

VIMS faculty members honored with Plumeri Awards

By Staff

(April, 2013) VIMS Professors of Marine Science John Graves and Robert (J.J.) Orth have been selected as recipients of 2013 Plumeri Awards for Faculty Excellence at the College of William & Mary.

Each year, the award recognizes 20 faculty members for their exemplary achievements in teaching, research, and service. Now in its fifth year, 100 faculty members from William & Mary and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science have received the award since its inaugural year in 2009.

The award—established with a generous gift from Joseph J. Plumeri II '66, D.P.S. '11—bestows \$10,000 to each of the recipients, which they can use for research, summer salaries, or other stipends associated with scholarly endeavors, with the ultimate intention of enhancing faculty interaction with students.

“The very nature of a William & Mary education means that these awards have directly and indirectly touched our students,” says W&M Provost Michael R. Halleran. “Our students are frequently involved in research and projects undertaken with Plumeri Award support, and these awards also deepen student learning through the faculty’s enhanced scholarship.”

“I have dedicated most of my life to doing my small part in helping out the environment, especially Chesapeake Bay,” says Orth. “Receiving this recognition is a true honor and it is heartwarming to know my efforts of almost 40 years have a special meaning to the College.”

Orth and Graves are joined by 18 faculty members from William & Mary also receiving the prestigious award. The winners range from a lawyer, to a political scientist, to a theater professor. While Orth specializes in restoration science, especially related to seagrass communities, Graves’ research interests are broadly focused on the processes of molecular evolution in the marine environment.

“The Plumeri Awards have provided critical resources to help bridge the gap between our faculty’s professional goals and the university’s financial constraints,” says Halleran. “Mr. Plumeri’s generosity, leadership, and passion for excellence continue to make a significant difference for William & Mary’s faculty and students.”

The Plumeri Awards will continue to be granted annually to 20 faculty members at the College and Institute until 2019.



Chancellor Professor John Graves



Professor Robert Orth

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Virginia Institute of Marine Science
School of Marine Science
College of William and Mary
Gloucester Point, VA 23062
(804) 684-7000

Plumeri Award Citations

John E. Graves, Chancellor Professor of Marine Science

Professor Graves both engages and inspires the undergraduate and graduate students he teaches and mentors and the faculty he works with as chair of the Department of Fisheries Science at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. His students are often on the high seas satellite tagging and taking tissue samples from billfish, or using cutting-edge techniques of molecular genetics to identify fish stocks or various species in market products, or interpreting the data from their studies at an international regulatory meeting regarding the impact of global fisheries. Graves has served as a chairman of the U.S. Advisory Committee to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas since the mid-1990s. He has used these opportunities to expose his students to the intense arena of international fisheries management. His students have excelled in research, published jointly with him in peer reviewed journals and landed prestigious internships on Capitol Hill. His passion for research works across boundaries with faculty from other disciplines. He earned a doctorate in marine biology from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego.

Robert J. Orth, Professor of Marine Science

At the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) since 1974, Professor Orth has earned a reputation as a leader in restoration science, especially as related to seagrass communities. His research is mainly focused on Chesapeake Bay, but he is involved in restoration projects around the world. One of the most widely published faculty members at VIMS, Orth has restoration innovations and successes that serve as models for scientists around the world. Annual results from a seagrass mapping program he developed are used by the federal government, as well as the states of Virginia and Maryland, to help evaluate the success of Chesapeake Bay cleanup efforts. Orth has served on several boards and commissions, including treasurer, president and past president of the International Estuarine Research Federation. He also delivers seminars and talks in the community about the importance and state of seagrass in the Bay. At VIMS, he previously served as chairman of the Department of Biological Sciences and assistant director of the Division of Biological and Fisheries Sciences. A dedicated mentor and adviser, Orth has been particularly successful in engaging students in his state and federal advisory activities. He holds a doctorate in zoology from the University of Maryland, College Park.