



Paulinus Chigbu (1963-Present)

**Professor & Director, NOAA Living Marine Resources
Cooperative Science Center**

University of Maryland, Eastern Shore

“You have to be motivated and looking for opportunities. Look for mentors to help you reach your goals.” Paulinus Chigbu, 2006.

Overview

Chigbu is currently a professor of biology at the University of Maryland- Eastern Shore (UMES), where he also serves as director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Living Marine Resources Cooperative Science Center at UMES. His research interests include fisheries ecology, climactic influences on water quality and biota, trophic dynamics in marine and freshwater environments, and zooplankton ecology. In addition to a Fulbright scholarship, Chigbu has received an Excellence Fellowship from the University Of Washington School Of Fisheries, a Research Innovation Award from Jackson State University, and served as Chair of the Mississippi Academy of Sciences Marine and Atmospheric Sciences Division. His selected publications include:

- Chigbu, P. & Parveen, S. (2014). Bacteriological Analysis of Water. In L.M.L. Nollet and L.S.P. De Gelder (editors). Handbook of Water Analysis. Third Edition. CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group, Boca Raton, New York.
- Chigbu, P., Love, J.W. & Newhard, J.J. (2009). Effects of El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) on marine fish and shellfish populations and their habitats in North America. In John A. Long and David S. Wells (Editors): Ocean Circulation & El Nino: New Research. Nova Science Publishers, Inc. ISBN: 978-1-60692-084-8
- Love, J.W., Chigbu, P. & May, E.B. (2009). Environmental variability affects distributions of coastal fish species (Maryland, USA). Northeast Naturalist 16(2): 255-268.
- Chigbu, P., Jearld, A. & Fogarty, M. J. (2007). National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Jackson State University Program in Fish Stock Assessment. Journal of Geoscience Education, 55: 541-549.
- Chigbu, P. & Sobolev, D. (2007). Bacteriological Analysis of Water. In L.M.L. Nollet (editor). Handbook of Water Analysis. Second Edition. CRC Press, Boca Raton, New York.

This interview was conducted in 2015.

Early Life and Education

Paulinus Chigbu has long been interested in science, but first became interested in the environmental field while working on his bachelor's honors thesis at the University of Benin in Nigeria. "The research focused on rotifers in a river in Nigeria," Chigbu explains. "My professor and advisor, Austin Egbore, taught me how to study zooplankton. That was the platform for my interest in hydrobiology." After completing his degree, Egbore invited Chigbu back to the university to work with him teaching zoology and hydrobiology while he earned his master's degree. Chigbu found he enjoyed teaching and doing research in those areas, and decided to pursue his doctorate in fisheries.

Career

Chigbu got a Fulbright scholarship to do his doctoral work at the University of Washington, where he received his Ph.D. in 1993. After earning his doctorate, Chigbu found a teaching position at Elizabeth City State University; from there, he moved on to Jackson State University, where he worked as an associate professor of biology and the director of the schools' Marine Science Program. Chigbu is currently a professor of biology at the University of Maryland- Eastern Shore (UMES), where he also serves as director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Living Marine Resources Cooperative Science Center at UMES. His research interests include fisheries ecology, climactic influences on water quality and biota, trophic dynamics in marine and freshwater environments, and zooplankton ecology. In addition to a Fulbright scholarship, Chigbu has received an Excellence Fellowship from the University Of Washington School Of Fisheries, a Research Innovation Award from Jackson State University, and served as Chair of the Mississippi Academy of Sciences Marine and Atmospheric Sciences Division.

Mentoring Others

"I'm happy to mentor students," Chigbu says, and he has been involved in a variety of formal mentoring programs as well as serving as a more informal guide and inspiration to his students. While at Jackson State, he and a colleague ran a project that brought minority students to Jackson State and the University of Southern Mississippi to do research in the marine and coastal sciences; Chigbu coordinated the recruitment of students for the program and paired them with faculty members for their research projects. Additionally, he has served as a mentor to high school students participating in the American Fisheries Society Hutton Junior Fisheries Biologist Scholarship Program.

Chigbu has also participated in a number of initiatives to promote diversity in his field. He was involved in the Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) for three years at Jackson State, a program with an undergraduate research and internship component as well as a high school outreach component. He was also the program coordinator for an Office of Naval Research Interns in Biomolecular Sciences Research Enhancement Program project, and has served as principal or co-principal investigator in a number of similar efforts.

Highlights

Chigbu says that doing something he truly enjoys, in tandem with contributing to the pool of knowledge in his field, has been deeply gratifying. He does not consider any single accomplishment or award he has earned to be the highlight of his career; rather, his career as a whole is his major achievement.

Advice to Young Professionals

For minorities interested in his area of the environmental field, Chigbu suggests taking a comprehensive approach to their education and career plans. "First, you must be sure you are truly interested in studying the environmental sciences," he advises. "If you are interested, you should look carefully at a number of schools and universities before you participate in their environmental programs. Undergraduates need to make sure they have a strong foundation in basic science (physics, chemistry and biology) and general math. It is important to know because that knowledge is interconnected. No knowledge is a waste." Finally, Chigbu says students need to know what they want to achieve, and then work hard for it: "You need to know what you want to accomplish, and set short and long-term goals, then work toward them. It will require hard work and sacrifice. You have to be motivated and looking for opportunities. Look for mentors to help you reach your goals."

For More Information

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