

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Florida Sea Grant College Program

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As part of the strategic planning process in 2008, Florida Sea Grant directors, extension specialists and marine extension agents participated in the development of a SWOT analysis of the program. This information will be used in the upcoming years to strengthen the program by taking strategic actions to address identified program opportunities and also to adjust the program operations in order to turn weaknesses and threats into opportunities and then ultimately strengths.

Strengths

1. Florida Sea Grant (FSG) is a science-based network embedded in the state's Land Grant University, allowing its extension and communication programs to function in an effective, integrated and recognized manner.
2. FSG encompasses research, extension and education grounded in objective science and has a program structure that allows delivery of information to end users.
3. A large and diverse faculty at the 16 participating institutions in Florida collectively has a tremendous breadth of expertise to address nearly all aspects of coastal and marine issues.
4. There is a state-wide network of highly competent marine extension agents who are actively engaged with their constituents in day to day activities and through formal advisory councils.
5. FSG extension specialists are national and international leaders in seafood technology, coastal and marine economics, fisheries ecology, coastal policy and law, and remote sensing / waterway management.
6. The Directors, specialists and agents actively participate as members of councils and advisory panels such as the Florida Oceans and Coastal Council, the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council and the Florida Ocean Alliance, and these groups have common goals regarding sustainable coastal economies and natural resources.
7. FSG has the ability to call upon regional expertise due to the connective nature of the National Sea Grant Program throughout the United States.
8. FSG has the ability to address needs of constitu

2. State budget cuts have eroded an already meager operating budget in the last year and further cuts are anticipated.
3. The program is lacking extension faculty leadership in certain critical areas including coastal water quality and ecosystems, coastal hazards and climate change effects.
4. There are no marine extension agents in Martin, Palm Beach or Broward Counties, some of the most heavily populated coastal regions of Florida. Further, a total of just 18 agents to cover over 1,350 miles of coastline where about 18 million people live falls far short of any reasonable goal for providing sufficient extension and outreach.
5. In certain program areas there are not effective linkages between research and extension, either due to process or lack of necessary personnel.
6. The program traditionally has awarded relatively small research grants and when coupled with a substantial matching requirement, federal IDC and an expressed desire to have students supported on the grants, this has severely limited the scope of any particular research project.
7. FSG has not formalized working relationships with governmental agencies or marine interest organizations through memorandums of understanding, in spite of its member participation in some groups.
8. The number of program goal areas and local demands far exceeds the program's ability to deliver.
9. Very little work is done with the marine commercial sector relative to a preponderance of work in K-12 marine education, and area addressed by many other programs.
10. There is no accommodation for non-English speaking residents of Florida, which comprise over 18% of the population, particularly in south Florida.
11. There is no national strategic plan or framework for communication programs, and thus no clearly identified opportunities to partn Tw5.5h deork 1Thermmat4(.7(ea7 Tw()5.5rking [wissu3.6 sectocert

2. As such, the program has an important opportunity to ensure that its research, education, extension and outreach programs remain relevant to stakeholders so that we continue to meet their needs and have their support.
3. Formation and effective use of a programmatic Advisory Council can help the program remain relevant, garner new resources, enhance program visibility, and form partnerships – collectively to better meet the goals and objectives identified in the strategic plan.
4. There is an opportunity to ‘retool’ the proposal selection process so that research is clearly linked with strategically identified program outcomes and with the extension, outreach and/or educational activities required to take research results to end users.
5. Given that it is at the discretion of the program leadership to determine how to target research RFPs, there are opportunities to provide more substantive funding to a reduced number of research projects and sustain funding in critical program areas for longer than one grants cycle.
6. Regional research and extension projects may provide opportunities to more effectively use limited resources to address problems that extend beyond the Florida coast, and if federal budget conditions improve, could result in new extension agent positions and research funding sources.
7. Development of a National SG Strategic Plan and associated Implementation Plan may create a synergy that helps the national program leaders convince NOAA, OMB, Congress and the Administration that a funding increase is warranted.
8. In a number of areas where FSG has been a leader in research, extension/outreach and/or education, there are opportunities for public-private partnerships and perhaps endowments to support program initiatives.
9. The Florida Oceans and Coastal Council, Florida Oceans Alliance and recently formed Governor’s Climate Task Force bring additional voices and support for increased funding of coastal and marine research, extension and education to Tallahassee.
10. FSG has a track record of linking coastal conservation and sustainability with economic viability. This is an increasingly important link to highlight during times of economic recession.
11. Because the program is non-regulatory, it is well positioned to be an honest broker in helping coastal communities to resolve conflicts.
12. FSG has an opportunity to take leadership in a regional Caribbean strategy for marine research, education, extension and outreach.
13. Through a carefully considered strategic program management process we will identify opportunities to better interact with industry groups, garner additional resources for the program, and enhance synergy within the program, including among the staff in GV.

Threats

1. As a result of budget shortfalls at local, state and federal levels, resources may continue to decline and many other programs will be strongly competing for private funds.
2. Several senior extension faculty members may be retiring in the next few years and there is uncertainty associated with the future of their positions.
3. The emergence of a Florida Oceans and Coastal Council, Florida Ocean Alliance, Gulf of Mexico Alliance, Governor's Climate Task Force and a myriad of other councils and groups in recent years could diminish the role that FSG traditionally has played as a leader in addressing coastal issues in Florida.
4. If the program develops too extreme a focus on research with immediate practical outcomes, this could diminish the overall scientific quality (and possibly the long-term impacts) of the program.
5. Public and private universities and agencies are engaged in outreach more than ever before. NOAA line offices and the NERRS compete with SG for clientele and compete for dollars to run their operations. All of these outreach programs compete for stakeholders. These same organizations compete for reviewers, advisory board members and supporters.