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### CSURF- Travel Award Reflection

During the weekend of March 8<sup>th</sup> I was able, along with my lab mates and advisor, to attend the Tidewater Chapter 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society. This meeting was located in Beaufort, NC and involved a poster social, oral presentations, a continuing education course and various times to socialize with professors, professionals and other students. CSURF's travel award allowed me to attend the conference and minimize the monetary stresses placed on the fisheries lab here at UNCW.

In September I began working on my research on southern flounder reproductive physiology. At the time of the conference I had about half of my results back and was able to compile a poster. My knowledge from my fisheries class as well as information about general marine science from my work helped me to prepare for the conference. I also was able to use my statistical knowledge during the continuing education course, which focused heavily on the use of statistical models. During my presentation time I was able to utilize my abilities to discuss science issues with professionals in the field and was confident when answering questions about my project.

While at the conference I was able to present my poster. Before going to the conference I had discussed how many things with Steve Midway, who is assisting me with the project. He told me how many things would work with the poster social and what to expect. Overall, the social went very well and for the most part was what I expected. Many people asked me very important questions about my work. It allowed me to gain an outside perspective of my work and see things that I need to spend time fixing. Also, a few people were able to give me suggestions on how to make my work easier to understand. By presenting my poster I gained self-confidence and realized that there are many aspects to the fisheries discipline.

Another important experience I had at the conference was a mentor lunch on the second day. During this lunch undergraduate and graduate students were able to sit down and discuss the field of fisheries with professionals and educators. I was able to gain insight into both the students and the adults lives. It allowed me to understand the many steps that will help me to excel during and after college.

Before the conference I had assumed that fisheries was a relatively concise field and that I would be at least mostly familiar with all the research. However, after even just a short amount of time at the conference I began to realize that the fisheries field is extremely broad and encompasses many topics. Some of the research I was able to understand but a good portion of it was completely foreign to me and it took me a little while to start to comprehend the overall goals of the research.

While at the conference I learned that a lot of fisheries work interests me and I could see myself working in this field after graduating from UNCW. Although, I also realized that much of the work involves work with statistics and math. This, does not interest me very much and makes me slightly doubt if I will want to do extremely in-depth statistical types of studies.

Overall, the applied learning I was able to gain helped me put my skills and knowledge into place in a real world situation. I especially enjoyed learning about other peoples work directly from them and not just being lectured or reading a chapter in a textbook. However, the conference was fairly short and a lot of information was being presented in a short amount of time. This made it hard for me to absorb everything I was learning about. Although it made it a little harder to fully grasp all the research that is being conducted in fisheries in the our area I still felt that the experience was extremely beneficial and allowed me to learn many things about myself and my project, as well as many other issues in fisheries today.