An Introduction to the School of Oceanography for Affiliate Faculty

(last update: June 2022)
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(Rick Keil, Director)

Introduction & A Brief History

Thank you for being a member of the University of Washington School of Oceanography. We are glad you are part of our community and we hope you will have strong and creative collaborations within the School for many years.

The School of Oceanography was formed in 1930 and initially named the UW Oceanographic Labs. The labs became a department in 1951 and began offering Bachelor’s degrees at that time. We were the first university in the U.S., and likely the world, to offer an undergraduate B.S. in Oceanography. Our first degree recipient was Alyn Duxbury. Dux remains a committed member of our community and will be this year’s 2022 commencement speaker. Today we are a school, but that is merely a synonym for department.

The School of Oceanography is housed within the College of the Environment at UW, along with units such as Aquatic & Fishery Sciences, Marine Affairs, Earth & Space Sciences, Forest Resources, and Atmospheric Sciences. Together there are more than 300 teaching and tenure-line professors in the College, making us part of one of the largest and most productive units of its kind.

The University of Washington has been ranked #1 in the world in Oceanography for the past four years. Each year approximately $60M in research money passes directly through the School of Oceanography, making it the fourth largest research unit on campus (exclusive of the medical school). In collaboration with our partners in the Applied Physics Laboratory and the Cooperative Institute for Climate, Ocean and Ecosystem Studies (CICOES), the UW is funded for an additional $140M in annual research, making marine-related research one of the most important research engines on campus. The School of Oceanography is also one of only three schools in the country operating more than one UNOLS research vessel, and our global-class ship the R/V Thomas G Thompson has completed the greatest number of at-sea days in the fleet each year since 2019.

The mission of the School of Oceanography is to advance the science of the ocean, educate students in the field, work toward solutions to problems stemming from climate change, and to increase the public’s awareness of the ocean. The School has a focus on scientific discovery through observation, experimentation, theory, modeling, and technological innovation. We are a national leader in undergraduate oceanography, unique in incorporating “blue water” research cruises as a major component of our curriculum. We graduate Master’s and doctoral students (90% of whom stay in the field) who will be future leaders of scientific discovery, teaching, and public service.

The School publishes a weekly newsletter called Ocean Currents. If you are not receiving this (check your spam), please email Su Tipple.
Types of Faculty

There are seven types of faculty within the School, and each type has all the ranks: assistant, associate and full professors. Teaching Professors are charged primarily with instruction and have a strong emphasis on undergraduate education and on graduate student TA and teaching training. Teaching professors have limited voting rights. The School currently has three teaching faculty in various career stages. Only one (at the moment) has a full-time long term commitment from the School, but that will change for the better and we hope to hire in this role in the near future.

Tenure-line Professors are charged with a mixture of research, mentoring, teaching, and service. This is the traditional role that one thinks of when hearing the term “professor.” Oceanography tenure lines come with a 9-month state commitment. Professors in this role are voting faculty and are charged with most of the service to the School via standing committee work (e.g., faculty council, DEI, etc.). There are currently twenty-five faculty in tenure lines at various stages of their careers.

Professors WOT are professors in the School who have a “without tenure for reason of funding” status. This means that they have all the rights (and expectations) of a tenure-line professor but there is no guarantee of state support for their role. The School guarantees three months of funding for those appointed in the School (there are two WOTs currently in the School) in exchange for teaching and service. We have individual agreements with our three WOT faculty whose primary appointments are at the Applied Physics Lab. Professor WOT faculty are voting members of the School. This type of faculty member is not likely to grow dramatically in the future, but there are nascent plans to revive the way the WOT role is used across campus and this may lead to new appointments in our School.

Research Professors are appointed to research-focused roles with all the rights and privileges of the tenure line except the tenure part. They are self-funded soft money roles. The School currently has one faculty member in this role. Research Professors have voting rights with some limitations. This is not a type of professor that is likely to grow in numbers within the School.

Adjunct Professors are those who have tenure lines in other academic units and an affiliation with Oceanography. Oceanography is consulted when these faculty get promoted, but our role is to support them and their careers by providing access to our resources such as graduate school applicant pools, intellectual capital, and infrastructure. Adjunct professors have voting rights in their home department but not in Oceanography. The School currently has four adjunct faculty.

Affiliate Faculty are researchers who do not have a paid faculty appointment in an academic unit. At UW the primary locations for persons with this appointment are APL and CICOES, which do not have a teaching component built into their systems. Other affiliate faculty come from off campus. Most of our affiliates come from NOAA PMEL. Affiliate faculty do not have voting rights. The School currently has forty-one affiliate faculty!

Emeritus Faculty are those who have retired from the teaching, tenure-line, WOT, or research professor positions. Emeritus status comes with limited privileges such as reduced
parking fees on campus and access to the libraries. Unfortunately, emeritus status is not granted to affiliate faculty upon their retirement. In certain situations, emeritus faculty are allowed to work part-time after retirement. When in paid status, emeritus faculty are eligible to vote.

There are a few other terms that come around occasionally. Core faculty is a term used on our website to identify faculty members who are active in the School in terms of advising graduates and undergraduates. It is a loose definition aimed at helping prospective students know who is active in the School in that regard. If you see yourself mis-identified as either core or non-core, just let me know. A joint appointment is when a tenure-track faculty member has a commitment from two academic units, and thus has responsibilities to both units (negotiated individually for each joint appointment). A jointly appointed faculty member has voting rights in both departments and is evaluated in both departments for annual merit raises and promotions. The School has historically had one to three jointly appointed faculty, and currently has two.

Faculty are not automatically enrolled in the graduate program to serve as graduate advisors or mentors. We are voted into the graduate faculty separately from the vote that establishes a faculty appointment. If you wish to serve as mentor or advisor, you need to request that of the School. There is a vote and, if positive, then the School will enroll you in the graduate faculty.

The term voting faculty refers to those who hold permanent teaching, tenure-line, WOT, or research professorships and who are determined to be “active” status. To oversimplify, voting faculty are determined each quarter to be those who are being paid through the department and are in an appropriate title. For example, emeritus faculty who are working 20% on a small grant during the first five years of their retirement are voting faculty. Faculty members on sabbatical are not voting faculty until they return from sabbatical. Affiliate faculty are never in the voting ranks. The UW’s faculty voting policy can be found here. The School typically has 30-35 voting faculty at any given time.

Finally, the faculty are nominally divided into four options: Biological Oceanography, Chemical Oceanography, Marine Geology and Geophysics, and Physical Oceanography. The options meet to set curricular goals, coordinate graduate student admissions, advise each other within the option, and to provide a coordinated voice to the Director as needed. Affiliates are assigned to one or more options.

**Role of Affiliate Faculty**

There are clear goals for the role of Affiliate Professor.

**For the Researcher:** Helps to build a broad and strong scientific community for the scientist that is larger than their home research unit, encourages new scientific collaborations with scientists within academic units, allows researchers to advise and mentor graduate students and postdocs, and provides limited teaching opportunities intended to strengthen the researcher’s portfolio without significantly impacting their primary research focus.

**For Oceanography:** Provides ties to other research entities that enhance the School’s research opportunities and portfolio, broadens the areas where a unit can recruit and train graduate
students and postdocs, and provides an opportunity to educate students in research topics and skills that the core faculty might not have.

Appointment of new Affiliate Faculty

Persons who wish to be affiliate faculty should have a viable reason such as the desire to advise graduate students or postdocs. They must seek a faculty advocate from the voting faculty, and that advocate approaches the School via the Director. If the Director agrees to advance the candidate, then a CV, a statement from the candidate explaining their qualifications and the role they see themselves playing in the School, and three letters of recommendation are required. Once the materials are gathered, the advocate presents a motion at a faculty meeting and then presents the candidate for discussion followed by an online vote. After the vote the Director will reach out and inform the new faculty member.

Annual Renewal of Affiliate and Adjunct Faculty

Affiliate faculty appointments are annual and need to be reappointed each year. In February the School reaches out and requests an updated CV and a statement of the person's interactions with the School in the past year. These documents are required by the UW. Renewals are discussed at the March faculty meeting. The faculty code requires that the voting faculty cast a ballot on each affiliate faculty member each year. We do this online and it is usually routine except for when affiliate faculty drift away from the School or when they do not provide updated material.

Promotion of Affiliate Faculty

When you receive a promotion in your home unit, please inform the School of Oceanography and we will determine whether a promotion up the assistant-associate-full ranking is warranted. The process on your end is similar to that of being appointed: updated resume, statement of involvement within the School, and three new letters of recommendation. After a discussion and vote, the School processes paperwork through the Dean's office and up to the President. Promotions are only granted once a year and are due to the Dean's office at the end of each calendar year. If you are in need of a promotion so that your faculty rank matches that of your job title, please plan to step through the process in the fall beginning in September or October.

Faculty Meetings and Governance

All faculty at UW are held to the faculty code. The School does not have a further specialized code for our faculty (some other units in the College do), but we do have a School-wide code of conduct. Basically it says that we should all strive to be honest, open, and truthful, to treat each other with respect, and to work together to create a safe work environment where everyone feels comfortable in their search for knowledge.
Faculty meetings are the best way to stay informed about the goings-on at the School and the University-wide things that affect faculty. The School holds faculty meetings in person in MSB 123 at 10:30 a.m. on the first Wednesday of the month during the academic year (October through June). These meetings are open to the public and are organized according to Robert’s Rules of Order. In general, faculty (all types) are free to speak on issues presented at the meeting and to propose new business. Graduate students, staff, postdocs, and the general public are not invited to speak until recognized by the Director.

Meetings are currently held in “hybrid” mode where a Zoom link is provided for those who cannot attend in person. It would appear that this will continue for the foreseeable future, although that is not guaranteed. All affiliate faculty are encouraged to attend in person and participate in the social aspects of faculty meetings. Zoom attendance is also appreciated.

Occasionally there are off-date special faculty meetings and executive session meetings. These are usually associated with hiring or promotions. Affiliate faculty are welcome to attend these types of meetings but are not allowed to participate or speak unless acknowledged by the Director. People who do not hold voting faculty status are not allowed to attend executive session meetings. Technically affiliate faculty are also disallowed, but it is our tradition that they are welcome to attend. Often our affiliate faculty have knowledge pertinent to a promotion and are invited to participate and share; however, affiliate faculty are not allowed to vote.

The School of Oceanography is led by a Director who serves a five-year term. The Director is selected by the Dean from internal candidates after soliciting input from the School. The Director, in consultation with the voting faculty, is ultimately responsible for administrative affairs of the School, including personnel, budget, space allocation, and educational programs, and serves as the primary conduit between the faculty and the Dean. There are two Associate Directors, one for Education (who also acts as the Graduate Program Coordinator and liaison to the UW Graduate School) and one for Facilities and Ship Operations. There are four standing committees: the Faculty Council (voted by the faculty, only faculty on this committee), the Hiring Committee (a mix of faculty and graduate students, selected by the Director), the DEI Committee (a mix of members from across the School, self-nominated and occasionally filled by the Director when there are no volunteers), and the Academic Affairs Committee (faculty members only, selected by the Associate Director of Education, assisted by the Student Services Coordinator).

Administrative help within the School is lean and limited. There are several positions, of which four are most likely to be important to affiliate faculty. Kittie Tucker (Administrator) leads the group and is responsible for the fiscal health of the School and human resource issues. Lien Lai (Payroll Specialist) assists in payroll for graduate students and staff. Michelle Townsend (Student Services Coordinator) is your link to the graduate students and all the rules associated with graduate student mentoring, etc. Finally, Su Tipple (Administrative Assistant) is the 35+ year memory of the School and has answers to all your questions.

Ship operations are managed separately from the department. Robert Kamphaus is the Manager of Ship Operations. The School occasionally has resources available to use our ships or to cover post-cruise analyses. See our website or contact the Associate Director for Facilities and Ship Operations (Bob Morris) for details.

The School of Oceanography does not have an external advisory board.
Faculty Mentoring of Graduate Students

Graduate mentoring is one of the most rewarding, and occasionally frustrating, parts of being an affiliate faculty member. The School is here to help and can provide mentorship training and advice to affiliates, especially those mentoring graduate students for the first time. The School publishes a comprehensive guide to our graduate program, which can be found on our website. Here is a simplified breakdown of how our graduate program works.

Application and Admission:

Potential graduate students apply to the School and UW by December 1 each year. If you, as an affiliate faculty member, are recruiting a student, then you inform the Associate Director of Education (Evelyn Lessard) at this time. You will then be given access to the applicant pool and all their associated paperwork via a Google drive. This information is confidential so it is important that you do not share it outside of faculty within the School.

The School uses a holistic review process, which your option will help you learn. We do not accept GRE test scores as part of the application. Applicants are screened into one of four categories:

- Tier 1: Strong application in all aspects; should thrive in any program
- Tier 2: Strong application in most aspects; average in others; highly likely to succeed in our program
- Tier 3: A mix of strengths and weaknesses (perhaps due to personal issues or access to opportunities); upward trajectory; may require extra coursework or attention from advisor to succeed
- Tier 4: Not likely to succeed. Not academically prepared; not clear on their reasons for pursuing graduate studies

Then the options meet to discuss Zoom interviews, admissions, and internal applications for scholarships and awards. In-person visits are scheduled in early March after students are admitted to the program. The visit serves as an opportunity for us to encourage prospective students to select our program for their graduate studies. This is a change from past protocol, where admissions were made after the visit. The School, not the recruiting professors, pays for visits. You might, however, wind up footing the bill for drinks or after-hour costs that the School cannot reimburse.

Students who will be mentored by affiliate faculty are eligible for the same awards as other students. Please note that some awards are only available for citizens of the USA. Generally, our success at recruiting is about 50%. Therefore, if an option has five funded slots, then ten students are accepted and invited for in-person interviews.

Admitted Student Fiscal Obligations

Students admitted into our program are given a guarantee of six years of financial support as long as they are held in good standing. You, as their major advisor, are expected to provide that support except for when the student is acting as a TA or on their own fellowship.
Students are obligated to TA a minimum of two times. Some select to TA annually—the School encourages you to discuss teaching with prospective students in order to see the optimal balance between TA-ing and research. The School takes this commitment very seriously and will step up when a faculty member loses funding, but of course money is tight so we hope this occurs rarely. Faculty who make a habit of needing substantial fiscal assistance from the School can be barred from further recruitment.

Student Committees

Students enrolling to receive a Master’s degree are required to have a committee of three (or more) members of the graduate faculty, one of whom needs to be “out of option”. All may be members of the School, and in fact the majority of members must be from within the School. Additional members are acceptable, but it is unwise to make a committee too large because scheduling the twice-annual meetings becomes difficult.

Ph.D. committees can be between four and seven members strong, must conform to the M.S. rules (e.g., ‘out of option’ person), and must contain a GSR (Graduate School Representative) who acts to ensure that UW policies and procedures are followed.

Committees meet twice a year (late spring, late fall) or more, and are to advise the student and assess student progress. These meetings are intended to be supportive, collaborative, and forward-thinking. They are assessments but are not exams.

After the semi-annual committee meetings, the options get together to discuss how things are going. Option meetings are an important part of our checks-and-balances and they provide an opportunity for mentors to ask for help and receive advice.

Student Milestones and Progress

Generally, we do not accept students only for an M.S. degree, instead preferring to accept students who wish to proceed to a Ph.D. Therefore, our milestones are as follows (roughly):

- 1st year: students get settled into classes and research.
- 2nd year: students finish classes, give short seminars on their research at a department-wide half-day event in late fall, and begin writing their first paper.
- 3rd year: students defend a non-thesis M.S. degree and submit their first paper for peer review. A non-thesis degree means that UW does not collect and publish a thesis, but our School does expect a peer-reviewed publication to (eventually) come from this work.
- 4th year: students are planning (and conducting) their Ph.D. research, writing a thesis proposal, and defending that thesis proposal at a doctoral exam.
- 5th year: students are finishing their research and writing papers, still taking an occasional course of interest but no regular class-based instruction.
- 6th year: students are finishing up. We hope students finish in five years, but students commonly enter their sixth year. A seventh year is very uncommon.

The School is collegial in nature and the M.S. defense, doctoral exam, and Ph.D. thesis defense are usually times for celebration. If your student is struggling and you feel that their passing the exams or defense might be in jeopardy, it is extremely important that you
communicate this with the full committee and with the leadership of the School as early as possible so that mitigation steps can be employed. The School would prefer a student to understand their situation and move on voluntarily rather than being involuntarily excused from the School at a critical step. It is your responsibility to be respectful of this and to keep open channels of communication between the student, the committee, and the School at all times.

Help with Writing

Students often struggle to write their first peer-reviewed research articles. As advisors we can also struggle to mentor correctly when students are writing. The School offers small group writing assistance for graduate students. When your student is beginning to write their first paper, we suggest that you reach out and encourage them to enroll in our writing course. This will save you both time and aggravation.

Postdocs

Postdoctoral Associates unionized a few years ago in 2019 and that changed some aspects of their place within the School. For example, postdocs are no longer considered part of the faculty, and there are severe restrictions on their ability to teach for the University. These changes can make managing a postdoc position more complicated and you are encouraged to read the most current postdoc labor contract (UAW Postdoctoral Scholars Local 4121). Further complicating things is the fact that the School of Oceanography has two types of postdocs—those who are technically “in the School” and those who are not. The distinction comes down to which unit/entity is paying the salary. For Affiliate Faculty, the most common arrangement for your postdocs is that your home unit (PMEL, APL, CICOES, etc.) is paying them and the School is their sponsor. In these cases your postdocs are the responsibility of your home unit and they would not necessarily get Oceanography-specific things such as an office in one of our buildings or keys to our buildings. All this is negotiated at the time of the postdoctoral hire.

If you wish to hire a postdoc and they are to be associated with the School (either directly through payroll or indirectly through your unit), the School’s Director needs to approve the hire. This is usually a routine thing—just send an email along with whatever materials you have (CV, letters, a paper or two) and the School will approve your hire.

Please be aware that the DEI committee is looking at best practices for hiring staff and postdocs. Changes might be coming in how we do this. Stay tuned.

Two other things to be aware of with postdoctoral associates are that there are occasions where they may be eligible for overtime if their annual salary falls below a state-imposed minimum, and that postdocs are required to have a mentoring plan. The School does not assist with creating or implementing mentoring plans, but the College does. More information on mentoring plans can be found on the College website.
Mentorship Training

UW and our School are trying to get better at providing mentorship training to faculty. This coming year (2022-2023) we will be partnering with TrueColours.be for an intensive 4-day mentoring workshop. There are limited spaces available, but if you are interested in the training please email Rick. After this we hope to bring some mentoring tools in-house and make them available to all. The School is lucky to have a small endowment for faculty training, so if you find a training that you wish to take or that we might make broadly available, please contact the School.

Annual Events, Seminars, etc.

One way to feel at home within the School of Oceanography is to participate in our regularly scheduled events. Here is an overview of our annual calendar:

- **Weekly**: option-specific seminars, departmental seminar
- **Monthly**: faculty meeting (with pastries!), First Friday Kegger
- **October**: Convocation celebration (awards ceremony) and pizza party
- **November**: 2nd year grad and postdoc Lightning Talk ½ day Symposium
- **December**: annual holiday party
- **March**: graduate student recruitment, 2 days of events
- **June**: Faculty BBQ, Graduation celebration

How to Get Help

When you need help the first stop ought be the resources portion of our website where you might find answers to most common questions. Should this be inadequate, please contact Su Tipple and she can direct your questions to the appropriate person.