## Tips for Students (updated January 2013)

**Dear students,**

**I cannot thank you enough for taking the time to contact me directly, or seeking me out online. I do sincerely apologize for having to deliver a standardized letter; however I am contacted daily, literally, by eager and motivated students like you seeking to 'take the plunge' into an ocean science field for college, or are career bound after college. Over the years, I've done my best to respond to each and every inquiry, though it has proven impossible to keep up.**

**Below is a list of FAQs, with my best advice. I hope this helps to guide your search. Should your path take you in a direction that is specifically in line with my professional interests of professional diving, ocean exploration, and settlement of new frontiers, feel free to get in touch to discuss mentorship, internships, or advising in these areas. I do frequently work with students in this capacity.**

**In the meantime, please feel free to follow my work on my website, www.oceanopportunity.com, and/or via a periodic e-newsletter, 'The Explorers Voice' by subscribing here:**

**:: click here to join e-mail list ::**

**Good luck & safe exploring!**

*Michael Lombardi* **(signed electronically)**

**Michael Lombardi**

**Ocean Opportunity Inc.**

# General Q's about Professional Diving

## Q: What is your official job title?

**Being self-employed, I refer to myself as a 'diving contractor and/or undersea specialist'. I am generally hired to perform underwater tasks in both the scientific and commercial sectors.**

## Q: What is your educational background?

**I have a bachelor's degree in Marine and Freshwater Biology. Since graduating, I have undertaken many professional development training opportunities – from welding to advanced mixed-gas diving to literacy education. Training and education is an ongoing effort.**

## Q: What experience is required for your position?

**Diving is has inherent risks, and there is no better way to prepare for these than staying active out on and underwater. It takes time to reach proficiency in diving alone, plus there are added demands for specific underwater tasks. Both physical and psychological stress are a significant part of professional diving, and learning personal coping mechanisms for both are critical.**

## Q: What is your job availability?

**Positions as a diving professional are wide and varied. Some folks work in the recreational sector as divemasters and instructors. Others use diving to carry out actual working tasks. While it is a niche skill set within the marine community, there will forever be the need to place humans underwater, and hence the need for professional divers.**

## For high schoolers

### Q: I want to be a 'marine biologist'. What should I study in college?

**The marine and ocean sciences are wide and diverse fields. It is common for young students to think that 'marine biology' is the sole ticket. All of the basic sciences are applied in ocean professions – biology, chemistry, physics – as well as many humanities subjects. Choose a major area of study that both interests you, and draws on your personal strengths.**

### Q: What are the best colleges for marine science?

**Most major colleges and universities in coastal states offer either formal degree programs in the field, or in many cases concentrations in the field. My best advice is to focus on colleges or universities that have research programs and offer post-graduate degrees. Often times, these are 'Sea Grant' supported institutions. A full list of Sea Grant programs can be found here: www.seagrant.noaa.gov.**

### Q: Do I have to learn how to scuba dive to study marine biology?

**Not necessarily. Marine science is going in the direction of using remote sensing and various instruments to gather data from afar – the role of the scientist has changes considerably since the field started when naturalists and field ecologists were the mainstream professions. However, there is unarguably no better way to experience and further interpret the underwater world than to be immersed within it. Scuba is a tool for the job, and provide for some very rewarding experiences.**

### Q: I probably won't go to college. How can I get a job in an ocean related field?

**Numerous industries are supported by the ocean – from transportation to aquaculture. There are many technical positions for engineers, field assistants, captains, and so on that may or may not require formal degrees, but may require other professional certificates. Many of these types of positions work hand in hand with researchers in making marine science possible.**

### Q: I'm not very good at math and science, but I love the ocean and want to work with marine life. Are there any jobs out there?

**Yes. Do not be swayed by the term 'marine biologist' if your strengths are not in biology per se. Many archaeologists, anthropologists, even poets and painters, find their life's work in the ocean. There are vast opportunities out there for all types of skill sets.**

## For college students

### Q: My major is not marine-specific, but I want to study the ocean. What should I do?

**Get involved in active marine programs, be it research, animal rescue, a local aquarium, and so on. There are certainly not limitations to applying any field of study to the ocean. Often time, a unique perspective on the ocean will be welcomed by group's that are often constrained by solely like-minded individuals.**

### Q: Do I need a Master's or PhD to be competitive?

**Yes, and no. For a career in academia, where grant driven research is your ticket, you will likely find that a PhD. is needed to pursue federal agency supported research. In the private sector, advanced degrees may make you more competitive in the job pool, however practical experience and time in the field weigh heavily as well. Advanced degrees are not for everyone, and there is nothing wrong with taking the plunge into the working world sooner than later. Best advice is to have a well crafted plan for your personal and professional goals and seek the advice of a mentor in the field to help you on your way.**

### Q: It doesn't look like there are many jobs for divers in the marine science field. How do I find a job where I can spend more time underwater?

**Hired divers are far and few between in the marine sciences. Diving is generally used as a 'tool' for the job by scientists, rather than diving be their profession. In instances where highly advanced or technical dive operations are needed, professional divers are often hired or collaborated with by the science community. For those seeking jobs as divers, consider a track as a Diving Safety Officer at a college or university – or – consider commercial diving.**

### Q: I'd like to dive professionally, what should I do?

**Don't rule out commercial diving. The numbers of commercial divers who have made it through college are small, however this is a huge advantage in the working world. Professional divers often interface with scientists, engineers, and project superintendents, who very much appreciate the diversity and life experience that a well educated diver brings to the table.**

### Q: I'm having a hard time finding references for job applications, where did I go wrong?

**Throughout college, it is important to be involved with research, volunteer programs, educational internships, and so on. These are critical networking opportunities – in addition to practical work experience. Build relationships along the way, and don't be afraid to ask for help when the time is right.**