

The MATE Internship Program

By Nandita Sarkar, MATE Internship Coordinator

So what is this MATE internship program? Many of you have probably sailed with a MATE intern onboard your cruise and may not even know it. The Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) Center's Marine Technical Internship program has been working with the UNOLS/USCG fleet for seventeen years and has placed 303 students in marine technical internships, over 250 of which were shipboard positions. Interns have been placed with both the shipboard Marine Technicians as well as the science party, where the science party operations are more technical in nature. The MATE program has two goals. The first is to provide real-life shipboard technical experience to make students more competitive in the job market. This is especially important in a field where potential marine techs get caught in the paradox of not being able to be considered for positions without at-sea experience, but not being able to gain at-sea experience without being hired! Also, for those students who are newly exploring shipboard technical work, the program provides a mechanism to expose students to shipboard technology and life. There are 50-100 applicants for the program each year. Matching the interns to the hosts is no easy matter. Behind the scenes, the MATE program coordinator works hard to specifically match each qualified intern with the needs of the host. When more experience is required, a more experienced intern is sent. When less experience is sufficient and the cruise duration is shorter, a less experienced student may be sent. The host can be as involved as he/she would like in the selection process and makes the final choice on the intern.

The program is funded by the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Ocean Sciences Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) Program and places 10-15 interns on UNOLS and USCG vessels for a few weeks each summer. In addition, in 2011, the Long Term internship program started, in which one intern works with one to two

institutions/ships for up to six months. This longer internship allows the intern to truly dive into the position and gain the in-depth experience required to be successful in the world of science support. The program has been quite successful in getting students ready to work in the UNOLS fleet. Both the 2014 and 2015 Long Term Interns are currently working as Marine Technicians within the fleet (Nick Mathews, BIOS, and Sonia Brugger, UH) and three other former long-term interns are working or have worked as fill-in Marine Technicians for the fleet. Of the 11 total interns this year, four have already received job offers as marine technicians. Many thanks to all of the hosts and mentors for providing such valuable experience for these students!

The MATE internships do not just benefit the students, they also benefit the shipboard technical group and the science party. Earlier this summer a key technician had to depart the R/V *Marcus Langseth* for a family emergency. As their Technical Support Manager scrambled to find a replacement, his lead shipboard technician commented that "...Tyler [MATE intern] has grabbed on to what needs to be done so quickly that I am totally comfortable handing over to him..." Tyler was asked to stay for another cruise and was an important functioning member of the science support team. Similarly, onboard the R/V *Oceanus*, Chief Scientist Kim Thramatrackholn of Rutgers University commented that Sonia Brugger, a MATE intern, "was incredibly helpful and was a huge benefit to have on the cruise." Over on the R/V *Thompson*, the MATE intern played an important role during an exceptionally busy cruise by adding that extra set of skilled hands. Their Marine Technician commented, "Thankfully we had a MATE intern [Pam Ward] help assist with the majority of the CTD casts. Under normal conditions [without a MATE intern] this would have required much more creative solutions."

The program is a win-win, giving students the necessary on-the-job experience while also supplying the shipboard technicians and scientists another set of helping hands.

We are already looking ahead to the 2016 season. Please consider hosting/mentoring an

intern! For more information contact me at nsarkar@mpc.edu. If you know of students who might benefit from a shipboard internship, please send them to our website at: <http://www.marinetech.org/internships/>



Summer 2015 MATE intern, Pamela Ward, on R/V *Thomas G. Thompson*.
Photo provided by U. Washington



Martine Holmquist working with a magnetic drill to make holes into 1" steel to bolt a winch onto the deck of the R/V *Marcus G. Langseth*. *Photo by Kate Tremblay.*

Tom Soto (Chief Science Engineer, R/V *Langseth*) and Kate Tremblay (MATE Intern) in the main lab aboard R/V *Langseth*. *Photo by Kate Tremblay*

