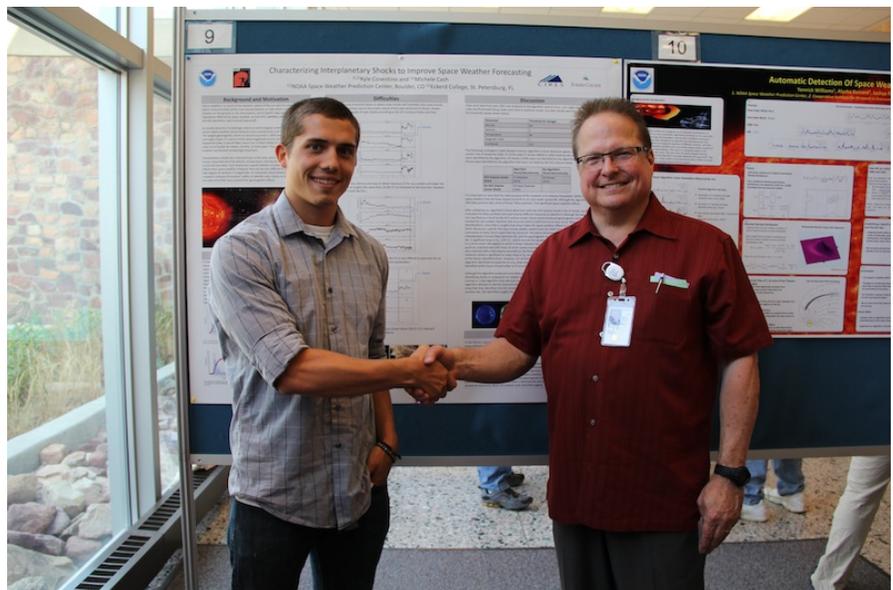
seasonal and inter-annual patterns in phytoplankton growth related to ocean chemistry. Chris enjoyed working on a hands-on project that required significant time in the field and was determined to pursue a career with NOAA after the 2012 summer internship. He learned about opportunities with the NOAA Corps during a presentation by a recruiter at Hollings orientation. Following his growing interest in field work and ambition to be a NOAA diver, he applied and was selected for the NOAA Corps.

Chris participated in the 124th class BOTC (Basic Officer) Training at the Coast Guard Academy, and his first assignment was in Charleston, SC, aboard the NOAA Nancy Foster, which facilitates monitoring of National Marine Sanctuaries, habitat characterization, oceanographic monitoring and coral reef monitoring in the Caribbean. Chris is the newest junior officer on

the NOAA Nancy Foster and spent the winter months learning emergency procedures and training for the upcoming field season. During Chris's first field season as a NOAA Corps Officer, he hopes to apply his scientific education in the field and become confident in facilitating all kinds of scientific research projects. Christopher hopes to build a fulfilling career with the NOAA Corps and eventually pursue his PhD in science.

Kyle Cosentino - Hollings Class of 2012

Ensign Kyle Cosentino reported to the NOAA Corps Officer Training Center in August 2014 to begin his basic training in the NOAA Commissioned Corps. Kyle graduated from Eckerd College in May 2014



with a B.S. in marine science and a minor in chemistry. During his time at Eckerd, he developed a strong interest in understanding the fundamental components and mechanisms of the natural world.

Kyle was also a 2012 Hollings Scholar, and conducted his summer internship with the NOAA NWS Space Weather Prediction Center in Boulder, CO. He co-authored a publication for the Journal of Geophysical Research entitled "Characterizing Interplanetary Shocks for Development and Optimization of an Automated Solar Wind Shock Detection Algorithm", which was the result of his work with Dr. Michele Cash. His interest in a career in the NOAA Corps developed after attending a NOAA Corps recruitment session for Hollings scholars in Boulder.

Kyle's first assignment is aboard the Oscar Elton Sette, home-ported in Honolulu, HI. So far, he has traveled to American Samoa for a Reef Assessment and Monitoring Program cruise and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands on a cruise to study endangered Hawaiian Monk Seals. Later this summer, Kyle will return to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands for an annual marine debris cruise. Kyle is very interested in entering the NOAA dive program and is considering the NOAA aviation program as a potential career path after his initial sea assignment. His recreational interests include fishing, windsurfing, running, and traveling.

Brian Yannutz - Hollings Class of 2008

Prior to Brian's Hollings internship experience, he traveled on a sailing vessel for 15 days, which whetted his appetite for life at sea. Brian was a 2008 Hollings scholar from the University of



Hawaii at Hilo, where he earned his B.S. in marine science. During his summer internship, Brian conducted research in Seattle, WA, at the Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory (part of NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research). Brian was engaged in water quality sampling from hydrothermal vents aboard the R/V *Atlantis*, using the ALVIN submersible from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. He used high definition video from another remotely operated vehicle to measure the relationship between hydrogen sulfide concentrations and shrimp densities in hydrothermal vent communities near the Juan de Fuca Ridge. While in Silver Spring, MD, for final presentation week, Brian learned about the NOAA Corps, and began considering the Corps

as a potential career path. In the summer of 2012, while he was doing field work on a marine debris cruise in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, Brian decided it was time to apply. He graduated BOTC training in fall of 2014 with Chris and Kyle. Brian says that the NOAA Corps is the 'best kept secret' of NOAA.

Brian began his first assignment in December 2014 aboard the *Oregon II*. He will be based in Pascagoula, MS, and mainly serving on research cruises in the Gulf. His field season began in March and this season he will serve on groundfish cruises during the summer and fall, as well as a few shark longline cruises. Brian hopes to become a confident ship driver and navigator, and is very excited that his vessel facilitates NOAA's shark research. Within 3-5 years, Brian hopes to become a NOAA Working Diver, and eventually a Dive Master. Brian serves as the Environmental Compliance Officer on his ship, and he hopes other NOAA vessels will implement some of his ideas to become more environmentally sustainable.

Brian Kennedy – Hollings Class of 2007

Brian attended the Honors College at the College of Charleston (C of C) in South Carolina, where he majored in Marine Biology and minored in Marine Geology. While at C of C, he had the opportunity to sail on multiple research cruises aboard two different National



Administration (NOAA) research vessels and was selected as a NOAA Hollings Scholar. As part of the Hollings Scholarship, Brian completed his summer internship with NOAA's Coral Reef Ecosystem Division (CRED) in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 2008. The majority of Brian time as an intern with CRED was spent assisting with the Automatic Reef Monitoring Structures (ARMS) program. Brian was involved in the logistical support of an ongoing operation and the analysis of preliminary data. This was a nascent project to monitor the effects of ocean acidification on calcifying organisms. Through this project, Brian learned about and influenced the first steps of experimental design and participated in numerous brainstorming sessions with researchers from around the county on how best to monitor this aspect of global climate change.

After completing his Hollings internship and graduating with honors from C of C, Brian wanted to continue his connection with NOAA and gain more experience in operational science, which brought him to the NOAA Corps. He was selected for a commission as part of BOTC 125 and was in one of the last classes to complete their training at the US Merchant Marine Academy at King Point, NY.

Brian's first NOAA sea assignment was as a Junior Officer aboard NOAA's *Okeanos Explorer*, America's Ship for Ocean Exploration. During this assignment, Brian participated in more than 25 expeditions of exploration taking him to two oceans (Atlantic and Pacific), three continents (North America, South America and Asia) and through the territorial waters of more than five countries (Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Indonesia).

After two wonderful years aboard the *Okeanos Explorer*, Brian was able to continue his work in ocean exploration while on a land assignment with NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER). During his more than three years on assignment with the NOAA Office of Exploration and Research, Brian has taken on more responsibility, advancing from an expedition coordinator for OER-led Expeditions to presently serving as the Acting Deputy Program Manager for the *Okeanos Explorer* Program.