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ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (April 15, 2010) - One hundred twenty-five high school students representing 25 regions of the country will test their knowledge of ocean organisms, atmospheric science and underwater geology in the finals of the National Ocean Science Bowl at the University of South Florida’s College of Marine Science and USF St. Petersburg, April 23-25.

The tournament – among the premier academic competitions in the United States for emerging scientists – draws teams from as far away as Alaska and Hawaii for three days of learning activities and scholarly sport. The event is sponsored by the Consortium for Ocean Leadership, a Washington-based nonprofit organization that represents 95 of the leading public and private ocean research education institutions, aquaria and industry with the mission to advance research, education and ocean policy.

The goal of the competition is to increase scientific knowledge of the world’s complex ocean systems and introduce the nation’s top high school students to ocean science and the researchers who dedicate their work to developing new knowledge and technologies to understand the oceans and the conservation of marine ecosystems.

The competitors have reached the finals having won regional competitions in their home states. More than 300 high schools and 2,000 students competed on a regional level, including Florida’s Spoonbill and Manatee Bowls. Durant High School will represent teams along Florida’s Gulf Coast as winners of the March 2010 Spoonbill Bowl held at USF St. Petersburg.

The students will spend their first day in St. Petersburg engaged in a series of field trips and hands-on learning experiences. Students will tour Caladesi Island, Ft. DeSoto Park, Weedon Island Mote Marine Lab and Lowry Park Zoo and the Florida Aquarium and technology labs at Raytheon, Ocean Optics, and USFSP Environmental Sciences. A group of students also will spend time aboard the R/V Weatherbird, USF’s high-tech research vessel.

The competition begins at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 24, at USF St. Petersburg’s Science and Technology Building with a round-robin format. The Science and Technology Building is located just west of 1st Street South and USF St. Petersburg’s Harborwalk.

The winners will go on to Sunday’s double-elimination rounds which begin 9 a.m. at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, 100 Eighth Avenue S.E. The winner will be crowned at 2 p.m. in an awards ceremony recognizing the top teams and the coveted James D. Watkins
Sportsmanship Award. Last year this award was won by Canterbury Schools of St. Petersburg, who represented the Spoonbill Bowl during 2009 Finals Competition.