The Seymour Marine Discovery Center is dedicated to educating students, families, and the general public about the role marine science plays in the understanding and conservation of the world’s oceans. The Seymour Center provides access to a university research center through rich educational experiences and intriguing exhibits utilizing our striking setting along Monterey Bay as a backdrop for teaching.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-16, 64,856 visited the Seymour Center.

The following represents a snapshot of the year’s achievements.

EDUCATION PROGRAM DELIVERY

VISITOR PROGRAMS

A variety of specialty-themed days were presented to the walk-in public. Examples include Sea Otter Awareness Week, Shark Science Week, Earth Week, and World Oceans Day. These provide interest for the return visitor, grow attendance, and focus insight on a specific aspect of marine science through pop-up exhibits and programs. 3,000 visitors participated in these special education days (an increase of 700 visitors from the previous year during those same special education days).

Our daily tour offering changed midyear due to construction on our associated research facility. From July through mid-April, 12,400 visitors enjoyed a behind-the-scenes tour with guided access into Long Marine Laboratory. Beginning April 20, our tour route changed the focus to highlight the Younger Lagoon Reserve instead.

Another 3,000 visitors participated in this docent-led activity, with special access to this 72-acre reserve that surrounds the Seymour Center. Another 1,600 visitors participated in a Reserved Group Tour, pre-arranged specifically for their needs. Finally, through our three specialty tours, Marine Mammal Research Tour (partial year only due to construction), Younger Lagoon Reserve Tour (separate from our daily offering), and Santa Cruz Wharf Tour, we served another 170 people.

Younger Lagoon Reserve overlook
During the very popular, Science Sunday lecture series, scientists discussed blue whales in Sri Lanka, leatherback sea turtles, burrowing owls, habitat restoration in our nearby Natural Reserve, white sharks off the California coast, sound pollution, and the spread of algal toxin through the marine food web in an at-capacity talk called, “Why Can’t I Eat Crab?” More than 900 visitors attended this 11-part series. The outstanding fall tradition, the Ken Norris Memorial Lecture, continued in October. Moderated by County Supervisor and former mayor Ryan Coonerty, three leading scientists discussed “Our Modern Ocean: Disturbing Trends—Encouraging Signs.” A fascinating topic, renowned thinkers and thoughtful discussion made this a special evening.

School Programs

School field trips serving K-14 students continue to be a cornerstone of our program. In FY 2015-16 we provided marine science education to 285 classes, comprised of 8,550 students, teachers, and adult chaperones. Of the 285 classes served, 85 came from schools classified as Title 1—schools with high numbers of students from low-income families. Scholarships were made available to Title 1 schools, making it possible for 730 students to participate who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience a marine research center.

Approximately 55 percent of visiting schools came from Santa Cruz County, including Davenport, the San Lorenzo Valley, and Watsonville. Classes from Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties made up 30 percent. The balance was comprised of students from inland counties, traveling here to learn about their connection to the ocean. Students visited from Contra Costa, San Joaquin, Tuolumne, and San Benito Counties. Teachers often incorporate the Seymour Center into their weeklong marine science field study courses, including a high school class from Wisconsin that has made the Seymour Center a part of their curriculum for the past three years.

We continued our partnership with the Younger Lagoon Reserve and the Monterey Bay Aquarium in the fall of 2015, allowing us to increase our capacity to support high school students in the Watsonville Area Teens Conserving Habitats (WATCH) program. 24 WATCH students from Aptos High School designed and carried out field-based research projects in Younger Lagoon Reserve on topics including endangered fish, aquatic invertebrates, and birds. We supplied students with meeting and lab space, training, compound and dissecting microscopes, and lab equipment.

We also provided teachers with professional development workshops to sharpen their scientific skills. In our annual Underwater Robotics Workshop, 27 teachers and 83 students worked side by side. The GEMS Ocean Sciences Educator Workshop brought together 24 teachers to further develop their teaching strategies and marine science content knowledge as they transition to the Next Generation Science Standards.

Youth Summer Science Program

With nearly as many on the wait list, 108 children ages 7-14, enrolled in nine, weeklong summer science sessions known as Ocean Explorers. Students actively learned about and participated in marine research at the Seymour Center, and our associated Long Marine Laboratory, where participants worked alongside marine mammal researchers and trainers.
Participants gained experience with the scientific process, focusing on honing their observation and questioning skills. Ocean Explorers also investigated the coastal environment at field sites around Monterey Bay, including rivers and watersheds, sandy beaches, rocky intertidal areas, and kelp forests by kayak. Young participants generally come from Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, and San Mateo Counties—however, nearly 10 percent traveled from areas as far away as Arizona, Oregon, Washington, Massachusetts, New York, and the Philippines for this unique experience. Full and partial scholarships were extended to low-income participants.

**AQUARIUM AND EXHIBIT HALL**

An interim exhibit hall layout was developed to guide the first phase of our planned update. To begin work, existing exhibits and pod elements were reorganized. Three exhibits were moved from the entry gallery to the middle gallery—elephant seal research, geology/coastal erosion research, and the tidepool exhibit (which was relocated near the invertebrate touch pool to provide a more direct connection). These adjustments provide a new boundary for managing visitor access to the shark touch pool. Digital frames were used in two exhibits making them more viewer-friendly and energy efficient. A new text panel template was developed to reference the three underlying exhibit themes: What Is Science? Why Is Science Important? Who Are Scientists?

The theater enclosure was reduced in size and relocated to the rear of the entry gallery with a baffle wall to enhance the audio/visual experience by restricting light and sound intrusion. An artist’s studio/workspace was created along the back wall of the theater for a new “artist in residence” program. Our first science illustration intern began work there during the summer.

One exhibit pod was partially disassembled with its structural components repurposed into four tables. With the addition of casters, these carts/tables provide movable surfaces for activities and events. They offer visual consistency with the preexisting exhibit components; one serves as the introductory area for changing exhibits.

In the aquarium, vibrant sea slugs, kelp greenlings, and beautiful black and yellow rockfish joined the exhibits. The newest exhibit focuses on juvenile reef fishes and a SMURF—Standard Monitoring Unit for the Recruitment of Fishes (not a small blue character familiar from Saturday morning cartoons!). SMURFs are clever tools researchers use to estimate the abundance of juvenile fishes settling onto reefs.

An amazing display of pelagic red crabs opened in the fall. Arriving with the year’s warm currents, these colorful crustaceans rarely drift into local waters from their home along Baja California. Now showcased in deeper accommodations, visitors can experience the species’ captivating vertical swimming. A rare opportunity to view these charismatic crustaceans, this exhibit also encourages important conversation about changing ocean temperature.
Finally, our team designed, created, and installed a new cover for the shark pool. The cover greatly improved airflow and is far simpler to use. It’s stored conveniently above the pool on a pulley system and is operable by one person, dropping the time involved to open and close the exhibit from 20 to two minutes each day.

STUDENT RESEARCH AND EDUCATION AWARDS

Each fall, UCSC students compete for monetary awards for their proposed research and education projects in the marine sciences. In conjunction with our board of directors and the Institute of Marine Sciences Director Gary Griggs, the Seymour Center hosts this competition. Last year 14 projects were supported with $10,830 awarded from funds endowed for this purpose. Three of the recipients attended and spoke at the Global Oceans Awards Gala.

INSTITUTIONAL GROWTH AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

While part of UC Santa Cruz, the Center must raise its ~$1.25 million budget annually (including all operating costs, salaries, and benefits). Earned revenue—admissions, program fees, facility rentals, and the Ocean Discovery Shop—makes up approximately half of our general operating requirements. And while fundraising is always a challenge, our community of supporters remains strong and committed to our mission.

MARKETING AND VISITATION

Although visitation was slightly lower during the fiscal year with 64,856 visitors, this is likely due to challenges created by construction on our surrounding Coastal Science Campus that ranged from wayfinding to parking. Work is progressing well and will wrap up in the coming year.

The Center actively promotes its activities with press releases and calendar listings throughout the region. Last year, traditional print ads were placed in Good Times (and their annual Visitor Guide), Monterey Bay Travel Adventures, Summer Magazine, Bookshop Santa Cruz’s Reader’s Guide, Visit Santa Cruz County’s Traveler’s Guide, Wildlife Viewing Guide, and Visitor Map, plus the wedding-focused publications Coastal Wedding and Here Comes the Guide. The Center’s activities are also often covered in the local newspaper, the Santa Cruz Sentinel.

Online campaigns running throughout the year included SantaCruz.com and SantaCruzParent.com. Public radio ads ran two weeks every month on the NPR-affiliate, KAZU. We continued our long-time contract with Certified Folder, placing rack cards at lodging and attractions...
throughout the region, as well as the San Jose Airport. Coupons for discounted admissions were available in various formats. The most highly used program is through the many Bay Area municipal libraries. Called Discover and Go, more than 450 families from across the region utilized these discount coupons.

We continue to connect with the public through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr, and bi-monthly e-blasts. Our most active accounts are Facebook with ~3,500 followers, Twitter with ~600 followers, and Instagram with ~450 followers. **Monthly e-blasts reached 5,800 people.** Our website continues to be strongly used—a sample month during the past year: 8,200 sessions; 6,200 users; 22,800 page views.

A marketing highlight, in September we launched “SMDC 365,” a daily series of ocean-themed Facebook posts. Content ranged from informative charts and graphs, lighthearted quotes, conservation-oriented comics, to highlights from current marine science research and events. The purpose was to increase Facebook engagement and to generate enhanced association with ocean science. Data suggests these goals have been met as average daily engagement (a like, share, or comment) doubled in a sample month (July). Likewise, the total average reach (number of Facebook users who see our posts in their newsfeed) nearly tripled that month, **growing from 970 users in 2015 to 2,904 in 2016.**

**Facility Rentals**
The Center’s exceptional location along the northern shore of the Monterey Bay, complete with spectacular ocean views and local native plant and animal species, makes for a prime meeting, retreat, conference, reception, wedding, luncheon, dinner, or other business or social event venue. Clients choosing our unique setting support ocean science, conservation, and education programs. Volunteer educators are often on site during events to answer questions and provide guests with an introduction to our resident marine animals.

Since the Center opened in 2000, we have more than doubled our facility rental use and income.
During FY 2015-16, nearly $130,000 in rental fees helped fund our mission, with more than 8,700 guests attending events. We continue to market our facility to new guests and event attendees, both locally and internationally, encouraging them to spread the word about our Center and ocean conservation.

**TECHNOLOGY**

The Seymour Center operates a comprehensive database that manages information for donations, membership, facility rentals and in-house use, as well as for all education and volunteer program information/registration. We utilize online programs for marketing, event management, grant applications, payroll, benefits, recruitment, and more. Privacy and security of personal and donor information is of paramount importance.

The Center was caught off guard with the university’s IT department’s decision to no longer support older technology—both hardware and software. The Seymour Center has instituted a program to purchase three to four computers annually in order to retire old/outdated models and ensure stability going forward.

**FUNDRAISING**

The Center fundraises for nearly half of its operating budget. Due to the generosity of individuals, businesses, and foundations, and by building on established relationships and strong bonds, the Center exceeded its budgeted goal by more than $150,000 in FY 2015-16.

For a second year, a leadership gift of $250,000 from Scott and Kelly Dale and an anonymous gift of $100,000 steered the way for significant increases in individual giving, including a successful end-of-year campaign. Scholarship, memorial, and other gifts contributed to the overall increase in individual philanthropy.

Membership support remained stable. Dual/Family and Senior Family memberships continue to be the backbone of the membership program. The Directors’ Circle, the Seymour Center’s most significant leadership circle continues to grow. These patrons enjoyed an annual event in conjunction with the directors of the Coastal Science Campus that focused on the fragile Antarctic environment. Many supporters who had experienced that continent attended in their Antarctic-appropriate jackets!

The Seymour Center presented its two signature annual events, the Whale of an Auction and the Global Oceans Awards Gala. The auction continues to be online-only through the Bidding for Good website. It allows individuals from across the country to bid on items and experiences only available through this auction. Our auction is known for unique activities and adventures with scientists and researchers that are otherwise not available to the general public.

**UCSC Student Research and Education Award winners with M. Sanjayan (second from left) at the 2016 Gala**

The Global Oceans Awards Gala was a huge success in 2016. The Center honored M. Sanjayan, a conservation scientist, writer and television news contributor, specializing in the role of conservation in improving human well-being, wildlife, and the environment. The event sold out weeks in advance, raising critical funds.
for our education programs, including scholarship funds earmarked for Title 1 schools and low-income children who attend our exceptional science programs.

Grant funding remained stable during the year with support from The Campbell Foundation, the Surf Industry Manufacturers Environmental Fund, the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, anonymous foundations, and others.

The Seymour Center ended the year with net revenue of ~$153,000. While some funds are restricted to specific programs, we began the fiscal year on solid financial footing.

ENDOWMENT
The Center has a modest but growing endowment—$759,000. The long-term objective is to grow this fund to $3 million to provide a larger portion of the Center’s operating budget, closing the gap between expenses and income. We also have a separate Fund Functioning as an Endowment of $307,000. Interest from both of these endowments help fund our education programs now, and will into perpetuity. The total payout this year was ~$35,000.

STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

VOLUNTEERS
Our region is replete with talented community members who become passionate volunteers for our mission of ocean science and conservation. Through our role as a university outreach center, we also attract excited, energetic college students who serve as both volunteers and interns. Volunteers of all ages (15 and up) and backgrounds serve in every program. Using our exhibit hall as a teaching backdrop, docents and exhibit guides address threats to our coast and ocean, while school program instructors and youth leaders work with K-14 students and summer campers. Our volunteer aquarists and gardeners work behind the scenes with our living collections. The number of volunteers remained relatively constant with **230 active volunteers logging nearly 24,000 hours** during the fiscal year.

STAFF
We experienced some staff turnover during the year, which was both time and resource consuming, however we are a maturing organization that attracts talented staff. During the past year, our Youth Programs Manager left her position after 10 years due to a move out of state. A successful recruitment was completed with the hiring of Kevin Keedy, an original, founding member of the Seymour Center staff. Kevin served for nearly six years as our first Youth Programs Manager, beginning with our grand opening in 2000. We also added a much needed position of Exhibits Curator/Designer. Jeff Northam was hired to complete deferred exhibit maintenance and lead development of a new, engaging, relevant, and inspiring experience.
15 extraordinary college student employees served in every capacity from admissions and customer service, to education program delivery, and aquarium husbandry.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
The year was one of renewal for the Seymour Center's board of directors. The executive committee took on the challenge of updating by-laws, clarifying honorary and emeritus board designations, and creating new opportunities for board engagement. Of significant note is the change from Friends of Long Marine Laboratory to **Friends of Seymour Marine Discovery Center** to clarify the focus of the board. The committee developed a board “check list” that included expectations, opportunities, and a self-evaluation tool. This tool will help refine board roles while providing concrete ways to engage. It was welcomed by the full board.

Five new members joined the board: Robert Allen, retired general surgeon; Dale Beiser, retired high-tech production and inventory manager and current volunteer; Peter Cartwright, retired energy company executive; Joni Janecki, ASLA President and Founder, Joni L. Janecki & Associates; and Randy Strong, Vice President, Carroll & Strong Builders. Joni and Randy were part of the original team that designed and built the Seymour Center. Each new board member brings a unique and valued perspective to the Center and a passion for ocean science and conservation.

**THANK YOU**
for your commitment to our mission and for your investment in the Seymour Marine Discovery Center. We are extremely grateful to all who have helped make this past year a success.