

AUVSI honors VIMS professor with “Member of the Year” award

(August 17, 2011) The Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International—AUVSI—has named professor Mark Patterson of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science as the inaugural winner of its “Member of the Year” award.

The award recognizes an exceptionally dedicated AUVSI member for advancing unmanned systems through industry innovation, member recruitment, or both.

Wendy Siminski, Director of Development for the AUVSI Foundation, says “Mark has done so much in support of the unmanned-systems community. We’re all very excited to present him with this award.” The award ceremony will be held during the group’s annual international meeting in Washington, D.C. on August 17th.

With more than 6,000 individual members and 2,200 corporate partners in 55 countries, AUVSI is the world’s leading voice for research and development related to unmanned vehicles in government, industry, and academia.

Patterson directs the Autonomous Systems Laboratory at VIMS, where he has pioneered the development and deployment of autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) for marine research. His two patents reflect the cutting-edge nature of his research. He earned U.S. Patent No. 5,995,882 for the robotic sub *Fetch*, and patent No. 7,221,621 for neural network software to identify fish using sidescan sonar.



VIMS professor Mark Patterson.

Fetch has racked up a long list of firsts, including qualifying as the first swimming supercomputer. It has swum on a wide variety of research missions, to locations as far flung as the Caribbean, Iceland, and Antarctica and as nearby as the York River and William and Mary’s Adair Swimming Pool.

In addition to his accomplishments in research and development, the award honors Patterson for his contributions to education and outreach. That includes his role in organizing and hosting the International RoboBoat Competition, a robotics challenge in which teams of undergraduate students from universities around the world race robotic boats of their own design through an aquatic obstacle course. The event is jointly sponsored by AUVSI and the Office of Naval Research.

Daryl Davidson, Executive Director of the AUVSI Foundation, says “Mark has truly earned this Award due to the amount of time and energy he’s invested in AUVSI—through the Hampton Roads Chapter as well as the parent organization, and in the AUVSI Foundation—through his work in support of the RoboBoat competition. He’s supported the bigger AUVSI family at every possible level.”

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Virginia Institute of Marine Science
School of Marine Science
College of William and Mary
Gloucester Point, VA 23062
(804) 684-7000