

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UC Santa Barbara, Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary Celebrate Opening of Ocean Science Education Building

Government officials joined leaders of UC Santa Barbara and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Tuesday morning for a kelp ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Ocean Science Education Building on the UCSB campus. The 15,000-square-foot facility is the result of a partnership between the university and NOAA.

"Our new building will serve as the center for collaborative research and for education by our outstanding faculty and the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS) and affiliated researchers," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang.

A collaborative effort between UCSB's Marine Science Institute and NOAA's CINMS, half of the building houses new sanctuary headquarters, where administrators and staff of the nearby marine sanctuary and university researchers specializing in marine ecology and environmental management can interact more closely.

"The Channel Islands National Marine sanctuary is one of our nation's greatest treasures and the new Ocean Science Education Building is really going to help us advance our mission," said Holly Banford, deputy assistant administrator for the NOAA National Ocean Service. "It's going to bring the academic community together with the federal sector and advance our research, our science, and our education."

The other half of the building, still under construction, will be the site of a state-of-the-art Outreach Center for Teaching Ocean Science (OCTOS), a facility that aims to do marine research, teach students of all ages who are interested in marine science, as well as train and assist science teachers with their subjects. On the ground floor, plans include a wet lab, with tanks and artificial habitats for sea life observation, and an interactive virtual dive display that will give visitors a taste of underwater research. On the second floor an immersive theater will get viewers up close to underwater exploration, or allow them to converse with UCSB researchers in real time.

The new educational center will most likely be a stop for students attending UCSB's Tech Trek, a summer camp aimed specifically at eighth-grade girls who have a particular interest in science and math. "It's been great," commented Tech Trek participant Quincey Smithers, who has been "meeting new people and learning amazing things."

For all the excitement around the new building, the idea for which was conceived in 2002, and broke ground in 2010, its purpose is a sobering one.

"We have a lot of challenges ahead of us," said Rep. Lois Capps, who was among the project's supporters. Overfishing, climate change, and ocean acidification are among the hurdles faced by today's ocean conservationists. "It is local initiatives like this one that are going to fill that gap, when you partner together as is demonstrated by this building and by this program, you point the way for other collaborative investments."

NOAA invested \$8.1 million in a grant to the university toward the project's design, development, permits, and construction. UCSB contributed the land, managed the construction project, and is the owner of the building. The sanctuary holds a long-term lease and pays for building operation and maintenance costs.

UCSB is leading an ongoing \$10 million capital campaign for designing and completing educational exhibits at OCTOS, with assistance from the Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

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† Top image: From left, UC Santa Barbara Chancellor Henry T. Yang; Holly Banford, deputy assistant administrator for the National Ocean Service; Chris Mobley, superintendent of Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary; Michael Witherell, vice chancellor for research at UCSB; and Congresswoman Lois Capps cut a kelp ribbon during the opening ceremony.

Credit: George Foulsham

†† Bottom image: Gay Larsen, director of development for ecological and environmental sciences at UCSB, leads a tour of the future home of OCTOS, the Outreach Center for Teaching Ocean Science.

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