**COMMENTS REGARDING THE FISHERIES BIOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT (MR-250) COURSE OUTLINE**

Over the past several years, there have been multiple discussions regarding the need to revise the content of some of the courses offered in the marine science program. In a meeting held with Frankie Harriss and Brian Lynch a few weeks back, it was agreed that we should move forward and amend changes to the program.

One of the modifications is to drop the Ichthyology course (4 credits) and transfer part of the content of this course to the Fisheries Biology and Management course. The major reason why Ichthyology would be abandoned is because in major colleges and universities this is a specialized course where students need to have a number of pre-requisites to register. These pre-requisites include Biology I and II and Vertebrate biology to name a few. In other words, some of the course content does not correspond to a AS degree level. Knowing that the fish (finfish) landings account for over 90% of the world fisheries in volume, some basic biological knowledge of fish remains key information for our marine science students. Consequently, by adding a laboratory component to the Fisheries Biology and Management course, it would be possible to extend the material presently covered in this course to include a component which would cover more extensively the biology of finfish notably the anatomical features, the taxonomic characteristics, and the use of dichotomic keys. These components are key elements when identifying fished species whether at a fish market or when studying taxonomic groups in world or regional landings.

Furthermore, the laboratory component of the Fisheries Biology and Management course could also permit to bridge some of the covered content, mainly the sampling strategies, with the “observers on board” program. Observers on board are fisheries technician trained by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) personnel and mandated to gather key fisheries statistical data on board fishing vessels (mainly the longliners and seiners). This is a rapidly expanding profession since the percentage of fishing vessels to be monitored by observers will drastically augment in the coming years within the waters covered by SPC and the Fisheries Forum Agency (FFA). In some parts of the world, certain lucrative fisheries have 100% cover i.e. all fishing vessels are obliged to carry on board a fisheries observer. In the tuna fisheries of the Tropical Pacific, we are not yet at this stage but it can be expect that the percentage of observers of board will rise rapidly in the coming years. In fact, SPC has already hired an observer on board trainer and coordinator for its Pohnpei headquarters. This certainly represents a potential working opportunity for our graduating students.

Finally, with a laboratory component, the students will have more time to explore the various population dynamics computer programs available to solve various fisheries problems that they are assigned to. In the past, students have had to work on a number of population dynamic problems but they did not have much guidance because of the limited time available from the lecture slot.

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September 20, 2011