

A Scientific Ocean Drilling Coordination Office
for the US Community

FY25 Q1 Operations and Management Report

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Submitted by TAMU Scientific Ocean Drilling (SODCO)
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1. Introduction

Texas A&M University (TAMU) and Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University (LDEO) collaboratively form the Scientific Ocean Drilling Coordination Office (SODCO) to facilitate US scientific ocean drilling goals. TAMU will assist principal investigators with creating drilling proposals; identify suitable drilling platforms, coring, and logging tools; work with the scientific community to advance new technologies; and plan and implement expeditions. LDEO will provide research community support services for successful planning and execution of expeditions, including pre-drilling activities, planning and training workshops, and science communications and outreach.

2. Management and Administration

The SODCO branches at TAMU and LDEO act as a fully integrated team. The SODCO Executive Team comprises the SODCO Director, the Director of Science Operations, and the Director of Science Support:

- SODCO Director (TAMU): provides overall project coordination and supervision of project personnel at TAMU and acts as the interface with other TAMU-provided services (general Information Technology [IT], Publications, Sponsored Research Services [SRS], and Gulf Coast Repository [GCR]).
- Director of Science Operations (TAMU): oversees day-to-day activities of operations, engineering, science, permitting and clearances, and a technical team.
- Director of Science Support (LDEO): manages community science planning, including pre-drilling and training activities; oversees science communications; and supervises the staff at LDEO.

The SODCO award was issued to the Texas A&M Research Foundation (TAMRF) on 28 February 2025 with a start date of 1 February 2025. The subaward agreement with Columbia University was finalized on 9 April 2025. On 7 April 2025, a supplemental funding request was submitted to add the site survey data-bank (Scripps Institution of Oceanography) function as requested by NSF, support for maintenance and operation of the downhole logging database (LDEO), and salary and travel support for the US Co-Chief Scientist on IODP³ Expedition 502.

The SODCO Executive Leadership team began the process of filling open positions at TAMU and LDEO. Progress with hiring is reported below.

The Directors at TAMU and LDEO meet weekly to track issues and updates.

3. Advisory structure

The SODCO advisory structure will include the central SODCO Advisory Board (SAB) and a series of working groups, advisory committees, and panels:

- Science Staffing Subcommittee
- Science Communications Subcommittee
- Science and Workshops Subcommittee
- Engineering and Technology Advisory Committee
- Safety and Environment Panel

The Executive Leadership team will initiate the process to populate the SAB in Quarter 2.

4. Science operations

Analytical instrumentation

Customized seagoing containers will provide critical instrumentation and support for at-sea data collection, while laboratory facilities at the GCR will be available for shore-based description and measurements. Work with TAMU was initiated to provide power requirements to the areas where the containers will be stored on campus when not deployed at sea. Planning for science container customization and vendor investigations will begin in Quarter 2.

Operations and Engineering

The Operations and Engineering group consists of a Supervisor, two Operations Engineers, and two Staff Engineers. In Quarter 1, four of the positions were filled: the Supervisory position, both Operations Engineers, and one of the Staff Engineers. The final Staff Engineer will be hired later this year.

The Supervisor of Operations and Engineering and the two Operations Engineers attended the Joint IODP³-NSF Expedition 501 port call in Bridgeport, CT (27 April–1 May), to observe mobilization activities and meet with European Science Operator operations personnel and the drilling and coring vendors.

Technical Support

The Technical Support group comprises a Supervisor, a Senior Technician, a Chemistry Technician, an Electronics Instrumentation Specialist, and a Mobilization and Logistics Coordinator. Hiring was completed for the Supervisor of Technical Support and the Mobilization and Logistics Coordinator. The office is in the process of hiring the Senior Technician and the Electronics Instrumentation Specialist. The Chemistry Technician will be hired later this year.

The Supervisor of Technical Support will be sailing on Joint IODP³-NSF Expedition 501 and helping support whole-round measurements. They will be learning from the European Science Operator and observing laboratory operations. The Supervisor moved onto the L/B *Robert* on 29 April.

Science Services

Two Expedition Project Managers make up the Science Services group at TAMU. Both were hired in Quarter 1.

5. Science Support

Science Support

The Science Officer position description is in the process of development. The position will be posted in Quarter 2, and interviews and hiring will be carried out later this year.

SODCO identified two research projects related to scientific ocean drilling within the 2025 Lamont Summer Intern Program (LSIP) in March. Interns were selected from a national undergraduate applicant pool by LSIP organizers in April. The LDEO SODCO team will provide support and informal mentorship to two interns working on the relevant projects when the internship program begins at the end of May.

Communications

The Science Communications Manager position was posted on 1 March. A first round of applications was reviewed in April. Interviews and hiring will be carried out in Quarter 2.

SODCO prepared an announcement on the opening of the new Scientific Ocean Drilling Coordination Office that was circulated to the US science community by the current US Science Support Program and to the international community by the IODP³ Science Office in April.

6. SODCO website

SODCO held initial meetings with TAMU Scientific Ocean Drilling webmaster, LDEO IT staff, and a web developer in April to discuss the technical aspects of hosting a website for SODCO. An introductory meeting was also held with C&G Partners in April to discuss the development of a visual identity for SODCO and a new SODCO website, which will be an ongoing project this year.

7. Financials

Administrative ramp-up activities were initiated and carried out as possible during Quarter 1. This included establishing project accounts in the TAMU accounting system and placing known project personnel on payroll as hiring continued. The subaward to LDEO was drafted and signed by both institutions. Individuals are added to payroll as hiring continues.