COPUS
coalition on the public understanding of science

260 days until
Year of Science 2009...
and counting!

The COPUS Clarion

A monthly newsletter of the COPUS network Volume 2 Issue 4 April 2008

The Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS) is a grassroots effort linking universities, scientific societies, science centers and museums, advocacy groups, media, educators, government agencies, businesses, and industry in a peer network having as its goal a greater public understanding of the nature of science and its value to society.

COPUS South Florida Meeting Tremendous Success

Coalition participants inform structure and function of regional hubs and suggest thematic approach for celebrating the Year of Science 2009.

The first COPUS Regional Hub meeting, held March 7-8 at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, was an energetic sharing of ideas among 17 participants, all of whom are working either regionally or nationally to support the public understanding of science. Conversations focused on opportunities, advantages and challenges, of forming, expanding, and sustaining COPUS regional and thematic hubs and on ways to promote the Year of Science 2009. The COPUS Hub Toolkit http://copusproject.org/resources/hub_toolkit.pdf captures recommendations from this meeting and will help guide others in the development of hubs across the country.

Meeting participants also recommended that Year of Science 2009 (YoS09) activities be subdivided into 12 themes, one for each month in 2009, all focusing on how science works, why it matters, and who scientists are. By following this thematic approach, COPUS participants, hubs, and individuals may

- Focus YoS09 activities in the month or months that best reflect their interests and expertise.
- Take the challenge of weaving specific science interests or specialties through all the themes to demonstrate the interconnectedness of science.
- Seek out an expert in the subject area of one of the themes and work with him or her to design an activity that combines his or her interests and yours.
- Host a Science Café each month and use the themes as a guide for planning.
- Coordinate local activities with national resources and events guided by COPUS thematic organizers.

January- Process and Nature of Science; Communicating Science
February- Evolution
March- Physics and Technology
April- Energy Resources
May- Sustainability and the Environment
June- Oceans and Water
July- Astronomy
August- Weather and Climate
September- Biodiversity and Conservation
October- Geosciences and Planet Earth
November- Chemistry
December- Science and Health

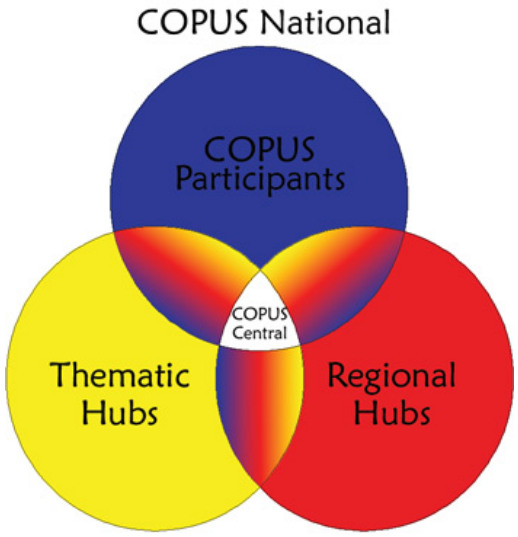
COPUS participants trying the "thematic approach" in Year of Science 2009 may want to try these recommendations.

What are COPUS hubs?

COPUS Hubs determine their own membership, structure, focus, and activities, but whether regional or thematic, they promote the public understanding of and engagement in science with a current focus toward participation in the Year of Science 2009 (YoS09).

COPUS regional hubs are *locally based* communities of COPUS participants and science stakeholders that work together within a designated geographic region to promote the public understanding of science. Regional hubs are forming in cities nationwide, see the map at http://copusproject.org/regional_hubs.php

COPUS thematic hubs represent *nationally distributed peer communities* that build bridges between their members, the national coalition, and the regional hubs to advance the public's understanding of and engagement in science. These hubs cross geographic boundaries and enlist members to offer support to COPUS activities at the national and regional levels. Thematic hubs include organizations and communities such as the Association of Science-Technology Centers, Society of Physics Students, Sigma Xi's chapter network, state geologists, and Science Cafés. More information is available online at http://copusproject.org/thematic_hubs.php



This diagram demonstrates how the various participatory bodies of the COPUS network interact with one another.

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Featured Program: Center for Precollegiate Education and Training at UF

Engaging University Research in the Community

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The University of Florida Center for Precollegiate Education and Training (UF-CPET) promotes and supports the use of the facilities and faculty of the research university in the preparation and enhancement of science and technology teaching at the secondary education level. As the University of Florida's umbrella organization for the articulation and transfer of science and technology to public school and community college teachers, students, and the public-at-large, UF-CPET combines many outreach activities, providing access to university research disciplines and faculty members and fostering life-long relationships between researchers, teachers, and students. UF-CPET science education programs enable individualized and team-centered direct public dissemination of research and knowledge through enhanced teaching.

Now in its 50th year of outreach programming, UF-CPET collaborates annually with approximately 300 faculty volunteers, as well as with hundreds of educators from around the state. Program participants enjoy great benefits: with the support of UF-CPET staff, volunteer researchers learn how to communicate their science effectively and plant seeds for future students while meeting the broader-impact requirements of their research; teachers enjoy learning about cutting-edge science being carried out in their state, and they learn best practices for improving the quality of their science instruction; and students gain hands-on experience with cutting-edge research, stimulating a life long appreciation of science and its process while sparking an interest in the exciting world of careers in science.

Volunteers dedicate their time, resources, and laboratories to assist CPET staff members with programs such as the Summer Science Institute for teachers, the annual Mini Medical School, and Special Explorations for Teachers and Students, to name a few. A detailed list is available on the CPET Web site *www.cpet.ufl.edu/default.html*. These programs allow teachers, students, graduate students, researchers, and industry stakeholders to be at the forefront of science and technology literacy, educational vision, and workforce development by uniting them in laboratory-based investigations and technology-driven solutions in science and mathematics.

Other universities, such as the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, are building similar programs to help connect research scientists on campus to the community. The Center for Educational Outreach *www.ccitonline.org/ceo/* at Baylor aims "to advance quality teaching and learning in science and health, and to promote access to careers in medicine and science-related fields." Baylor's center, like UF-CPET, has expanded its collaborations beyond university walls to include many of the state's key stakeholders in development and implementation of programming.

"Not all scientists are naturally gifted at communicating and engaging broad audiences in the exciting research they conduct in their labs and in the field—but [they] understand the critical need to do so," says UF-CPET Director Mary Jo Koroly. "Programs like CPET enable them to team up with staff who are gifted as science communicators, so that the university can effectively support and engage educators, students, and the public in our state and community in learning about the value and nature of science."

Welcome New Participants!

- American Astronomical Society
-New Mexico State University Center for Natural History Collections
- Ohio Academy of Science
- Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History
- Paleobio.org
- Palm Beach Zoo
- Seymour Marine Discovery Center at Long Marine Laboratory, UC Santa Cruz
- University of California, Berkeley, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research

International Registrant

-IBscientific

Questions? Comments? Ideas? Contact Sheri Potter at spotter@copusproject.org.

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American Institute of Biological Sciences | THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA | NSTA National Science Teachers Association | University of California Museum of Paleontology