

**Fleet Improvement Committee Meeting**  
**University of Miami, RSMAS**  
**Dean's Conference Room**  
**February 21, 2001**

*Meeting Report*

**Introduction:** The meeting of the Fleet Improvement Committee was a working meeting. It contained an open discussion among its members to primarily address the Federal Oceanographic Facilities Committee (FOFC) discussion paper entitled "Charting the Future for the National Academic Research Fleet."

The [agenda](#) for the working meeting is attached below.

**Meeting Participants included:**

Larry Atkinson (ODU), FIC Chair  
Mark Brzezinski (UCSB)  
Joe Coburn (WHOI)  
Annette DeSilva (UNOLS Office)  
David Hebert (URI)  
Bob Knox (SIO), UNOLS Chair  
Chris Measures (U. Hawaii)  
Mike Prince (UNOLS Office)  
Terry Whitledge (U. Alaska)

**The following is a summary of the general discussion of the FOFC paper. Comments, questions, and opinions are recorded in the order made.**

To begin the discussion, Larry Atkinson presented the UNOLS fleet utilization chart showing ship time planned through 2001. The chart demonstrates that demand for the fleet is on the increase in 2001. If this trend continues, it is unlikely that the FOFC long-range plan will be able to meet ship needs of the future. It was also pointed out that RON BROWN, HEALY and the other USCG Icebreakers are not included in the utilization figures or the FOFC plan.

Through the FOFC surveys, the science community indicates the need for ships will increase in the future. The Oregon Workshop Report and the Brewer/Moore Millennium Report reemphasize this. There will be non-traditional ship support needs in the future. Some of these non-traditional ship needs might include:

- Field programs for model verification,
- Support platforms for AUVs,
- Observatory support
- Event response

Along with the many new non-traditional ship uses, conventional ship use will continue.

By reducing the size of the future fleet, the FOFC long-range projections may work to constrain the future of oceanographic field programs. The limited size of the fleet will constrain the flexibility of fleet operations and in turn its ability to respond to events (seismic, storm, environments biological, etc.) This concern was expressed through many of the FOFC survey responses. Limited fleet size will constrain research in the globally remotely areas. Henry Dick (WHOI) recently pointed out that it took 11 years to plan and schedule his 2000/2001 cruise to the South Atlantic. He finally conducted the cruise and important discoveries were made.

The planning factors for the fleet of the future must address excess capacity and the associated costs to accommodate surge season operations, event response work, multi-ship operations, globally remote research, etc. The costs of maintaining ship crews during this period must be considered as part of the plan.

Implementation of the FOFC Fleet Plan has the potential to jeopardize the effectiveness of the academic fleet. The FOFC plan addresses efficiency, but not effectiveness.

There is concern that the FOFC plan does not include the smaller vessels of the UNOLS Fleet which have played an important role. Their utilization in recent years has been high and continues to increase. It is difficult to evaluate the Fleet Plan without including the smaller vessels.

FOFC Survey Summary - Mike Prince reviewed his viewgraphs which summarize the community survey responses to the FOFC paper <http://www.mlml.calstate.edu/unols/fltdisc/surveyresults/surveyppt/>. Some comments and FIC discussion regarding the viewgraphs are provided below:

- Does the plan meet the needs of Marine science? – Community Response, “no.”
- Number of vessels needed compared to the plan – The Community response generally indicated that more ships are needed. Few felt that the FOFC plan was ok as projected.
- Is the distribution of ships in the plan right? – Most indicated that the plan should provide a better distribution for the various classes of vessels.
- Fleet capabilities:
  - Vessel Size – There is concern that as new ships are planned, there is often a trend for them to be larger than their predecessor, the “creep” factor. Many indicated that they did not like the idea of having a larger oceans class ships.
  - Many indicated the need for multi-ship operations.
  - Access to wire time is an issue. There needs to be technology development in this area.
  - The community was divided on the need for additional berthing capacity. It was commented that PIs tend to request what they know they can expect. So in looking at past trends this should be kept in mind. If the PI had additional choices, how would this have affected their requests?
  - More lab and deck space needs to be considered as this directly relates to the number of bunks available. If bunks are added, the corresponding additional lab and deck requirements must also be considered. On regional and intermediate vessels this is a concern. The point to be made is that if you increase bunks you need to add deck and lab space.
- Other vessel capabilities:
  - Heavy weather capability – the community indicated a need for this capability. Additionally, it was pointed out that the limited size of the projected fleet could impact weather windows. Fewer ships would likely dictate operations outside optimum weather windows. Although more capable ships are envisioned, should weather windows be built into the fleet plan? Safety considerations must be addressed.
- Political Comments – The community generally supports open competition for operation of future vessels.
- Comments on lifespan – The Community in general indicated that the lifespan of vessels could be longer.
- Comments on funding – The responses favorably viewed a cautious growth plan.

The FIC discussion continued. Oceanography is on the threshold of a new phase of growth. NSF plans are calling for a doubling of their budget. The FOFC fleet plan should follow this direction. The FOFC plan should address future science facility needs as reported by the Brewer/Moore Millennium Paper, the Cowles OSU Workshop Report, and community survey responses. The tune of the Fleet paper is negative. By projecting the need for a smaller fleet, the FOFC plan has the potential to be self-fulfilling. The plan is too conservative. There needs to be a strategic fleet plan that addresses the vision of oceanographic research directions. A vision statement is needed.

In summary, UNOLS has circulated the FOFC document and the community has responded by pointing out major concerns. The paper lacks a vision of where ocean sciences should go. There is a much greater role for ocean sciences in the future than the paper conveys. FIC would like to work with the FOFC group in redrafting a long-range fleet plan. The revised plan should be less conservative and more forward thinking. Oceanography needs to adopt a champion to advocate for future growth.

The remainder of the morning and much of the afternoon was spent reviewing and commenting on the FOFC Paper. Mike Prince incorporated the FIC comments into the paper (distributed after the meeting by e-mail). In general, the comments are intended to make the document more positive and visionary, while at the same time realistically project the needs of the future.

At the UNOLS Council meeting (2/22), FIC/UNOLS will propose to assist the agencies in a rewrite of the Fleet Plan. There was some concern on whether one paper could adequately express the budgetary concerns of the federal agencies and at the same time adequately reflect the science facility needs of the future. It was emphasized that the science directions need to be incorporated in the revised plan. The FIC agreed that if the agencies cannot adopt the recommendations of UNOLS, UNOLS would need to come up with their own long-range fleet plan.

#### Other Topics:

**CAPE HATTERAS Midlife/Stretch Proposal** – The FIC reviewed the past ship day utilization and bunk utilization for the vessel. The charts indicate that availability of bunks does not seem to be a major limitation of the vessel since the bunks are not often fully utilized. The proposal package does not clearly define the science need for a larger vessel. Mark Brzezinski and Joe Coburn volunteered to review the proposal from a technical perspective. Larry will provide FIC's input to Duke/UNC.

**Intermediate Vessel Statistics** – Annette DeSilva provided statistics on the ship day utilization and bunk utilization for the intermediate vessels prior to the meeting. These files are posted on the web, <http://archive.unols.org/meetings/2001/200102fic/stats/intermed.htm>.

*The meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.*

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**UNOLS Fleet Improvement Committee Meeting**  
**Wednesday-Thursday, February 21-22, 2001, 8:30 am**  
**University of Miami**  
**Miami, Florida**

**Wednesday, February 21, 2001 - Dean's Conference Room**

**8:30 am - 5:00 pm**

This first day of the FIC Meeting will be a working session for the Committee. No formal reports are planned. The day will be devoted to discussion and writing assignments.

**Topics to be addressed include:**

- **The FOFC draft discussion paper**, *Charting the Future for the National Academic Research Fleet*, <http://archive.unols.org/committees/fic/renewal/fltdisc/>. Appraisal of community responses and comments on FOFC paper, <http://www.unols.org/committees/fic/renewal/fltdisc/responses.html>. The FIC will try to summarize the responses for the UNOLS Council report on Thursday, 22 February.
- **Review and comment on the OSU Workshop findings**, *Assessment of Future Science Needs in the Context of the Academic Oceanographic Fleet*,

<http://archive.unols.org/committees/fic/biennial/futship.pdf>.

- **Review and comment on the Draft Report: *Ocean Sciences at the New Millennium***, [http://www.joss.ucar.edu/joss\\_psg/publications/decadal/](http://www.joss.ucar.edu/joss_psg/publications/decadal/)
- **Intermediate Ships review** - FIC will review the information that is available and that Annette will provide at the meeting (on bunk usage, regional demand, etc.).
- **CAPE HATTERAS Mid-life Refit Feasibility Study** - The FIC will prepare a response to this study. The study was distributed by postal mail in fall, 2000.

For all items identified above, FIC will review and then write a one-page response for presentation at the following Council meeting.

Additional items for FIC:

1. What other items would you like to address at the meeting?
2. Please read the FOCI report, the Cowles report, the Millennium report and information soon to be provided on the Intermediates before the meeting.

**Tour of WALTON SMITH**  
**Wednesday, February 21, 2001, 5:00 pm**  
**FIC and Council Meeting Participants are Welcome**

**Thursday, February 22, 2001 - RSMAS, Auditorium**

**The morning session will be a joint meeting of the UNOLS Council, Fleet Improvement Committee, and Federal Agency Representatives.**

**0830 Call the Meeting:** Bob Knox, UNOLS Chair, will call the meeting to order and provide an opportunity for introductions. *A moment of silence will be observed in remembrance of the KNORR crewmember's passing.*

**0840 Accept [Minutes of September 2000 Council meeting](#).**

**0845 COMMITTEE REPORTS:** Bob Knox will provide a brief summary of the UNOLS Committee written reports and open the floor to a question/answer period. (Prior to the meeting, Committee Chairs submitted written reports on activities since the September Council meeting.) Chairs will identify any important issues that need to be addressed further by the Council.

**0915 FEDERAL AGENCY and CORE REPORTS:** Representatives of the Federal Agencies and CORE will be given an opportunity to report on activities of interest to the Council or to bring any issues before the Council requiring their input or action.

**0935 Long-Range Planning for the UNOLS Fleet** - Bob Knox will introduce a discussion on long-range planning for the UNOLS Fleet. The discussion will address:

- The FOFC draft discussion paper, *Charting the Future for the National Academic Research Fleet*, <http://archive.unols.org/committees/fic/renewal/fltdisc/>
- Appraisal of community responses and comments on FOFC paper, <http://archive.unols.org/committees/fic/renewal/fltdisc/responses.html>
- OSU Workshop findings, *Assessment of Future Science Needs in the Context of the Academic Oceanographic Fleet*, <http://archive.unols.org/committees/fic/biennial/futship.pdf>.
- Draft Report: *Ocean Sciences at the New Millennium*, [http://www.joss.ucar.edu/joss\\_psg/publications/decadal/](http://www.joss.ucar.edu/joss_psg/publications/decadal/)

- The Neptune Project <<http://www.neptune.washington.edu/>>and Its Implications on Ship Support - John Delaney
- FIC Fleet Renewal Activities

**1015 Break**

**1030 Long-Range Planning Discussion (Continued)**

**1230 FIC Meeting Adjourn**

**Please note, this will end the FIC meeting; however, FIC members are welcome to stay and attend the full Council meeting. The Council agenda can be viewed at, <http://archive.unols.org/meetings/2001/200102cnc/200102cncag.htm>.**