



Organization for Tropical Studies

Call for Research Mentors: 2018 NSF-LSAMP REU Programs, La Selva and Las Cruces Biological Stations

The Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) is looking for mentors for the Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) programs, funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), at La Selva and Las Cruces Biological Stations in Costa Rica.

In summer 2018, two nine-week REU programs will be conducted simultaneously, one at La Selva (with field trips focusing on environmental issues) and one at Las Cruces (with field trips focusing on culture and global health). The programs will include 28 undergraduate participants from NSF – LSAMP (Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation) institutions (14 students each at La Selva and Las Cruces). Each site will have a coordinator, a TA and a group of mentors.

The objective of these programs is to provide an introduction to tropical ecosystems and their environmental and cultural issues, as well as to offer a quality research experience for skilled and enthusiastic undergraduates representing a range of ethnic backgrounds.

Program goals for undergraduates include:

- Encouraging interest in field research and tropical ecology
- Establishing a clear understanding of the scientific method
- Introducing students to tropical ecosystems
- Facilitating academic group environments that allow development of communication skills needed for success in the sciences
- Increasing awareness of ethical and cultural issues to consider in research
- Improving understanding of career opportunities in biology and environmental science
- Facilitating exposure to an international network of researchers and local public to develop a sense of global awareness as scientists
- Encouraging participation of underrepresented minority students in STEM fields

Both programs are open to U.S. students in STEM fields who are underrepresented minorities (African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Native Pacific Islanders) and are enrolled at NSF-LSAMP affiliated institutions. Selected students will be in residence at La Selva or Las Cruces Research Stations for 9 weeks (June 4-August 7, 2018 at Las Cruces / June 6-August 9, 2018 at La Selva). Each student will have a home mentor – a trusted advisor from the student's home institution who is selected by the student – as well as a research mentor, selected by OTS. A workshop, held at the La Selva and Las Cruces stations, for home mentors and research mentors will be conducted during the days prior to student arrival at their respective sites.

Each research mentor will be responsible for supervising two participants' independent research projects at either La Selva or Las Cruces. Research mentors will be at the research station for a maximum of six weeks while the program is in session and a few days before the students arrive to participate in a workshop with home mentors. Mentors do not receive honoraria, but NSF funds will cover flights to and from Costa Rica, six weeks of station fees,

plus the mentor workshop. The program covers REU students' expenses, a stipend, and a small budget for lab or field equipment.

Ideal mentor applications will demonstrate the following:

- Previous research experience at La Selva and/or Las Cruces Biological Station in Costa Rica
- Experience mentoring undergraduates and working with students in the field
- Presentation of a potential project design that can be completed in 6 weeks and tests a novel and solid hypothesis
- Potential to be a strong science role model with the ability to guide students in initiating a lifelong career in STEM fields
- Desire to contribute to a well-rounded program that includes not only independent student research under the guidance of an experienced mentor but also statistics, communication skills, field safety, ethics training, and/or other workshops
- Strong record of publication and/or grant-writing

Interested mentors should send one PDF that includes **a letter of interest and a short summary (no more than 250 words) of 2 potential student research project(s)**. Please also provide a 3 to 10 word summary for each of the 2 project ideas. For mentors selected to participate, their proposed research topics will be listed on the OTS website so that student applicants can select their preferred mentors/projects in their applications. This is a 9 week program, where mentors typically stay for the first 6 weeks, and must also be willing and able to mentor students - via skype/email if not in person - until the end of the program (August 7th at Las Cruces and August 9th at La Selva). Students typically require extra attention during the final two weeks of the program as they analyze and write up their data.

The letter of interest should include

- Dates/time frames when you might be on site during the summer
- Your preference for working at La Selva or Las Cruces
- Whether you are willing to work at your non-preferred site

For researchers who have not previously served as mentors in the La Selva OTS REU, Las Cruces NAPIRE, please also provide a copy of your curriculum vitae and a statement of mentoring philosophy and experience. To allow sufficient time for appropriate matches between mentors and accepted participants, please send this information by **November 20, 2017**. Applications should be emailed to adriana.baltodano@tropicalstudies.org.

Important information to know before you apply:

1. Students will have no more than **6 weeks for data collection** in the 9-week program, so please consider projects that can be easily completed within this time.
2. When possible, REU research projects should be independent to the degree that there is a potential for publication with the student as the first author on the paper. The REUs should feel some ownership for their projects (or their part of a larger project) and should not be acting as mere research assistants.