

International professor serves as Visiting Lecturer at VIMS

By Erin Kelly

(October 21, 2013) When awarded a Fulbright fellowship, some scholars find it taxing to pick their host institutions. Not so for Dr. Bijoy Nandan, who had his sights set on the Virginia Institute of Marine Science from the get-go.

Nandan, an Associate Professor in the Department of Marine Biology, Microbiology & Biochemistry at the Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) in Kochi, Kerala, India, was one of 17 scholars selected for the prestigious 2013-2014 Fulbright-Nehru Visiting Lecturer Fellowship. The fellowship—awarded to Indian academics and professionals—enables the recipient to act as a visiting scholar at a college, university, or research institution in the United States.

“I was attracted to VIMS because of the fascinating ecotoxicology research being done in Chesapeake Bay and its surrounding estuaries,” says Nandan. “I’ve been impressed by VIMS for awhile, so I knew I wanted to learn more about the institution and the research being done there.”

Nandan says he’s best described as an aquatic ecologist who focuses on the dynamics, distribution, and composition of species within planktonic communities. Nandan’s Fulbright project, “Marine Ecotoxicology and Ecosystem level monitoring: Assessment and Management,” will allow him to share his research with the VIMS community through a series of lectures he will present both on and off campus.

“My overall goal for my time at VIMS is to effectively convey the aquatic ecotoxicology research we are doing in India to an American audience,” says Nandan. “I want to introduce the VIMS community to the research being done by my department at CUSAT, and share the knowledge I have acquired as a scientist and professor.”

While at VIMS, Nandan will lecture on a variety of topics including marine pollution and trophic-level responses, toxicity and bioaccumulation, Indian environmental laws, and Arctic and coastal-wetland ecosystems. During his 4-month-long stay in the U.S., Nandan will give presentations at several other colleges and institutions as well, including William & Mary and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego.



In the Arctic: Dr. Bijoy Nandan during a 2011 Indian Arctic Expedition at the Indian research station “Himadri” at Spitsbergen, Svalbard, Norway. Photo courtesy of Dr. Bijoy Nandan

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Research collaborations at VIMS

Since his arrival in September, Nandan has been working directly with Professor Michael Newman, who—like Nandan—has a wide variety of research interests including ecotoxicology, aquatic ecology, and water quality. “I found out about VIMS through some of Mike’s publications that I came across while doing similar research in India,” says Nandan.

In 2011, Nandan invited Newman to Cochin as an Erudite Lecturer through the Scholar in Residence Programme offered by the Erudite of Higher Education Council in Kerala. Similar to a Fulbright fellowship, Newman presented lectures at CUSAT, as well as other universities in Kerala.

“Mike’s lectures focused on both basic and advanced levels of marine ecotoxicology,” says Nandan. “I found his talks to be fascinating, and through getting to know Mike and more about the activities going on at VIMS, I felt I should come here and experience it for myself.”

In addition to his role as a visiting lecturer, Newman says Nandan will take part in fieldwork with VIMS colleagues, gaining exposure to alternative ways of addressing issues related to coastal pollution and marine biodiversity.

“My biggest wish is to share my research, knowledge, and experiences with American students,” says Nandan. “When I return to India in January, I hope to bring a scope of knowledge back home with me.”

Fulbright-Nehru Visiting Lecturer Fellowship

The Fulbright-Nehru Visiting Lecturer Fellowship is offered by the United States-India Educational Foundation (USIEF), one of 50 bi-national Fulbright commissions around the globe. The goal of the fellowship is to promote mutual understanding between natives of India and the U.S. through the educational exchange of outstanding scholars, professionals, and students.

India has one of the largest Fulbright programs in the world, awarding more than 17,000 fellowships and other grants to Indians and Americans since the program’s inception in 1950.

The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government. It offers 8,000 grants annually, and has offered funding to more than 300,000 participants since its start in 1946. The program—which now operates in 155 nations worldwide—is designed to “increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.”



Arctic Sampling: Conducting sampling in the Kongsfjorden system for the collection of sediment and macro and meio benthic samples on board the research vessel “Teisten” of Kings Bay, Svalbard. Photo courtesy of Dr. Bijoy Nandan