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ODU Launches Open Seas Technology Innovation Hub

August 27, 2019



In conjunction with the unveiling of the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship on Aug. 29, Old Dominion University is launching the Open Seas Technology Innovation Hub.

Open Seas is a partnership between the ODU, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) and the College of William & Mary. The program will be heavily focused on three industry clusters - maritime, shipping and logistics; aquaculture and fisheries; and flood mitigation and resilience.

"The Open Seas Hub will become the regional center for innovation and commercialization across the resilience, aquaculture and port sectors," said Morris Foster, vice president for the Office of Research. "It will also be affiliated with similar maritime innovation centers associated with high-volume ports internationally."

In partnership with organizations such as Rise and the Commonwealth Center for Recurrent Flooding Resiliency, the Hub will provide a mechanism to expand upon the existing network of resilience research and innovation in coastal Virginia and build connections to other water-focused economies throughout the world.

Open Seas will be led by founding Executive Director Jerry Cronin, who created and led the TempO program at the Institute for Innovation & Entrepreneurship. He brings to Open Seas a lifetime of living near deep water and experience as a U.S. Coast Guard officer, entrepreneur, program director and international businessperson.

The Hampton Roads area has numerous natural advantages. It is a major commercial seaport, an important node in the global logistics network and is home to a large concentration of military services - including the world's largest naval base. It sits at the southern end of the Chesapeake Bay - an important fishery. Additionally, it faces challenges from the changing oceans, and Norfolk remains one of the world's most vulnerable cities to sea level rise.

"Open Seas seeks to leverage the area's assets and needs to support the development and global deployment of innovative solutions," Cronin said. "It will focus on firm creation and expansion, industry-specific education and networking events to jump-start and grow regional entrepreneurial ecosystem."

The U.S. Economic Development Administration's Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIE) Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) Program provided initial funding to establish Open Seas as part of its i6 Challenge. I6 is a leading national initiative designed to support the creation of centers for innovation and entrepreneurship that increase the rate at which innovations, ideas, intellectual property and research are translated into products, services, viable companies and jobs.