ASU PhD Position: Marine Social Science

The Jenkins Research Team in the School for the Future of Innovation in Society (SFIS) at Arizona State University is seeking to fill a graduate research assistantship position for a funded PhD student. The assistantship provides three academic years (9 months, excluding summer) of support beginning in Fall 2018. This National Science Foundation and United States Department of Agriculture funded project is entitled: Infews/T3: Reducing Resource Use at the Seafood-Energy-Water Nexus: Focus on Efficient Production and Waste Reduction. The goal of this innovative project is to develop solutions to reduce waste (energy, water, sea life, etc.) in the U.S. seafood supply chain. To apply, please send a 1-page cover letter, CV, and two letters of reference to Dr. Lekelia Jenkins; kiki.jenkins@asu.edu and cc Dr. Jesse Senko jesse.senko@asu.edu. The cover letter should address: 1) why you are interested in this research; 2) why SFIS and ASU is an appropriate place for you to do a PhD; and 3) your academic and professional qualifications for the position. Your CV should include your academic and professional history, degree(s), GPAs, GRE scores, and any publications, presentations, or awards. The successful applicant must also be admitted to and remain regularly enrolled in SFIS’ PhD Program in Human and Social Dimensions (HSD) of Science and Technology, and take 6 non-audit credit hours during each semester of the assistantship. Applications for the assistantship will be accepted until the position is filled, but preference will be given to those received by February 15, 2018 (HSD program application deadline will be waived).

Overall Project Description - While the U.S. government advises doubling seafood consumption for nutritional reasons, many wild caught seafood stocks are depleted. Meeting seafood demand by further expanding aquaculture requires substantial energy and water use. Meanwhile, the United States wastes nearly half of its seafood supply. This research is motivated by inefficient resource use and waste that places unnecessary strain on water, energy, and other resources. To reduce waste, a multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional research team will examine intersections and feedback between social and behavioral processes such as government, industry, and consumer decisions; cyber-components; physical processes; natural processes; and biological processes.

Position Description - The PhD student will work with the social science team to conduct case studies that characterize major seafood/aquaculture supply chains in the United States and abroad, examine existing waste reduction strategies, and explore options for new strategies with an emphasis on feasibility and acceptability from a socio-cultural perspective. Potential duties include: 1) preparing qualitative research instruments; 2) conducting interviews and reviewing documents; 3) coding and analyzing data; 4) preparation of peer-reviewed journal articles; 5) literature reviews; and 6) other administrative and research tasks relevant to the project. The PhD student will be required to do his/her thesis on some aspect of this project with freedom to define his/her own research niche, and will be required to be first-author on at least one paper resulting from this project.

The PhD student will also have the opportunity to assist Drs. Stacia Dreyer and Jesse Senko of the Social Science Team, on the following aspects of the project: Dr. Dreyer’s main interest in this project lie within understanding social and psychological factors related to reducing seafood waste. Dr. Dreyer will be leading consumer surveys, follow-up interviews, and food diary research on seafood consumption and waste as well as examining the acceptability of strategies to reduce waste. Dr. Senko will be leading a qualitative case study of the NGO SmartFish International, a social enterprise in Baja California, Mexico that incentivizes socially and environmentally responsible artisanal fishing by creating new markets for sustainable seafood. The PhD student will assist Dr. Senko in developing, conducting, and analyzing interviews with fishers, community members, restaurants, grocers, and potentially other seafood suppliers, and the SmartFish leadership team. The results of this study will help us better understand how SmartFish can provide a useful model for incentivizing reduced-waste fishing in other international seafood production.

Qualified individuals will possess many of the following knowledge, characteristics, and skills: 1) A bachelors degree in sociology; anthropology; psychology; science, technology, and society; environmental studies; conservation science or other relevant fields (Master’s degree preferred); 2) Interest (and ideally experience) in sustainable seafood, aquaculture, and/or fisheries research; 3) Expertise in social science research, especially qualitative research methods, preferred (or a strong desire to learn); 4) Good writing skills; 5) Basic computer skills, including proficiency in Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, and Word; 6) Experience with research software (or willingness to learn), including Endnote, MAXQDA, and SPSS; and 7) Organized, self-motivated, problem-solver who is passionate and easy to work with.