



UNIVERSITY-NATIONAL OCEANOGRAPHIC LABORATORY SYSTEM

Moss Landing Marine Laboratories 8272 Moss Landing Road, Moss Landing, CA 95039

(831)-632-4410 Fax (831) 632-4413 www.unols.org office@unols.org

May 15, 2002

Dear Sea-going Colleague,

As some of you know, the Federal agencies had been urged by the Academic Fleet Review (Schmitt et al., 1999) (conducted for the National Science Foundation and approved by the National Science Board in May 1999) to begin the process of long-range planning for the renewal of the fleet. As a result of this report, the Federal agencies, through the Federal Oceanographic Facilities Committee (FOFC), and with input from the academic community (via UNOLS), produced a plan entitled "Charting the Future for the National Academic Research Fleet". Over the next 20 years, the Plan calls for a fleet that is more capable than at present, but that has fewer vessels. In the Plan, a new class of ships, the Ocean Class, was proposed. The *"Ocean Class ships will fulfill a critical need in fleet modernization, by replacing the aging 'Intermediate' ships with vessels of increased endurance, technological capability, and number of science berths. These will be ocean-going vessels, though not globally ranging."*

The Ocean Class vessels are viewed as key elements of the future academic research fleet in the FOFC report. Their development has already begun with the construction of the R/V KILO MOANA (AGOR 26) and the planning of the Alaska Region Research Vessel. In addition to these two ships, the Plan anticipates the need for four additional Ocean Class ships over about ten years to fill the research capacity that will be lost by the retirement of the remaining Intermediate Class vessels.

The Science Mission Requirements (SMRs) and detailed design characteristics of these Ocean Class vessels are not explicitly stated in the FOFC report. The report states that:

"Designed to support integrated, interdisciplinary research, including within the exclusive economic zone of the U.S. (the 200-mile limit), these ships will have many of the capabilities of modern Global Class vessels. Being somewhat smaller and more efficient to operate however, they will substantially expand the existing capabilities provided by the Intermediate Class UNOLS ships. They will carry additional scientists, with increased laboratory and deck space, improved handling equipment, and sophisticated instrumentation, including instrumentation and equipment for ROV/AUV operations. Some may be specially configured to accommodate ice margin research, fisheries related oceanography, shallow submersible and/or ROV/AUV support, or other specialized missions."

The Ocean Class ship characteristics stated are:

Length: 55-70 meters

Endurance: 40 days

Range: 20,000 km

Science Berths: 20-25

At this critical time, we need input from you about the capabilities required of the new Ocean Class ships. Anyone in the ocean science community with an interest in the future of the research fleet and the Ocean Class ships is encouraged to go to the UNOLS Web site (http://www.unols.org/fic/ocean/ocean_class.html) and read the posted SMRs and discussion papers.



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There is a parallel effort to develop SMRs for the Regional Class vessels as well. A link to the Regional Class pages is located on the above Web page.

A workshop is scheduled for July 23 and 24 at Salt Lake City to draft a report that would aid in concept designs. If you are interested in attending, please go to the registration and input form located on the Web page. Attendance may be limited, however whether you plan to attend or not, please respond with constructive comments and answers to the questionnaire on the Web page. Every effort will be made to ensure that those attending the workshop represent a broad range of scientific disciplines, geographic regions and institutions and that input from all interested sea going scientists is considered. Consideration of and an attempt to articulate regional differences will be a part of these workshops. The community will be given an opportunity to review and comment on the outcome of these workshops and any follow on planning activities. Comments would be most helpful if received by June 21, 2002 and we would like to know of your interest in attending the workshop as soon as possible. Please pass this announcement on to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Hebert, URI/GSO
UNOLS Fleet Improvement Committee