

Origin of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography Director's Title 'Dean'

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The UC Regents approved the appointment of Dr. William A. Nierenberg as Director, Scripps Institution of Oceanography and Vice Chancellor of Marine Science of the University of California, San Diego on March 26, 1965, and Nierenberg assumed office on July 1, 1965.

On August 3, 1965, Walter Munk, chair of the Search Committee that selected Nierenberg, wrote UCSD Chancellor John Galbraith that Nierenberg wished to be appointed Dean of the Graduate School at Scripps, in addition to Director. Roy Harvey Pearce, Chair of the UCSD Committee on Educational Policy, who seconded the recommendation after meeting with Nierenberg, suggested that the appointment be worded Dean of Graduate Marine Sciences, Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

Galbraith forwarded the recommendation to UC President Clark Kerr on July 29, 1965 and amended his recommendation on October 19, 1965, suggesting that the appointment be worded Dean of Graduate Marine Sciences.

Nierenberg wrote in his brief autobiography:

“There were two system problems that existed when he [WAN] arrived. The first was the anomaly that SIO...had no specific representation within the brand new campus, UCSD. Beyond its research divisions, it consisted of a patchwork of three departments that could each give the PhD in its discipline. SIO was not a formal part of the UCSD Senate nor had it a designated faculty structure. This had to be and was corrected within the first two years...by fusing the three departments into one with the simple non-descriptive title of the Department of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.”

Nierenberg felt that were he appointed Dean, Scripps would be recognized as an educational entity as well as a research laboratory. He recalled that the Chancellor and the CEP did not see his point clearly, but they agreed to the appointment, and the Regents confirmed it in December 1965.

Perhaps the whole matter can be traced to the 1965 Administrative Master Plan chaired by Dean Robert Tschirgi (“The Tschirgi Report”), which was being drafted at the time of Nierenberg’s appointment. The Tschirgi Report defined the relationship between SIO and UCSD and discussed the Medical School but did not, in its first draft, mention education at SIO.

Tschirgi's papers are at UCSD Archives, and the records of Chancellor Galbraith, President Kerr and the Regents will doubtless yield more information on the matter.

CEP to Director, SIO June 25, 1964. Office of the Director (WAN) Box 34, f5
FN Spiess to VC Eckart, June 3, 1965. Office of the Director (WAN) Box 91, f2.
CEP to VC Carl Eckart, July 6, 1965. SIO Subject Files, Box 1, f14.
H York to WH Munk, et al., July 7, 1964. SIO Subject Files, Box 1, f26.
WH Munk to Galbraith and Eckart, August 3, 1965. SIO Subject Files, Box 1, f14.
CEP (RH Pearce) to VC Eckart, October 13, 1965. SIO Subject Files, Box 1, f14.
Chancellor Galbraith to President Kerr, October 19, 1965. SIO Subject Files Box 1, f14.