
UNCW Acquires Underwater Glider to Provide State-of-the-Art Undersea Equipment and Data for Ocean Science

**University of North Carolina Wilmington
Wilmington, NC
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Wilmington, NC - - As part of its continuing efforts to provide state-of-the-art undersea equipment and data for ocean science, the NOAA Undersea Research Program (NURP) Center at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (www.uncw.edu/nurc) has purchased a *Slocum*-class underwater glider from Webb Research, Inc. of East Falmouth, MA (www.webbresearch.com). The new vehicle will enhance the center's existing remotely operated vehicle (ROV) programs and technical diving capabilities with a vehicle from the young and evolving class of underwater robots.

The glider is an autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) designed for investigating oceanography to depths of 200 meters for periods as long as a month. The AUV travels in a saw tooth pattern while following programmed routes; satellite telemetry regularly reports vehicle status, position, and recorded sensor data. NURP Center operations manager, Lance Horn, commented, "AUVs are cutting edge technology with an important role in the future of underwater data collection."

The glider carries a suite of scientific sensors providing a near-real-time data stream consisting of salinity, temperature, depth, chlorophyll-*a*, colored dissolved organic matter (CDOM) fluorescence, optical backscatter (for sensing suspended particles), and scattering attenuation meter for determining water clarity.

Dr. Michael Durako, professor of biological sciences at UNCW and co-director for the Coastal Ocean Research and Monitoring Program (CORMP, www.cormp.org), one of the first customers for the NURP glider, said, "We are excited about the prospect of adding glider data to our coastal ocean observation network. The ability to collect high resolution spatial and temporal data will greatly increase our knowledge about the heterogeneity of the continental shelf off of southeast North Carolina. This platform will also be a great asset for providing independent verification of the accuracy of our offshore mooring sensors."

Funding for the \$74,000 glider came from NOAA's National Institute for Undersea Science and Technology at the Universities of Mississippi and Southern Mississippi.

Delivery of the new vehicle is scheduled for early June 2005. Scientific operations will commence this summer. Contact Andrew Shepard, NURP/UNCW director, for further information. (sheparda@uncw.edu, 910-962-2446)

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