

Crew and Technician Recruitment and Retention Workshop

Austin, Texas
February 18 & 19, 2009

Preliminary Report
to
RVOOC
April 16, 2009

Overview

- Recruitment and retention remains a serious problem for the UNOLS fleet.
- As a follow-up to discussions within RVOC and RVTEC over the past couple of years and in response to a charge from the UNOLS Council, UNOLS convened a workshop to formalize a plan of action to address these problems.
- The charge to the workshop participants was to develop specific action plans and proposals based on the recommendations generated by RVOC and RVTEC and circulated to the Council.
- This project is funded as part of the support for UNOLS by NSF, ONR, NOAA, USGS and MMS. The actual travel and logistics for this workshop was funded by the National Science Foundation.

Workshop Participants

- Stewart Lamerdin, MLML Marine Superintendent [Chair of workshop]
- Rich Findley, RSMAS Technical Services Manager [RVTEC Chair]
- Joe Malbrough, LUMCON Marine Superintendent [RVOC Chair elect]
- Eric King, UW Port Capt
- Al Walsh, LDEO Technical Services Manager and Port Engineer
- Tim McGovern, UH Technical Services Manager
- Lynn Butler, URI Sea Going Technician
- Mary Maldonado- SIO Crew and Technician Personnel Manager
- Barrie Walden, WHOI Former Technical Services Manager
- Dan Oliver, Univ. of Alaska Marine Superintendent
- Linda Goad, NSF Ship Operations Program Manager
- Jim Holik, NSF Technical Services Program Manger
- Tim Schnoor, ONR Ship Operations Program Manager
- Jon Alberts, UNOLS Executive Secretary Designate
- Mike Prince, UNOLS Executive Secretary

Outcomes and Recommendations

- Training Scholarship Program
- Internship Programs
- Crew & Technician Personnel Pool
- Available Berths Policy
- UNOLS Personnel Coordinator
- Recommendations for future action or consideration

Training Scholarship Program

- Develop a fleet-wide program with pooled or centrally funded resources that could be used for “scholarships” by crew or technicians to upgrade their technical qualifications and/or certifications and licenses.
- Receipt of funds and time-off to obtain the training or education would require a commitment to serve within the UNOLS Fleet for a commensurate amount of time after obtaining the training or education.
- These “Scholarships” would be over and above the normal training programs administered operating institutions.
- Applications could come from any crew member or technician.
- Information about the program and encouragement to participate would come from the individuals employer as well as from UNOLS.

Internship Programs

- Develop a process that would allow the UNOLS Fleet or individual institutions to participate in the Workboat Academy training program for licensed officers.
- This would require a commitment to provide crew positions every two months for participating students.
- This program could provide opportunities for helping crewmembers obtain a 500 ton Masters License at little extra cost to the UNOLS Fleet.
- Create a Technician Internship program with up to three interns per year on various size ships. This would be an in-house program with a curriculum developed by RVTEC and at sea opportunities provided by UNOLS Ship Operating Institutions. The program would be a year-long with at least 120 days at sea and potentially some on-shore training on certain instrumentation, data acquisition programs and trouble-shooting/repair techniques.
- The program could include a stipend, travel funds and perhaps housing.

Crew and Technician Personnel Pool Process

- Develop a process to be managed by a UNOLS Personnel Coordinator, or the like, that centralizes information about available crew and technicians.
- Relief Crew Member pool with screened applicants that are available for temporary relief crew positions.
- Contract Technician Pool of qualified and available Marine Technicians that can be hired as needed.
- Set up formal agreements where needed to share permanent employees (crew and tech) as relief personnel on other institutions ships without changing their status with their home institution. This would be done on a case by case basis between institutions or groups of institutions.

Available Berths policy for training, internships and cruise opportunities

- Develop a policy and process that will help to identify available berths on research cruises at an early enough date to effectively utilize those berths for internships, cross training and as cruise of opportunities for researchers and students. This might include developing a policy where on occasion berths are reserved for training or internship programs when it does not interfere with the originally funded science program.

UNOLS Personnel Coordinator

Create a full time position within the UNOLS Office Staff responsible for:

- Crew and technician recruiting
- Manage the relief personnel pool process
- Facilitate coordination among all the ship operators with regards to the pool of available personnel
- Develop materials and tools such as videos, brochures, newsletters, etc. that the would be used by the UNOLS personnel coordinator and operator representatives at job fairs, maritime schools and other sources for recruiting technicians and crew
- Develop and coordinate fleet wide training and internship programs and would help to manage the scholarship program

Recommendations for future action or consideration

- A short list of best practices for dealing with sea-going personnel was generated during the workshop. It was recommended that compiling these type of ideas and sharing them on a continuous basis would be useful and something that could be managed by the Personnel Coordinator.

A summary of these recommendations is as follows:

- Incentives, cash awards and letters of commendation for good work during a cruise.
- Travel to good locations, allow them to take vacations in these remote locations.
- Communicate with them about the salaries, benefits and the reasons for making changes. Be personal in communicating policies, etc.
- Be accommodating about meeting their personal needs for time off, etc. Give them time off when they need it.
- Have good vacation, time off compensation.
- Compensate for the time at sea in a meaningful way.
- Acknowledge and follow up on requests for information.
- Provide personal safety equipment and outfitting to crewmembers.
- Provide creature comforts such as internet, satellite TV, exercise equipment, etc.
- Continual training programs, team training programs.
- Habitability in living spaces and common spaces. Single staterooms for crew and techs (all normal ship operator employees).

RVOC/RVTEC Recommendations presented to the UNOLS Council:

- Develop a process to directly fund training for crew and technicians outside of operating budgets
- Development of a pool of full-time, relief personnel (including technicians) that would be available to ship out to any of the ships in the fleet
- Investigate the creation of a UNOLS Internship program in an attempt to certify and train younger personnel to fill crew and technician positions
- Creation of a position at the UNOLS office to formalize and manage the pool of “relief personnel available”, promote the UNOLS fleet at various job fairs/maritime schools, develop brochures and videos designed to increase awareness, monitor morale in the fleet
- Continue to pursue higher base salaries or other forms of compensation for positions in the fleet