Grants help find clues to climate change

Ocean science professor Jonathan Zehr and his colleagues want to understand how some of Earth’s tiniest inhabitants—marine microorganisms—affect the global environment.

These microbes play key roles in ocean processes and will help determine how global climate change affects the oceans in the future.

The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation has awarded a $4.8 million grant to UC Santa Cruz to fund ongoing research in marine microbiology. Zehr is principal investigator.

The five-year grant supports a research program called MEGAMER (Microbial Environmental Genomics Applications: Modeling, Experimentation, and Remote sensing), established in July 2005 with a $2.2 million award from the Moore Foundation.

Zehr has overseen the establishment of MEGAMER.

Celebrating innovation, ideas, and ideals

The second annual UC Santa Cruz Founders’ Day gala dinner drew more than 350 people to the Cocoanut Grove on October 24 to celebrate the founding ideals of the campus and the outstanding accomplishments of three individuals with ties to UCSC.

Guests were treated to three video presentations extolling the career achievements of alumna and “Washington Post” reporter Dana Priest, who won her second Pulitzer Prize in April; professor of Latin American and Latino studies Patricia Zavella, who was honored for being selected by the Academic Senate as the Faculty Research Lecturer; and Narinder Kapany, a research scientist, entrepreneur, and former UCSC professor who demonstrated that light could be passed through bent optical fiber.

Chancellor George Blumenthal said Priest, Zavella, and Kapany are the kind of success stories UCSC’s founders had in mind when they established the campus more than 43 years ago.

Subterranean stories

“Are We There Yet?” is the title of a public artwork and interactive sound installation by UCSC assistant art professor Dee Hibbert-Jones—on exhibit in Japan this past fall.

Hibbert-Jones’s project is the result of an invitation she received to participate in an international festival of art, “Dislocate 08,” exploring technology and urban experience in Yokohama and Tokyo.

She describes her work (in collaboration with artist Nomi Talisman) as “an emotional map of stories” collected from passengers on Japanese subways.

To develop the exhibit, they spent a week collecting stories from people traveling the Yokohama Blue Subway Line and then edited these stories into an audio MP3 file that could be taken onto the subway. Visitors were able to check out an MP3 player from a gallery in Yokohama and then travel the subway—listening in to other travelers’ personal anecdotes. As they passed through each of the 32 stations, they heard a different story.

“We have tales, for example, of sparrows living underground, stories of false teeth lost and found on the subway, tales of a heart broken at a certain station, and the stories of a subway cleaning worker describing what he sees each day,” said Hibbert-Jones.

Hibbert-Jones also created an interactive installation at ZAIM gallery in Yokohama, where visitors could touch subway stops on a large Flexiglas table covered with drawings of the city. By touching any stop on the subway, a viewer could activate a video projection that described stories from that station.