

**From:** Adriana Baltodano Fuentes  
**Subject:** Call for Field Research mentors - REU - Organization for Tropical Studies

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# ORGANIZATION FOR TROPICAL STUDIES

## Call for Research Mentors: 2017 NSF REU/ROA 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) and Research Opportunity Award for community college faculty (ROA) programs, funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), at La Selva and Las Cruces Biological Stations in Costa Rica.

In summer 2017, 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). Each program will include a total of 23 participants from a combination of applicant pools: NSF REU students (10, at La Selva only), LSAMP-NSF (Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation) students (10 at La Selva, 20 at Las Cruces), and, at each site, 3 ROA participants (community college faculty in need of field research and mentoring experience). Each site will have a specific 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 a quality research experience, for skilled and enthusiastic undergraduates and community college faculty representing a range of ethnic backgrounds.

Specific goals for the program include:

- Encourage interest in field research and tropical ecology.
- Establish a clear understanding of the scientific method.
- Introduce students to tropical ecosystems.
- Facilitate academic group environments that allow students to develop the communication skills needed to succeed in the sciences
- Increase student awareness of the ethical and cultural issues important when doing research.
- Improve students' understanding of career opportunities in biology and environmental science
- Facilitate student exposure to an international community network of researchers and local public to encourage their global awareness as scientists
- Encourage participation of underrepresented minority students in STEM fields.

Both programs are open to U.S. students enrolled at non-R1 institutions who are underrepresented minorities (African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Native Pacific Islanders). Selected participants will be in residence at La Selva or Las Cruces Research Stations for 9 weeks (June 7-August 9, 2017). Each student will have a home mentor – a trusted advisor from the student's home institution, selected by the student – as well as a research mentor, selected by OTS. Three-day workshops for both home mentors and research mentors will be conducted from June 3-6 at La Selva and Las Cruces. ROA (community college faculty) will be selected from among the 2015/2016 home mentors. These participants will conduct independent research under a research mentor's guidance while also learning mentoring skills from their mentors.

Each research mentor will be responsible for supervising two participants' independent research projects at La Selva or Las Cruces (either two undergraduate students, or one undergraduate and an ROA). Research mentors must be at the research station for a minimum of five weeks while the program is in session and one week to participate in a workshop with home mentors. Mentors do not receive honoraria, but NSF funds will cover flights to and from Costa Rica and six weeks of station fees, which include the mentor workshop. REU/ROA participants' expenses, as well as a small budget for lab or field equipment, are covered by the program.

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 attract students to begin lifelong careers in STEM fields and develop enthusiasm for their field
- Desire to contribute to a cohort-based and 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 researchers should send **a letter of interest and a short summary (no more than 250 words) of 2 potential student research project(s)**. The topics mentioned in the summary will be used on the OTS website so that applicants can select their preferred mentors/projects in their applications. Please be aware that mentors will be expected to be on station June 2-July 14 (La Selva) or May 31-July 14 (Las Cruces); mentors must be also willing and able to mentor students - via skype/email if not in person - until the end of the program (August 7). 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/timeframes when you might be on site during the summer
- your preference for working at La Selva or Las Cruces
- whether you would be willing to work with an ROA participant and an REU, or whether you would prefer two REU students.

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 no later than **November 15, 2016**. Applications should be emailed to [adriana.baltodano@tropicalstudies.org](mailto: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/ROA 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/ROAs should feel some ownership for their projects (or their part of a larger project) and should not be acting as mere research assistants.

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