Welcome! We, the Peer Counselors, would like to be the first people to introduce you to life as a student here at the University of Miami and the Rosenstiel School of Marine & Atmospheric Science (RSMAS). Incoming students are placed with a Peer Counselor who will help them make the transition to college a little smoother and much more enjoyable, both academically and socially. We are here as guides for not only new students but also prospective students who are interested in studying marine and atmospheric science. If you have any questions about the program, the campus, life at UM, or anything else, we urge you to email any one of us and we will do our very best to help you.

Natalie Kraft – Class of 2011
Head of Peer Counseling Program
Major: Marine Science Biology
Minors: Chemistry & Mathematics
Email: natalieclairekraft@gmail.com

Hello fellow marine & atmospheric science enthusiasts! My name is Natalie Kraft, and I am a senior majoring in Marine Science & Biology with minors in Chemistry & Mathematics. As much as I love living in Miami, my hometown is in southern California, where the water is a chilly 60º. My interest in the ocean ranges from coral reefs to the deep sea, but my primary research focus is on coral reef fish ecology. I am an authorized research diver for RSMAS, which has allowed me to do both my own research and help other labs with their work in the Florida Bay, Dominica, and Bonaire. For the past 2 years I have been working in Dr. Peter Glynn’s lab on various coral reef ecology projects based in Panama. This summer I am returning to Bonaire in the Netherlands Antilles to work at a marine research station/school as a teacher’s assistant. One of my favorite activities here at UM is being the Editor-in-Chief of Wave, the department magazine I started with a friend last year. It is a student run and written e-magazine filled with articles about what current students are doing, events that clubs are hosting, and interesting aspects of marine science. Check it out at: www.rsmas.miami.edu/undergrad

Brian Peters – Class of 2011
Major: Marine Science Biology
Email: b.peters1@umiami.edu

This is my fourth year at UM and my third year as a peer counselor in the Marine Science department. In addition to being a peer counselor, I am also a member of the UM club water polo team. This year, I have enjoyed working with Dr. Angela Knapp in the Marine and Atmospheric Chemistry department at RSMAS on developing a method for measuring dissolved organic nitrogen in seawater. Some of my favorite things to do include attending UM baseball games, skateboarding around campus, swimming laps in the UC pool, shopping for local fruits and veggies at farmer’s markets, and bragging about the Lone Star state. At the moment, I don’t have any plans after graduation in the spring, but I would like to study aspects of biogeochemistry in the world’s watersheds and oceans.
Ken Dixon – Class of 2011
Majors: Meteorology, Mathematics, & Physics
Email: k.dixon2@umiami.edu

My name is Ken Dixon and I am a senior Meteorology and Mathematics major from Naperville, IL in suburban Chicago. Last summer, I worked at the National Severe Storms Laboratory in Norman, Oklahoma examining the effects of initial and boundary conditions on numerical forecasts of high impact weather events. After graduating, I plan to attend graduate school for meteorology.

Sam Guffey – Class of 2011
Major: Marine Science Biology
Minors: Chemistry, Mathematics, & Physics
Email: s.guffey@umiami.edu

My name is Sam Guffey, and I love it here at the University of Miami! I’m a senior studying Marine Science and Biology, and I also dabble in chemistry, mathematics, physics and sometimes geology. I love fish and I’m really interested in how the animal body works in general. Since last August I’ve been working at RSMAS with Dr. Martin Grosell studying fish physiology, specifically the role of the intestine in osmoregulation. I also worked previously with Dr. Peter Glynn studying the role of cryptic fauna on the coral reefs of Panamá.

Throughout my career at UM I have been heavily involved with the Band program. Marching Band (in which I am a section leader) and pep bands for the volleyball and basketball games are great experiences for any musician; you don’t have to be a music major or amazing at an instrument—you just have to love it! I am also the current Vice President of the UM Aquarium Club, which discusses all aspects of aquariums, travels to public aquariums and hatcheries, and goes on lots of fun seining trips.

Sara Johnson – Class of 2012
Major: Marine Science Geology
Minors: Chemistry, Biology
Email: s.johnson25@umiami.edu

My name is Sara Johnson, and I was born and raised in western Kentucky. I am a junior and Marine Science and Geological Sciences major with minors in chemistry and biology. I am a Foote Fellow, honors student, and recent graduate of the PRISM Program. Last summer I went abroad to China and Vietnam studying water resource management. This summer I am participating in the Oceans and Human Health sampling effort and taking a geology field course for a month in Canada. I received the NOAA Ernest F. Hollings Scholarship and will be participating in that 10 week internship next summer. I currently work in a research lab studying bacteria interactions with biofilms on beach sediment grains and the implications for human safety at recreational beaches. I am a member of Rho Rho Rho and play on the UM Women’s rugby team. I am also secretary for Big Brothers Big Sisters at UM and co-chair for Ocean Kids, a non-profit marine science education effort dedicated to helping underserved children. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions!
Maria Rodgers – Class of 2012
Major: Marine Science Biology
Minors: Chemistry, Spanish
Email: maria.rodgers@ymail.com

Hi my name is Maria Rodgers and I am a junior from the Pittsburgh area. My majors are Marine Science and Biology and I have minors in Spanish and Chemistry. I am currently the Vice President of Rho Rho Rho (the marine and atmospheric science honor society) and am also involved in SCUBA club and the Marine Mammal Stranding Team. This summer, I interned at the aquarium in Pittsburgh working with sharks and rays and also was a lifeguard at a local pool. In the future, I hope to attend graduate school, obtain a Ph.D., and conduct research on sharks.

Katharine Woodard – Class of 2011
Major: Marine Science Biology
Minors: Chemistry, German Language
E-mail: k.woodard@umiami.edu

I’m a senior Marine Science/Biology major with a minor in Chemistry and German Language. I grew up in North Carolina though call home Louisiana, because I am an Army Brat. My parents recently moved from Japan to Tampa, Florida. Last summer, I completed a REU at the University of Miami, studying bacteria levels at a beach dominated by non-point sources using a mechanistic approach. The semester before (Spring of 2010), I spent studying abroad in the Galapagos Islands. I love scuba diving, running (I run Track/Field and Cross Country for UM), water skiing, and most everything dealing with the water. I plan on going to graduate school and study something along the lines of marine biophysics.

Kelly Kavanaugh – Class of 2011
Major: Marine Science Biology – Pre-Veterinary
Minors: Spanish, Chemistry
Phone: 630-364-8712
Email: k.kavanaugh@umiami.edu

Hi, my name is Kelly Kavanaugh and I am a senior from a little town outside of Chicago. I came to Miami because I love the ocean and I love Spanish culture, and Miami has plenty of both of these! Although I want to be a large animal vet, I am in love with the ocean and I never get sick of learning new things about marine science. I am involved with the Pre-Veterinary Society and Marine Mammal Stranding Team as well as a bunch of other clubs. This past year, I did research out at RSMAS with my physiology professor on the effects of Prozac on gulf toadfish. My favorite things to do include going to the beach, playing with my dog, or any dog, or actually any animal, snorkeling, traveling to Spanish-speaking countries, basketball, dancing, eating Chicago-style pizza, volunteering, and being with friends. My most memorable moment at UM has been feeling the heartbeat of a stranded pygmy sperm whale during volunteer rehabilitation with the Marine Mammal Conservancy (ask me for details!!!). I will always have a passion for the ocean, but I plan on going to vet school after graduation and eventually settling in Wisconsin and owning lots of horses.
Hi! My name is Amy Pflaumer. I’m a senior majoring in Marine Science and Biology with minors in Chemistry and Math. I came to Miami from cornfield-filled Illinois to be near the beautiful Atlantic Ocean! When I’m not in class, I’m almost always at RSMAS, studying the genetics of corals and their symbionts in Dr. Baker’s lab and temporal fluctuations of coral cover on Uva Island Reef in Dr. Glynn’s lab. In addition to coral, I’m interested in marine invertebrates (thank you Saltwater Semester!), marine biomedicine, and molecular biology in general. I’m a member of MMST (Webmaster) and I also love to swim, read, volunteer at the Miami-Dade humane society, learn salsa (SalsaCraze!) and be artistic in any way possible. Instead of heading back to the Midwest this summer, I’m staying on the coast; working at the University of North Carolina’s Institute of Marine Sciences, where I study the toxic cyanobacterial *Microcystis* blooms that plague the drinking water in Lake Taihu, China. I’m also an Academic Fellow in Hecht (PT 8!), so I’m sure you’ll see me around all the time! Feel free to ask me any questions or just stop and introduce yourself!

**Abby Wisnet – Class of 2013**
Major: Marine Science Biology
Minor: Chemistry
Email: a.wisnet@umiami.edu

Hi! My name is Abby Wisnet. I am a sophomore from Wisconsin and am majoring in marine science and biology and minoring in chemistry. Along with being a peer counselor, I’m an officer on the Marine Mammal Stranding Team and am involved in Rho Rho Rho, the Pre-Veterinary Society, and SCUBA club. During the school year, I deal with exotic animal specimens in the Comparative Pathology lab at the UM med campus, and for the past two summers, I have worked as a zookeeper. I’m a huge fan of sloths and stingrays. After graduating, I hope to go into veterinary medicine for both small animals and marine animals. Besides school activities, I love playing tennis, playing with my dog and rabbit, SCUBA diving, laying in hammocks, and just enjoying life!

**Kelley Winship – Class of 2012**
Major: Marine Science Biology
Minors: Chemistry, Psychology
Email: kelley.winship@gmail.com

My name is Kelley and I am a Marine Science and Biology major with minors in Chemistry and Psychology. I am from Tampa, Florida, and although I always said I would be leaving the humid state of Florida for college, that changed when I visited the University of Miami. Besides being a peer counselor, I am the President of Rho Rho Rho, the Marine and Atmospheric Science Honor Society, the Community Liaison for Ocean Kids 2010, and a member of the Marine Mammal Stranding Team. Although I am passionate about the entire marine ecosystem and all of its inhabitants, my true interests lie with cetaceans. I have completed two internships involving dolphin training and research, and I hope to pursue graduate research working with these animals. I also enjoy educating others about the ocean, and have really enjoyed working with the Ocean Kids event to teach underprivileged children in the Miami area about marine conservation issues.
Kait Birghenthal – Class of 2011
Major: Marine Affairs
Minor: Ecosystem Science & Policy
Phone: 305-785-9020
Email: seacanekb@yahoo.com

Hi there fellow Marine & Atmospheric Science lovers, and welcome to UM! My name is Kait Birghenthal, and I was born and raised in Miami. I’m a senior Marine Affairs major with a minor in Ecosystems Science and Policy, and am on the 5-year Master’s track for Marine Affairs. Beyond academia, I’m quite involved with extra curricular activities, including co-chairing our annual Ocean Kids event for underserved children along with Dr. Jill Richardson and a bunch of fantastic classmates. We’re always looking for people to come help, so please feel free to contact me if you’re interested! This summer, I worked for the National Marine Fisheries Service’s Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and the summer before that, I interned at Northeastern University’s Marine Science Outreach program, both of which I found to be entirely wonderful experiences! When not doing school-related things, I love hanging out with friends, going on voyages to Disney World, baking, and just overall enjoying life. I’m super friendly, and in general I love to chat, so if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Good luck & happy sciencing!

Josh Turner – Class of 2011
Majors: Meteorology, Mathematics
Minor: French
Email: j.turner4@umiami.edu

Hi, my name is Josh Turner and I’m currently a senior double major in Meteorology and Math and I have a minor in French. I’m from a tiny little town in western Maryland where I lived all my life prior to attending UM, and I absolutely love it here in Miami. I lived in Walsh Tower of Stanford my freshman year and then Mahoney sophomore year. Currently I’m living off campus but very close to UM. Deciding to come to UM was definitely one of the best decisions of my life. I’m currently doing an internship through the University of Oklahoma; I’m funded through the National Science Foundation to do research for NOAA-CREST in New York City this summer. My research is on convective thunderstorm trajectories and how their movement may be perturbed by the urban heat island affect. I look forward to coming back to UM and finishing my senior year, although finishing school will definitely be bittersweet. The only thing is, after undergrad, school won’t be over for me; I’m currently looking into graduate schools and I want to pursue a PhD in Meteorology.
Nikki Bruno – Class of 2012
Major: Marine Affairs
Minors: Biology, Ecosystem Science & Policy, Secondary Education
Email: scorpiox89@aol.com

Hi! My name is Nikki Bruno and I am addicted to Marine Science, aka “Fish Poking,” as I’ve come to affectionately call the field. I will be a junior during the 2010-2011 school year, and I’m currently studying Marine Affairs, Biology, Ecosystem Science & Policy, and Secondary Education. My love affair began many moons ago during a family trip to Sea World where I proclaimed I wanted to train dolphins. Since then, my interests have matured to encompass all sorts of conservation and ecological studies, as well as “spreadin’ the good fishy word” to anyone who will listen. I also enjoy racing sailboats, playing woodwinds, bombing hill (on a longboard of course), and exploring the outdoors through any above- or underwater means possible. I also spend more money on concerts than anything else. I’m super excited to be a MSC Peer Counselor this year, so please don’t hesitate one bit to contact me with any questions, comments, concerns, philosophies, or favorite microwave recipes!

Collin Crecco – Class of 2012
Majors: Marine Affairs, International Studies
Minor: Economics
Email: c.crecco@umiami.edu

Hey, my name is Collin Crecco, and I am majoring in Marine Affairs and International Studies with a minor in Economics. I am from New Hampshire and I’ll be heading into my junior year. The past two years have been a lot fun. I’ve earned my advanced and rescue diver certifications since I’ve been here, and I’ve also been a member of the Scuba Club, Earth Alert, Rho Rho Rho, and was the Vice President of the Undergrad Propeller Club last year. I’ll be completing an internship with NOAA as a Hollings scholar next summer. During my free time, I like to play pick-up basketball, baseball, and scuba dive. Hopefully after graduate school, I plan to go into environmental or maritime law.