

## **DRAFT Discussion Document: Narrative and Opportunities for Strategic Roadmap Updates July, 2020**

**Introduction:** The Center for Coastal Studies staff and Board of Directors have engaged in a number of strategic assessments /retreats on various aspects of CCS over the last few years. In addition, one detailed assessment of CCS's Education Mission was undertaken by an Ad Hoc Education Committee. This discussion document begins to integrate some of the ideas, innovations and options identified in those previous efforts to articulate a vision for guiding CCS's activities and direction in the coming years. Ultimately, a final version with wide consensus will provide a narrative from which specific goals, timetables, actions and responsible parties can be identified in a revised Strategic Plan.

The SP is organized around four Strategic Imperatives each having a number of Execution Priority actions the majority of which have been achieved or are inherently ongoing. The following topics fit nicely into that framework and or in some cases cross-cut two or more.

It should be noted that in addition to its core scientific research expertise and incredibly talented and dedicated staff, the Center for Coastal Studies has succeeded in recent years because its flexibility and dynamic nature enables it to evolve and adapt to challenges and opportunities with a nimbleness and efficiency that many organizations do not have. In today's world, that is an increasingly important feature and needs to be maintained and appreciated. Given that, the future Strategic Plans should be evaluated more frequently.

**I. Science / Education / Policy Paradigm:** The CCS Articles of Organization from 1977 identified three major areas of activity for CCS: scientific research, education and policy dialogues. In recent years, we have occasionally struggled to define and focus the education component of that three part mandate.

Although we have not analyzed our policy component as closely, it also has a wide range of activities that should be re-visited and perhaps refocused. We often state that our mission is to "use our scientific knowledge to inform public policy decision" but like education, that can be quite vague.

Furthermore, in both cases, we need to determine and hone in on our priority audiences with more consistent messaging using a wider array of communication technologies.

**Option:** CCS should frame and view our "education" and "policy" goals, mission and activities as fully integrated and interfacing very closely; and better described together as "outreach" so when we are making the results and knowledge gained from our scientific research available to all sectors (government agencies, elected officials, business leaders, educators and students and the general public) we are more pro-actively and deliberately "reaching out" to make those audiences better stewards of coastal environments and ocean ecosystems. Stated another way, we are working to increase "ocean literacy" among key decision and policy makers in order to promote more ambitious actions to protect and conserve ocean and coastal resources.

The more formal education mission of CCS would then prioritize its focus on graduate students and post-docs and a more rigorous internship program all conducted closely with our scientists and drawing on our highly respected strength as a scientific research organization. These students will soon be the next generation of decision-makers and leaders so expanding their ocean literacy and scientific knowledge will make them more effective ocean stewards, managers and policy makers. Establishing an institutional internship program remains one of the unfinished priority actions of the Strategic Roadmap.

We should consider offering only paid internships and or internships with housing so that we level the financial playing field for lower income / racial minority students who often do not have the "luxury" of a summer internship on Cape Cod without pay and housing. This could include refocusing the Hiebert Fellowship as a paid internship or two that is targeted for low-income and / or racial minority populations. Women recipients could still be a criterion but not the sole consideration.

The days of traditional classroom instruction are rapidly evolving driven by technological advances and most recently by the covid-19 situation. CCS has begun and should continue to utilize its social media and internet capabilities to adapt to this trend. Our increased "outreach" via social media during the covid period has already demonstrated a strength at CCS which when coupled with our broadcast technology in Larkin Hall should set a new direction and targets for outreach programs. These trends relate and respond to Executive Priorities in the current SP Roadmap under goal of Increase Public Impact.

**II. The climate crisis on our doorstep.** Threats to the health of ocean ecosystems are well known and numerous including overfishing, water pollution and habitat destruction. Now the overarching existential threat to ocean life is the rapidly warming climate bringing the multiple impacts of ocean acidification, warming waters, shifting habitats, rising seas, more intense storms and surges and more yet to be understood stresses.

CCS staff have begun to view their work more often through a climate change "lens" and found that indeed much of our ongoing investigations reveal climate change related impacts. An informal assessment and cataloguing of those activities was completed in 2018. We now have organized a series of monthly meetings to help better understand how and what CCS should be doing with regard to the scientific research and public outreach about climate change and oceans.

Furthermore, in 2015, upon my return from participating in the Paris Climate Conference, CCS helped launch a wider networking initiative called the Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative for which CCS is still acknowledged as a key participant and leader.

The utter urgency for actions to mitigate climate change in virtually every sector of society is stated unequivocally by two recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports that cutting CO2 emissions by 50% by 2030 is imperative if the world is to avoid some of

the most catastrophic impacts from climate warming. Many of those impacts will be most evident on ocean ecosystems and coastal communities.

**Option:** CCS should consider a much more active role in the climate change issue including adopting climate / ocean investigations as a priority theme for our research and scientific collaborations. Climate change / ocean impacts should be a major theme for our outreach messaging; and recruiting staff and researchers who will help focus our future research projects accordingly. CCS has lots of expertise and knowledge to contribute to addressing this existential threat with impacts that are most devastating to oceans.

**III. Strengthen Collaboration and Partnerships:** A strategic imperative of the Strategic Roadmap is to strengthen collaborations and partnerships. Our 2018 Coastwatch Annual Report features an impressive number and breadth of partners that CCS staff have developed in recent years. The execution priorities for this imperative are twofold: optimize the cooperative agreement with UMass Boston and identify other collaborators.

We have made significant strides with **UMass Boston** with joint and reciprocal appointments of staff at both institutions and the creation of the CAPE Lab on campus. However, original expectations of sustained financial benefits from the collaborations have not materialize.

It is time as we revisit our strategic plan to examine and perhaps focus attention on the more productive, local partnerships going forward. Coincidentally, several of our current major partners are engaged in similar strategic planning exercises that I believe will provide new and expanded and exciting opportunities for CCS future growth.

**Cape Cod National Seashore** has an initiative called the **Atlantic Research and Learning Center** that has languished at the Highland Center for several years due to budget and personnel reductions. CCS has already stepped up to fill the void with our Water Quality Lab now processing all the CCNS fresh water samples and some of the interpretative field walks and talks being performed by CCS staff. Just this month, CCS co-sponsored and helped conduct a two day virtual “retreat” to reinvest the ARLC. The key to this new vision is having a dependable supply of housing for researchers and graduate students and other provisions that will be articulated in a forth coming report. However, the consensus of this group of NPS staff from other national parks and local organizations and universities seemed clearly to evolve a program that looks very much like CCS. Either way, strengthening our partnership on all levels with the organization that manages 40,000 acres of surrounding protected lands and 50 miles of coastline is a nature strategic goal foCCS

**Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary:** Similar to a National Park on the landslide, the National Sanctuary may provide a wonderful opportunity for CCS to enhance its existing partnership via the creation of a new Sanctuary Visitor’s Center planned for Provincetown. CCS is an active partner in the development of this concept with the Town of Provincetown and the Sanctuary officials at Stellwagen and in DC. This potential

opportunity is not yet a done deal but if it happens, it will likely fall within our 3-5 years Strategic Roadmap timeframe.

**Pleasant Bay Partners:** An immediate emerging and active partnership with three Pleasant Bay oriented non-profits present a wonderful opportunity for strengthening our collaborations. With generous financial support from the **Friends of Pleasant Bay (FOPB)**, CCS scientists have completed a very impressive, multidisciplinary ecosystem assessment of the entire Pleasant Bay. It has been peer reviewed and published in a special issue of the well regarded journal *Northeast Naturalist*.

Meanwhile, the **Pleasant Bay Community Boating (PBCB)** now has an added emphasis on marine education and environmental stewardship – a natural alignment with CCS and our joint programming is already growing.

And most recently, a record breaking fundraising effort has resulted in the last privately owned island in Pleasant Bay to now be owned by a newly formed non-profit called **Sipson Island Trust (SIT)** – the vision of a field station and field research programs is shared by the Trust and CCS and another natural opportunity and partnership to be nurtured.

**Option:** CCS should consider growing the number of its university based partnerships including UMB but add others with potentially more financial resources (pre-covid) some of which may be land-locked and whose research and classes could be enhanced with a marine field station. This would dovetail with both strengthening our graduate level education efforts and also assist potentially with addressing our lack of racial diversity.

At the same time, we should prioritize our efforts with partners who share our geography namely CCNS, SBNMS and our Pleasant Bay Partners.

**Next Steps:** I will work with Sr. Staff to incorporate any and all of the options that are endorsed by the Board of Directors and Sr. Staff into a draft revised Strategic Roadmap with the appropriate specific steps, timetable and metrics and assigned responsibilities for implementation. I would ask the Executive Committee and Finance Committee to assess as best as possible at this time, the cost / benefits of each new strategic goals and action; and work with the Development Committee to assess which of these goal could be advantageous for our development goals. With the ever present covid caveat, our goal would be to have all of this planning completed by October and available to be incorporated where appropriate in the 2021 CCS work plan and budget.