

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bria A. Smith
Communications and Public Relations Manager
Department of Communications, Public Relations, and Marketing
(284) 852-7143
basmith@hlscc.edu.vg

HLSCC ALUMNUS LOAY JABRE PARTNERS WITH MARINE STUDIES FOR EXPLORATORY STUDY

Thursday, 22 August – The H. Lavity Stoutt Community College’s (HLSCC) Centre for Applied Marine Studies (CAMS) recently welcomed Dr. Loay Jabre, an HLSCC alumnus (A.S., Natural Science ’10) and Postdoctoral Investigator from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI) in Falmouth, Massachusetts for a two-week exploratory study and training visit.

Director of Marine & Maritime Studies, Susan Zaluski explained that the focus of Dr. Jabre’s visit was to provide training to the CAMS Coastal Resilience Lab team on utilising the centre’s newly acquired PlanktoScope, an open-source hardware and software instrument, designed for imaging, counting, and measuring plankton.

During Dr. Jabre’s doctoral studies at Dalhousie University, he founded and led ‘Planktosquad,’ a multidisciplinary group of graduate students who built a PlanktoScope to deploy for research and educational outreach in partnership with other organisations. During discussions about potential collaborations, both Jabre and Zaluski agreed that applying a similar approach could be a good fit for CAMS.

Dr. Jabre said, “The PlanktoScope is an inexpensive microscopy instrument that allows researchers and citizen-scientists to explore the microbial world. At CAMS, we used PlanktoScope to peer into the hidden universe of micro-organisms found in our BVI backyards – salt ponds, mangrove lagoons, beaches, and more.”

MORE



22 August, 2024**Page 2**

“We were particularly curious about plankton, which form the foundations of marine ecosystems and underpin important flora and fauna like coral reefs, flamingos, and fishes to name a few,” Dr. Jabre further explained.

The HLSCC Coastal Resilience Lab team members trained by Dr. Jabre included Nia Jeffers, Jian Jeffers, Joseph Wells, N’Khoy Stoutt, Nandi Christopher, J’Kyla Rogers, and Michaela Potter.

Ms. Zaluski explained that the team is initially using the PlanktoScope to investigate the microbiota of mangrove lagoons and salt ponds. By providing detailed snapshots of marine biodiversity, the PlanktoScope will offer new insights into these unique coastal habitats, enhancing ongoing mangrove restoration and conservation efforts at CAMS.

Jian Jeffers, a science teacher at the Elmore Stoutt High School and advisor for the school’s Environmental Club, is particularly excited about the educational potential of the PlanktoScope. She plans to incorporate it into the club’s STEAM activities later this year, demonstrating use by the next generation of ocean stewards.

The team has already begun cataloguing their findings on EcoTaxa, which supports open-access taxonomic classification through supervised machine learning. The findings can be found here: <https://ecotaxa.obs-vlfr.fr/prj/13647>.

In partnership with Dr. Jabre, the CAMS team plans to continue using PlanktoScope to study plankton communities across the BVI, and to better understand how these organisms interact with the precious ecosystems here.

MORE

22 August, 2024

Page 3

The acquisition of the PlanktoScope was made possible through the generous support of Unite BVI, while the Well Beings Foundation sponsored Dr. Jabre's visit to CAMS.

President of HLSCC, Dr. Richard Georges expressed his gratitude for the support and the opportunities it creates.

Dr. Georges said, "PlanktoScope is a transformative tool that will greatly enhance our research and outreach capabilities. We are incredibly thankful to Unite BVI and the Well Beings Foundation for their support, and to Dr. Jabre for sharing his expertise with our team. This visit marks a significant milestone for CAMS and HLSCC, reflecting the college's commitment to advancing marine science research and education in the British Virgin Islands."

###

About HLSCC:

H. Lavity Stoutt Community College is dedicated to providing high-quality education and fostering an environment of academic excellence and innovation. Through its Centre for Applied Marine Studies, HLSCC is committed to advancing marine research and contributing to the sustainable development of the British Virgin Islands. For more information about this project, please contact Susan Zaluski via email at szaluski@hlsc.edu.vg.



PHOTO CAPTION:

1. Dr. Loay Jabre setting up the new PlanktoScope with the CAMS Coastal Resilience Lab Team. **(Photo Credit: Susan Zaluski/HLSCC)**
2. The CAMS Coastal Resilience Lab Team taking samples at Beef Island Pond. **(Photo Credit: Susan Zaluski/HLSCC)**
3. The CAMS Coastal Resilience Lab Team (J'Kyla Rogers and Jian Jeffers) using PlanktoScope. **(Photo Credit: Loay Jabre)**
4. The CAMS Coastal Resilience Lab Team (N'Khoy Stoutt and Jian Jeffers) taking samples from the Paraquita Bay Lagoon. **(Photo Credit: Loay Jabre)**
5. The CAMS Coastal Resilience Lab Team (Nia Jeffers, Nandi Christopher and N'Khoy Stoutt) and Loay Jabre sampling at Beef Island Pond. **(Photo Credit: Susan Zaluski/HLSCC)**

