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Ocean Exploration Institute at FAU Harbor Branch Awarded \$1.77 Million Grant

FORT PIERCE, Fla. (October 14, 2014) – The Cooperative Institute for Ocean Exploration, Research and Technology (CIOERT) at FAU’s Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute (HBOI) was recently awarded a \$1.77 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for the 2014-15 fiscal year. The funding will allow CIOERT scientists to continue work in developing advanced underwater technologies, as well as exploring and researching regions of the eastern U.S. continental shelf and vulnerable deep and shallow coral ecosystems.

“The funding allows us to continue to discover, study, and protect deep coral reef ecosystems off the coast of Florida,” said Shirley Pomponi, Ph.D., executive director of CIOERT. “These reefs are important nurseries for commercially-important fisheries, and they may serve as refuges for corals that are affected by warming ocean temperatures.”

New projects will focus on developing autonomous underwater vehicles and sensors to map and monitor deep reefs, as well as expanding the use of the new Exploration Command Center at HBOI to “virtually” participate in expeditions in the North Atlantic and the Caribbean. CIOERT scientists also will continue to study the pharmaceutical potential of chemicals produced by deep-water organisms that have been collected during the first five years of the project, and to document the health of corals in the Gulf of Mexico and Florida Keys.

CIOERT was established in 2009 under a five-year cooperative agreement with NOAA. The program was rated “outstanding” by the NOAA Science Advisory Board and, as a result, was renewed for another five-year period. More than \$6 million in funding was awarded to CIOERT during the first five years.

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About the Cooperative Institute for Ocean Exploration, Research and Technology:

The Cooperative Institute for Ocean Exploration, Research and Technology (CIOERT) explores and studies the nation’s ocean frontiers using innovation and cutting edge technologies. CIOERT is sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER), and headquartered at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University in Fort Pierce, Fla.

CIOERT explorers and technologists address NOAA priorities within the following research themes: develop advanced underwater technologies; explore and research the frontier regions of the eastern U.S. continental shelf and slope; explore and research vulnerable deep and shallow coral ecosystems; promote ocean literacy and NOAA's next generation workforce development.

About Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute:

Founded in 1971, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University is a research community of marine scientists, engineers, educators and other professionals focused on Ocean Science for a Better World. The institute drives innovation in ocean engineering, at-sea operations, drug discovery and biotechnology from the oceans, coastal and coral reef ecology and conservation, marine mammal research and conservation, aquaculture, ocean observing systems and marine education. For more information, visit www.fau.edu/hboi.

About Florida Atlantic University:

Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, the University, with an annual economic impact of \$6.3 billion, serves more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students at sites throughout its six-county service region in southeast Florida. FAU's world-class teaching and research faculty serves students through 10 colleges: the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, the College of Business, the College for Design and Social Inquiry, the College of Education, the College of Engineering and Computer Science, the Graduate College, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science. FAU is ranked as a High Research Activity institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The University is placing special focus on the rapid development of three signature themes – marine and coastal issues, biotechnology and contemporary societal challenges – which provide opportunities for faculty and students to build upon FAU's existing strengths in research and scholarship. For more information, visit www.fau.edu.