

UCSB Marine Science Institute Broadening Opportunities Across Research Diving (onBOARD) - 2026

Goals and Basic Requirements

The fundamental goal of onBOARD is to lower the financial, cultural and other barriers to scientific diving for UCSB students, particularly but not exclusively for students from groups underrepresented in the marine sciences (e.g., Hispanic-Latinx, African American, Native American/Native Alaskan and Pacific Islanders; US Veterans; individuals with disabilities that do not disqualify them from obtaining medical clearance to dive).

Students with any degree of swimming proficiency are encouraged to apply, even those who cannot yet swim. The onBOARD will guide and support training of students who need or wish to build their swimming proficiency and water comfort so they can acquire the scuba diving skills and certifications needed to perform as a scientific diver. Scuba diving requires a certain set of swimming skills and level of comfort in the water, and if needed, the DPP will work with students to develop those skills before they embark on scuba training.

The training steps that lead to the Scientific Diving certification start with an initial 'Open Water Scuba' certification class (taught at UCSB through the Department of Recreation), followed by 12 additional ocean dives to gain experience, ending with the UCSB Scientific Diving class ('American Academy of Underwater Sciences (AAUS) 100-hour Dive Safety Course' taught through Environmental Health & Safety). At each step, the onBOARD and host research labs will provide the guidance, resources, gear and other support students need to complete each phase of the process. Students may discover that, for whatever reason, scuba diving is simply not for them. For that reason, there is no obligation for a onBOARD student to complete any phase of training or to continue to the next step.

PLEASE NOTE that this is not a fast process, it can take a year or more to complete all the steps to becoming a research diver. onBOARD is here to support students through the process. For that reason, it is very rare for a 4th year student to be accepted into the program.

Given the amount of time and extra-curricular effort needed to complete all 3 phases of scuba training, preference is given to students who are finishing their 1st year or 2nd year, followed by those in their 3rd year. 4th year students may be selected in extraordinary circumstances. This preference ranking reflects the goal of providing onBOARD students with the potential to participate as undergraduate Research Divers on UCSB field research projects, which requires a Scientific Diving certification.

Scientific diving is a highly regulated enterprise in the United States, and one requirement is that all individuals who participate in the UCSB Scientific Diving training course must first obtain medical clearance from a qualified physician. The onBOARD

will provide guidance and resources for program participants to obtain the required medical evaluation.

In addition to providing funding for dive training and gear, we will offer paid internships in research laboratories. onBOARD fellows will select a research lab that conducts marine or aquatic research and receive mentorship on marine science and research SCUBA diving.

Eligibility

Candidates selected must:

- Be aged 18 or older
- Be an enrolled student in good standing at UCSB in a science, engineering or other discipline where scientific diving may be relevant

Preference will be given to those who:

- Have interest in or aspiration for a career in marine sciences that may involve scientific diving
- Have financial, cultural or other barriers that limit becoming scientific dive certified
- Participation will broaden diversity in the scientific diving community

Before learning to dive you will be required to:

- Be able to pass a UCSB-administered swimming proficiency exam prior to embarking on scuba training courses (the program can help with swimming lessons)
- Be evaluated as medically fit to undertake SCUBA dive training (at no cost to the student)

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