Dr. Rick Luettich has been named a new alumni distinguished professor by the faculty and staff at the UNC-IMS. Dr. Luettich was selected in May and his professorship was officially announced June 17, according to UNC Executive Vice Provost Dr. Ron Strauss.

“It is clear that Dr. Luettich was outstandingly qualified,” Dr. Strauss said, “based on his background and research.”

Dr. Luettich was out of state and unable to come to the campus for the announcement. According to his pro file on the IMS website, Dr. Luettich has published more than 90 papers and reports on modeling, and observational studies of physical processes in coastal environments. One of his principal developments of ADIRC, a coastal circulation and storm surge computer model, and he’s overseen the use of this model in various studies, as well as in hindcasts and forecasts of tides and storm surges around the U.S. coast. ADIRC has been a cornerstone of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) storm surge studies that include forensic studies in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (2005).” The website says, “planning studies for new hurricane protection systems for the northern Gulf of Mexico coastline and coastal flood risk studies along the Gulf of Mexico and U.S. East Coast for the FEMA National Flood Insurance Program must also have been in pilot storm surge forecasting. Dr. Luettich has also conducted observational studies, including moored and shipboard sampling to characterize physical processes in coastal systems. Many studies focused on how these processes affect water quality, such as algal blooms and dissolved oxygen depletion, and fisheries recruitment.

Dr. Luettich has under taken and master's degree in civil engineering from Georgia Tech and a doctor of science in civil engineering from MIT. He has been named for his research as serving as director of IMS, he is director of the UNC Center for Natural Hazards Resilience, lead principle investigator for the Department of Homeland Security Coastal Resilience Center of Excellence and on the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observation System’s Coastal and Oceans Monitoring. UNC offers several different types of distinguished professorships. The one Dr. Luettich received is the alumni distinguished professorship. His specific field of research is civil engineering.

“In recognition of the contribution of exceptional faculty and staff to teaching and research,” he said, “the one Dr. Luettich received is the alumni distinguished professorship. He is one of the principal investigators of ADIRC, which is responsible for the development of many of the fundamental components of this model.

“Because Hurricane Florence was such a destructive event last year, it was important for us as researchers to develop a model able to predict these events. If the aquarium’s video matches, it would be able to save lives and protect our homes.”

The one Dr. Luettich received is the alumni distinguished professorship. His specific criterion is research, which is responsible for the development of many of the fundamental components of this model. The video features the family-friendly volunteer programs available to higher education and community leaders at the aquarium during Earth Day, April 20, 2019, and World Oceans Day, June 8.

The conservation action plan supports multiple conservation needs and projects for six native species in the state. A2A sponsored participants of the video contest to send in a 45- to 60-second video highlighting the story and impact of their volunteer event on the planet and its conservation.

The public can vote on the aquarium’s video multiple times a day until 11:59 p.m. Wednesday online at 252-726-7081 ext. 206 or on Twitter at @thenewstimes.