NSF-Funded Research Opportunity for Faculty Serving Native American and Pacific Islander Undergraduates in LSAMP Institutions

The Organization for Tropical Studies is pleased to announce the availability of NSF-funded research opportunities awards (ROA) for faculty members in LSAMP institutions serving Native American and Pacific Islander undergraduates. Over a nine-week period three selected faculty members will receive weekly stipends to conduct independent research under the supervision of fellow faculty-level researchers at the world renowned La Selva Research Station in the Caribbean lowland rainforest of Costa Rica.

Funded by the REU Program at NSF, the La Selva site-based program will enable the ROA faculty participants to separate from their Native American and Pacific Islander students at the OTS-owned Las Cruces Research Station in Southern Costa Rica, but at the same time give them the opportunity to work alongside under-represented minority (URM) students in an REU program as well as be supervised by established research-mentors at La Selva. The participants will develop individual research projects, collect data, and analyze their work.

Eligibility information:
Applicants must have served as an “on-campus (home) mentor” to a Native American and Pacific Islander undergraduate student who has participated in OTS’s NAPIRE program at Las Cruces Biological Station. The applicant must also have a faculty/instructor position at the same LSAMP school from which their NAPIRE student(s) originated. The program targets specifically faculty from community colleges, Pacific Island colleges, and Native American-serving institutions.

What the award covers
This award covers participants’ travel to and from Costa Rica as well as travel, lodging, and meals during the nine-week program. Each mentor will receive a stipend of approximately $1038/week (tentative). A budget for equipment and supplies is also available.

To apply
Please send the following materials (if possible, please send as a single PDF):

1. Cover letter
2. Brief statement regarding your research interests and how you believe this program would benefit you, your institution, and your mentoring of URM students. With respect to your research interests, please rank (1 – 4) your interest in the following research topics:
   - Amphibian/red-eyed tree frog ecology & behavior
   - Entomology/Biogeochemistry of leafcutter ant nests
   - Effects of climate change and disease on amphibians
   - Insect herbivory/plant-insect interactions
3. Your Resume or Curriculum Vitae

Application materials should be sent to barbara.dugelby@tropicalstudies.org and must be received by Friday April 8th to receive full consideration.
Program schedule

Pre-Program: Beginning in April, the three ROA participants, chosen from the same institutions in which the students are being recruited, will work virtually with their research mentors colleagues to discuss mutual expectations, develop research plans, and anticipate project challenges and needs. The participants also work with OTS staff to arrange travel and receive a comprehensive orientation packet with the program’s learning objectives, schedule, risk management information, and packing list.

All summer: The OTS REU site-based program at La Selva holds workshops, science lectures, and social and cultural activities. The ROA participants would be invited to participate in the workshops, cultural events and evening seminars focusing on the research at the station.

Week 1: Introductions, Field Orientation, and Research Proposal. The ROA participants arrive in early June, along with the REU students chosen to work at La Selva, “Icebreaking” activities will be held throughout the week, including nature walks, social events, and workshops designed to develop a cohort feeling while providing an introduction to tropical ecosystems, Costa Rica, the scientific method, research design, and risk management. The REU- and station-staff leads sessions on safety and program rules, map and compass use, local biodiversity, GIS and lab facilities, Costa Rican culture, and other topics.

Week 2: Preliminary Field Work. The ROA participants and RE students will go into the field to set up their individual projects and troubleshoot initial setbacks. They will work closely with their research mentors to tweak experimental designs, polish hypotheses, and create fieldwork schedules.

Week 3-6: Fieldwork, Ethics Sessions, Tropical Biology Seminars, Other Program Activities. During this period, the participants are devoted to field data collection. ROA participants will meet their mentors as needed. Mentors will accompany the ROA participants into the field or work with them in the lab. Other activities during these weeks include visits with local indigenous or Costa Rican communities and recreational activities.

Week 7-8: Data Analysis and Writing. During this week, the ROA participants return to the lab or classroom and focus on analyzing and interpreting their data with the help of their research mentor, the program coordinators, and teaching assistants.

Weeks 9: Final Presentation of Results. With much excitement, the ROA participants will finalize their written reports, along with the REU students, and prepare a conference-style talk on their research findings. Mentors and program coordinators provide final comments to improve each manuscript, aiming for publication-quality work. The final research symposium is open to the La Selva researcher community.