

Research Experiences For Undergraduates In Tropical Biology In Costa Rica

The Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) is a nonprofit consortium of over 60 universities and research institutions from the United States, Costa Rica, Australia, México, Perú and South Africa. Since 1963, OTS has provided leadership in education, research, and the responsible use of natural resources in the tropics. OTS is committed to increasing the participation of women, ethnic minorities, and economically disadvantaged students underrepresented in the discipline. As part of this effort OTS and the **National Science Foundation** offer a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program in Costa Rica that provides hands-on, field-oriented research experiences to undergraduate students from throughout the United States.



What is this program like?

The OTS Research Experiences for Undergraduates offers students from diverse ethnic and academic backgrounds the opportunity to conduct field research with an experienced tropical ecologist. OTS supports undergraduates selected through a competitive application process for an eight-week research program at the world-renowned La Selva Biological Station in the Caribbean lowlands of Costa Rica. In collaboration with a research mentor, each student designs, conducts and presents field research projects at La

Selva. The program provides students with a first-hand look at the challenges and rewards of tropical ecology. Students participate in a rich academic field environment, including research presentations, discussions, and an ethics workshop. Participants also have access to the social, cultural, and recreational activities of rural communities surrounding La Selva. Former REU participants have built on their OTS experience by pursuing successful careers in the biological sciences, including field ecology and tropical medicine.

Program Highlights

- Field study at a state of the art biological station set in a diverse lowland tropical forest
- Experienced scientific mentors supervising your independent research
- Examination of ethical issues pertinent to tropical field research and conservation
- Cultural exchanges with Costa Rican and international students and researchers

What are the program prerequisites?

OTS seeks to offer this opportunity to students from a broad range of backgrounds. Competitive applicants will have a strong background in biology, a demonstrated interest in field ecology, and introductory knowledge of Spanish (equivalent to about one semester). Prior field experience is not a requisite for admission. As part of the application process, students must designate the mentors with whom they wish to work. Student research interests must correspond closely to those of the preferred mentor. Please visit our website at www.ots.duke.edu to find out which researchers and what projects are available.



Why work at La Selva Biological Station?

La Selva is one of the most important sites in the world for research in tropical biology. Owned and operated by OTS, it is visited annually by over 1,500 scientists from 200 institutions and 20 countries, as well as by over 200 education groups. Research at La Selva covers diverse areas, ranging from organismal to ecosystem level biology. These studies have led to the publication of more than 1,600 scientific articles, theses and books. Two-thirds of the La Selva property (1,536 ha) houses species rich old-growth forest, while the remainder is abandoned pastures and plantations in various stages of secondary succession or experimental usage. An extensive trail system provides access to a wide range of terrestrial and aquatic habitats. The entire property has been topographically surveyed to a high degree of accuracy, and spatially referenced data are managed on the Geographic Information System (GIS). Two well-equipped laboratories, including a large analytical lab, offer air-conditioned work space, common-use equipment, and internet connections.

Who can apply?

The program is open to U.S. citizens and Permanent Residents who are undergraduate students enrolled in accredited institutions in the United States. Graduating seniors are not eligible. To apply, students must complete the REU application, including letters of recommendation, official transcripts from universities attended, and a statement of research interests.

What does the REU award cover?

The OTS REU award covers the cost of room and board and international travel to and from Costa Rica. Participants will also receive a stipend.

What is the application deadline?

For the 2010 summer program, the application deadline is **January 31, 2010**. In order to be considered for admission to the program, complete application materials must be received by this deadline.

What are the program dates?

For the summer of 2010, the program will begin on **June 13 and end August 6, 2010**. Students will live at La Selva Biological Station during the entire eight-week research experience. Additional travel is not included in the program.



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