



Dr. Barry A. Costa-Pierce

Professor of Fisheries and Aquaculture and
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Director, Rhode Island Sea Grant College Program

Since the inception of the University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program (UH Sea Grant) 40 years ago, a primary goal has been to ensure that the next generation of environmental professionals are prepared to handle the challenges that await. The UH Sea Grant Graduate Trainee Program, which provides funding to students through research grants and also provides opportunities to gain valuable experience conducting education and outreach within the local community, is a critical component.

While many UH Sea Grant students reach success throughout their careers, in this issue we are pleased to highlight former UH Sea Grant-supported graduate student Dr. Barry A. Costa-Pierce (Ph.D. Oceanography, 1984). Dr. Costa-Pierce currently serves as Professor of Fisheries and Aquaculture and Professor of Oceanography as well as Director of the Rhode Island Sea Grant College Program at the University of Rhode Island.

During his tenure in Hawai‘i from 1979 to 1984, Costa-Pierce focused on the ecology of aquaculture systems, specifically the prawn aquaculture ponds in Kahuku. “Prawn aquaculture was developing as a big business in Hawai‘i at the time. I was caught up in that, plus, UH had cutting edge researchers in the development of the industry, in all of its many aspects, research, outreach and education.”

After his Ph.D., Dr. Costa-Pierce worked briefly as a UH Sea Grant Extension Agent before

accepting a position as Director and Research Scientist at the International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management (ICLARM) based in Indonesia, and later as Director of ICLARM’s Malawi office in central Africa. In addition, Dr. Costa-Pierce worked extensively for the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in over 20 countries.

After ICLARM, Dr. Costa-Pierce was a lecturer in the graduate program at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and a “Student Recommended Faculty in Global Sustainability” at the University of California-Irvine where he was recognized for making an “exceptional impact on undergraduate education.” From there, he became the director of the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium where he spent three years, and wrote an award-winning book titled “Ecological Aquaculture: The Evolution of the Blue Revolution.” Since the publication of this book he has been invited to lecture throughout the world.

Through his many successes, Dr. Costa-Pierce recognizes UH Sea Grant as being an important component that helped shape his successful career. “When the Rhode Island Sea Grant Director job became available 10 years ago, I applied with enthusiasm, not only because it was my dream job back home in New England, but because it reminded me of my tremendous experience at UH Sea Grant,” said Costa-Pierce. “UH Sea Grant was the pivotal moment in my career.” In particular, he credits former UH Sea Grant Director Dr. Jack Davidson and Extension Director Bruce Miller as important mentors during this time.