

Coastal Studies Institute Board of Directors  
**Fall Meeting Minutes**

Date: October 31, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: CSI Room 262 / via Zoom

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Garner called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. A quorum was confirmed, with both in-person and virtual participation.

**2. Conflict of Interest Reminder**

Chair Garner read the conflict of interest statement from the bylaws. No board members disclosed actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

**3. Introduction of New and Returning Members**

Dr. Chris Osburn, North Carolina State University, was welcomed as the new institutional representative. He previously toured the CSI campus in August and expressed enthusiasm for strengthening ties between NC State and CSI. Mr. Malcolm Fearing was reintroduced and honored as an Emeritus Board Member, recognizing his 11 years of service and continued commitment to CSI's mission.

**4. Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was reviewed and approved with the addition of an Advancement update under the Executive Director's report.

**5–6. Election of Officers**

Chair Garner conducted elections for the new one-year officer positions established under the updated bylaws. Dr. Jack Bagwell was unanimously elected Vice Chair by acclamation. Dr. Stacey Ward-Rogers was unanimously elected Recording Secretary by acclamation.

**7. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the previous Board meeting were reviewed and approved as presented.

**8. Updates from Campus Partners**

- **North Carolina State University:** Dr. Osburn discussed opportunities to enhance collaboration between CSI, NC State, and the Center for Marine Sciences and Technology (CMAST). Efforts include student course-sharing, joint research, and potentially holding NC State's Blue Economy design-thinking workshop at CSI.
- **East Carolina University:** Provost Chris Buddo summarized ECU's \$25 million

strategic budget initiative to improve long-term fiscal stability and enable resource reallocation. He explained the planned administrative restructuring to consolidate the Department of Coastal Studies (DCS) and Integrated Coastal Programs (ICP) into the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences (THCAS). He emphasized that CSI operations, leadership, and mission would remain unchanged.

- **UNC System Office:** Ms. Andrea Poole provided perspective on statewide enrollment trends and system efforts to broaden college access. Initiatives include NC College Connect, direct admissions for qualified high school students, and outreach to adult learners. She and Provost Buddo discussed the decline in college-going rates and the system's strategies to attract and retain students across North Carolina.

### **9. Executive Director's Report (Dr. Reide Corbett)**

**ICP/DCS Transition:** Dr. Corbett provided a detailed overview of the ICP/DCS transition. The restructuring will relocate faculty tenure lines into the Department of Earth, Environment, and Planning within THCAS. He emphasized that this change is not a cost-cutting measure but a strategic move to strengthen academic alignment, provide faculty stability, and expand opportunities for collaboration. CSI's research, outreach, and educational programs—including NCROEP, the Semester at the Coast, and community partnerships—will continue without disruption.

Dr. Corbett noted that CSI's mission remains central to ECU's coastal enterprise, and the Outer Banks Campus will continue to serve as a platform for research, education, and public engagement. The restructuring also introduces opportunities for stronger undergraduate programming through Environmental Studies and closer ties with faculty across THCAS. Board members discussed the importance of communicating the transition as an evolution and integration—not a retreat—from ECU's coastal priorities. Members expressed support for maintaining CSI's visibility and leadership role while expanding student participation and coastal engagement.

**Research and NCROEP:** The NC Renewable Ocean Energy Program continues advancing partnerships with DOE, NREL, and Sandia toward test site accreditation through the Atlantic Marine Energy Center (AMEC). Collaborative efforts focus on renewable ocean energy, resilience, and economic development across coastal North Carolina.

**Housing and Infrastructure:** Discussions continue with ECU and Dare County on student housing solutions. CSI is pursuing design approval for a raised research and education boardwalk to improve waterfront access for students and researchers.

**Academic Programming:** The Semester at the Coast program continues to expand,

engaging hundreds of undergraduates. Integration with THCAS Environmental Studies will open new undergraduate pathways and research-based experiences.

**\*\*Outreach and Engagement:\*\*** CSI remains a hub for public and K–12 education, hosting more than 3,000 students annually through workshops, seminars, and field-based learning. Community engagement and regional partnerships continue to grow, enhancing ECU’s presence along the coast.

Board discussion focused on ensuring that messaging around the academic transition underscores continuity of CSI’s mission and growth opportunities. Members supported the strategic alignment and encouraged proactive communication with faculty, partners, and the public.

### **10. Report of Officers**

Officers expressed appreciation for continued board participation and noted the successful election and transition of leadership roles.

### **11. Budget Report**

A written financial report was provided for board review.

### **12. Committee Reports**

- **\*\*Nominations Committee:\*\*** Confirmed officer appointments and discussed long-term succession planning.
- **\*\*Advancement Committee:\*\*** Kendra (ECU Advancement) reported on strong donor engagement and ongoing fundraising efforts, including continued support from the Oliver and Rippey families and the growing Coastal Scholarship Fund. The committee also discussed upcoming funding strategies for the CSI Boardwalk project.
- **\*\*Programming & Engagement Committee:\*\*** Reported successful community engagement activities, including high school internships, teacher programs, and outreach events that strengthen CSI’s educational mission.

### **13. New Business**

Discussion included exploring new funding opportunities through the NC Department of Environmental Quality, NC Land and Water Fund, and local entities such as the Dare County Tourism Board to support infrastructure and outreach projects.

### **14. Board Member Comments**

Members emphasized the importance of workforce development and education in addressing regional challenges in skilled labor, planning, and coastal resilience. The board reaffirmed its support for CSI’s leadership in integrating science, education, and community needs along North Carolina’s coast.

## **15. Adjournment**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:00 p.m.

### **Action Items and Next Steps**

1. Update board roster with newly elected Vice Chair and Recording Secretary.
2. Finalize messaging plan clarifying that the ICP/DCS transition strengthens, rather than reduces, ECU's coastal enterprise.
3. Advance design approval for the CSI Research and Education Boardwalk; coordinate with ECU Advancement and Administration for BOT consideration.
4. Develop a formal CSI-NC State partnership framework to expand student research and course access.
5. Monitor THCAS integration progress and maintain communication with faculty throughout the transition.
6. Continue expansion of the Semester at the Coast and new Environmental Studies collaborations.
7. Plan the Spring 2026 meeting to include updates on ICP/DCS transition outcomes, NCROEP progress, and advancement activities.