



College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences  
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April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of Oregon's Oceangoing Research Vessel Program (ORVP), the renewal of which is currently under consideration as part of the Higher Education Coordinating Committee support bill **HB 5025**. I am an Assistant Professor at Oregon State University, studying Pacific Northwest climate processes including changes in hydrology and river discharge, glacial retreat, ocean heat and oxygenation, and wave energy. My research group studies periods of natural variability in the geologically recent past (~10,000 years) to better understand connections and feedbacks in the climate system of relevance to predicting future changes.

The Oregon State ORVP has been critical to this research, allowing us regular access to our regional ocean for sample collection. This program has also been invaluable to student education and professional development efforts, providing field and follow-on laboratory research experiences for dozens of students ranging from high school seniors to graduate students. Many of these students have come from underrepresented communities in environmental sciences, and the ORVP has directly contributed to their recruitment and retention on the STEM career path – our highschoolers have gone on to related undergraduate majors, our undergraduates have gone on to graduate school (including a number of excellent students recruited to OSU/UO), and our graduate students and early career researchers/post-docs are thriving in careers at institutions including Oregon State University, University of Oregon, US Geological Survey, Columbia Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, and University of California Santa Cruz. While we note many supported scholars and students remain in the state as their careers progress (I myself was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, holding degrees from University of Washington and Oregon State University), external recruitment of our graduates to prestigious institutions in turn strengthens connections between these institutions and Oregon State.

Graduate students supported by the ORVP program in its last cycle who have not yet completed their degrees continue to work on societally relevant research on our local climate systems with the materials collected during the ship time – at present the OSU Paleoclimate group has four graduate students using ORVP materials as critical components of their PhD studies. The pilot sample collection supported by the program also brings additional federal money back to the state: in the past year alone we were awarded an ~\$900k NSF research grant to study climate impacts on the paleohydrology of the Columbia River (NSF Award #2149564) as well as an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship (Ms. Katherine Stelling, former ORVP Research Experience for Undergraduate scholar and current OSU student) funding 3 full years of graduate stipend and tuition to study interactions between warming ocean waters and glacial retreat. Both of these large awards were funded directly due to the initial investment of state ship time to collect the samples required to conduct the research.



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I strongly encourage continued investment in the ORVP program, and further hope the support of work aboard the new Oregon State University Regional Class Research Vessel R/V Taani will be considered. This larger platform allows us to be more efficient in both our educational and research missions, facilitating inclusion of larger numbers of students and early career researchers, preparing them for careers utilizing the larger vessels of the US Academic Research Fleet. Furthermore the sample collection facilitated by this larger platform is *critical* for paleoenvironmental science, which requires heavy handling systems to recover core samples of the seafloor.

Thank you for your consideration and efforts to provide access to our regional ocean as we collectively work to understand environmental issues of relevance to our state and prepare the next generation to tackle the challenges of our future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Maureen Walczak'.

Dr. Maureen Walczak (Assistant Professor)

College of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences

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