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University graduate students partner with area high schools

Six Coastal Carolina University graduate students in the Marine and Wetland Studies program have been selected as the inaugural GK-12 Fellows to work with Horry County middle and high schools. (The "G" in GK-12 refers to graduate students.)

The partnership is part of a \$2.3 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) that established a program pairing University graduate students and Horry County K-12 teachers in coastal science research. Coastal Carolina University received the grant in May 2008.

The University students and their partnering schools are:

- * Carrie Jones, Myrtle Beach High School
- * Craig O'Connell, Loris Middle School
- * Meredith Penland, Carolina Forest High School
- * Justin Schreer, Carolina Forest High School
- * Julia Stevens, Forestbrook Middle School
- * Eric Tosso, North Myrtle Beach High School

The five-year project, "GK-12 Fellows Linking Marine and Wetland Research with Science Education in Coastal South Carolina Schools," funds six graduate students and Horry County science teachers each year, according to Craig Gilman, associate professor of marine science at Coastal Carolina University and principal investigator of the grant.

The participating students, known as GK-12 Fellows, develop and teach lesson plans based on their specific research projects. They also serve as a scientific resource for the classroom teacher and as tutors and mentors to the students.

Patrice Hewitt, a teacher at North Myrtle Beach High who is working with Tosso, says, "I am learning new teaching methodologies. Imagine having a scientist to complement and assist in reaching students of all learning levels effectively. This experience is priceless, and I feel that all of my students will benefit as well, some choosing the path of science as a future career endeavor."

Jamie Church, a teacher at Myrtle Beach High who is working with Carrie Jones, says, "The GK-12 fellows program is going to allow me the opportunity to expand my knowledge and field experience. Carrie has already made an impact with both her ideas for instruction and her assistance in everyday classroom procedures."

All the projects will focus on some aspect of coastal science, including research on sharks, blue crabs, wetland biodiversity, fungus in area beach sand and the ecology of the area's former rice fields.



The 2008 GK-12 Fellows: Clockwise from lower left, Justin Schreer, Craig O'Connell, Julia Stevens, Eric Tosso, Carrie Jones, and Meredith Penland



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