PRESS RELEASE **For Immediate Release**
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Ocean Observatories Initiative Receives Award

National Science Foundation and Consortium for Ocean Leadership Sign Cooperative Agreement to Manage Ocean Project

(Washington, D.C.) – The National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Consortium for Ocean Leadership have signed a Cooperative Agreement that supports the construction and initial operation of the Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI).

The OOI is a transformative infrastructure project that will provide an expandable and adaptable network for observing complex ocean processes such as climate variability, ocean circulation, and ocean acidification across a range of spatial scales at several coastal, open-ocean, and seafloor locations. Continuous data flow from hundreds of sensors will be integrated by a sophisticated computing network and will be openly available to scientists, policy makers, students, and the public. The OOI is expected to transform ocean science research and education by providing unprecedented power and bandwidth for an interactive connection to the ocean through diverse sets of sensors, and near real-time access to data.

"This award represents the fulfillment of over a decade of planning and hard work by hundreds of ocean scientists, and also reflects the commitment of the National Science Foundation to new approaches for documenting ocean processes. Those of us within the OOI project team are excited to play a role in implementing this unique suite of observing assets – knowing that we're building an infrastructure that will transform ocean sciences," said Ocean Leadership Vice President and OOI Program Director Tim Cowles.

The five-year construction phase will begin in September, with nearly $106 million of first-year funds coming from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and $5.91 million in NSF construction funds. Requests in FY 2010 and beyond, totaling $274.58 million for construction, will enable the acquisition of OOI instruments and sensors, production of key infrastructure elements such as the coastal and open ocean moorings, and the deployment of these assets.

The first year of funding under the Cooperative Agreement will support a wide range of construction efforts, including production engineering and prototyping of key coastal and open-ocean components (moorings, buoys, sensors), award of the primary seafloor cable contract, completion of a shore station for power and data, and software development for sensor interfaces to the network. Subsequent years of funding will support the completion of coastal, deep-ocean, and seafloor systems, with initial data flow scheduled for early 2013 and final commissioning of the full system in 2015.

The OOI is managed and coordinated by the OOI Project Office at the Consortium for Ocean Leadership in Washington, D.C., with three major

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1201 New York Avenue, NW • 4th Floor • Washington, DC 20005
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Implementing Organizations responsible for the construction of the components of the full network. Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and its partners, Oregon State University and Scripps Institution of Oceanography, are responsible for the Coastal and Global moorings and their autonomous vehicles. University of Washington is responsible for cabled seafloor systems and moorings on the Juan de Fuca tectonic plate, and the Cyberinfrastructure component is being implemented by the University of California at San Diego. In 2010 the program will add an Education and Public Engagement team that will take advantage of the cutting edge technology and combined science and education vision of the OOI.

"The oceans drive an incredible range of natural phenomena, including our climate, and directly impact society in myriad ways," said Arden L. Bement, Jr., Director of NSF. "New approaches are crucial to our understanding of changes now happening in the world's oceans. OOI will install the latest technologies where they can best serve scientists, policymakers and the public."

“The OOI project presents an unprecedented opportunity and whole new approach to advance our understanding of how the ocean works and interacts with the atmosphere and solid earth. This project will allow scientists to answer complex questions only dreamed of a few years ago concerning important problems associated with the future health of this planet such as the oceans role in climate change. It is very exciting to be part of this huge step forward in the ocean sciences,” said Bob Gagosian, President and CEO of the Consortium for Ocean Leadership.

As OOI construction begins, a series of science community workshops will introduce ocean scientists and educators to the full scope of the OOI construction design, its core capabilities, the completion schedule, timing of data stream availability and data access, procedures for adding sensors and conducting experiments, and use of the OOI as a framework for advancing ocean research and education. Each workshop will provide example use case scenarios and community user requirements, along with details of the proposal submission process with examples and guidelines. These workshops will be led by the OOI Project Team, including project scientists, engineers, and cyberinfrastructure architects, and including NSF representatives. At least two workshops will be held in the first year of construction and located to facilitate maximum attendance. The first workshop will be held Nov. 11-12, 2009 in Baltimore, MD. The second workshop will be held in spring 2010 (date and location TBD).

The OOI Network will provide advanced ocean observing technology and infrastructure to the ocean science and education communities. The data streams produced by the OOI network will be open and available to anyone with internet connectivity. Proposals submitted to NSF for research funding involving OOI data and/or requesting direct interaction with the infrastructure will follow a process involving varying levels of requirements and review. Assistance in proposal planning and scheduling will be provided through involvement of the OOI personnel, the NSF, the University-National Oceanographic Laboratory System (UNOLS), and the U.S. Navy. Information about the OOI proposal process will be available on the OOI web site (ooi.oceanleadership.org) and will also be discussed at upcoming OOI Community Workshops.

About the Consortium for Ocean Leadership

The Consortium for Ocean Leadership is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization that represents 94 of the leading public and private ocean research and education institutions, aquaria and industry with the mission to advance research, education and sound ocean policy. The organization also manages ocean research and education programs in areas of scientific ocean drilling, ocean observing, ocean exploration, and ocean partnerships.

For more information or interviews, contact:
Kristin Mellon
Consortium for Ocean Leadership
202-787-1644
gschmidt@oceanleadership.org

Cheryl Dybas
National Science Foundation
703-292-7734
cdybas@nsf.gov