Session Overview
Since inception in 2011, GoMRI directed substantial resources to and prioritized educating and training the next generation of professionals. Graduate students and those who have graduated and moved into early career positions are considered one of the principal legacies of the program. With priorities placed on professional development, education and outreach, and data sharing, GoMRI students and early career professionals possess unique skill sets as compared with their contemporaries trained under other more traditional funding and mentoring mechanisms. What capacity has their training within the program created in the oil spill sciences? Is this unique training/mentoring preparing them adequately for career advancement and future success? This session will highlight student and early career research, training, and graduate history of the GoMRI-supported centers and provides a summary of where the graduates are currently in their career arcs and professional aspirations.

Session Highlights
- “Soft skills” or non-technical skills such as report writing management, communication, teamwork, creativity, work ethic, etc. are as important as technical skills.
- GoMRI students and early career researchers benefited from the interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of the centers and the program. One of the most important benefits of this collaboration was the ability to build broad networks, both within their own disciplines and institutions and across other disciplines and institutions.
- While students have substantial academic responsibility during their careers, the mentorship from faculty must include education in research ethics.

The focus of our session was to share the educational, training, and mentorship ideologies of the GoMRI-funded projects and learn about how these activities and opportunities were received from the students and early career researchers themselves. The first half of the session focused on the “top” down, hearing from the directors of the consortia, as well as highlighting results from the graduate student and early career professional capacity survey facilitated by the session co-chairs, and the second half of the session included presentations on what specific opportunities contributed to career advancement.

- The unique interdisciplinary nature of the GoMRI program required students to tap into skills beyond their academic training (buoy design, wave tank/laboratory development) to answer fundamental science questions.
- Undergraduates and Ph.D. students were the top two groups of students served by GoMRI funding and training. This relationship provided post-graduates mentoring experience, as many of the undergraduates were mentored and directed by M.S. and Ph.D. students.
- Student involvement in the GoMRI program provided training on complicated issues such as “big” data management and the nuances associated with international partnerships.
- Each of the centers and their associated students participated in outreach on many different levels (K-12 classroom, media/press, public), requiring students to distill complicated research into easy to understand bites (e.g. children’s book).
- The pace of the GoMRI program pushed the students to make significant progress quickly.
One important component presented on the ethics of research included the concept of putting another’s research needs before one’s own.