

Preparing Students for Career Paths with the USDA Forest Service by Linking Student Success with Experiential Learning Opportunities in Forest Management and Climate Change Ecology

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New Mexico-Puerto Rico Natural Resource Career Tracks (NRCT)

PROJECT SUMMARY

This ROCN proposal is a collaboration among 14 Hispanic Serving Institutions in New Mexico and Puerto Rico focusing on Climate Change and Forest Service (FS) Labor Force Track. Our main objectives center on identifying and mentoring cohorts of students to prepare them for careers in Natural Resource Management. These students will be provided a series of experiential learning opportunities appropriate for their academic level that engage them in resource management. Annual programs include semester faculty mentorships, summer internship & research experiences, graduate student mentorship, field courses, a semester exchange program between New Mexico and Puerto Rico, high school field trips, and advising and tutoring programs. These programs will result in improved recruitment, retention, academic performance and graduation rates; a greater number of students transitioning from 2 to 4 yr institutions; and more students moving directly to careers with the FS or other USDA agencies.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. Increase student knowledge and skills in natural resource fields by placing students on internships, research mentorships, field course and trainings.
2. Increase academic performance and four-year graduation rates of students by 10% through our tutoring and advising programs.
3. Provide students with experiences to broaden their perspectives of natural resource disciplines through field courses and an exchange program between New Mexico and Puerto Rican Institutions.
4. Developing critical thinking and communication skills through independent research projects, faculty and professional mentoring, attendance to professional meetings, and research presentations.
5. Provide outreach to high school and entry level college students to excite students about careers in Natural Resource Fields
6. Develop a Forest Service/Graduate student Mentorship program to recruit underrepresented students into graduate programs.

KEY TO PROJECT SUCCESS

- Commitment to and understanding of project goals by project personnel and their institutions.
- Education Coordinator Positions.
- Communication and increased understanding among academic institution personnel and USDA Forest Service personnel.
- Communication of project goals with students enrolling the program.
- Ability to move funds across institutions – timely.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- 14 Collaborating HSI's (7 each in New Mexico & Puerto Rico)
 - New Mexico Institutions
 - NMSU-Las Cruces, NMSU-Alamogordo, NMSU-Grants, NMSU-Carlsbad, New Mexico Highlands University, Luna Community College & Eastern New Mexico University-Ruidoso.
 - Puerto Rico Institutions
 - UPR-Rio Piedras, UPR-Mayaguez, UPR-Cayey, UPR-Humacao, UPR-Bayamon, UPR-Utuado & InterAmerican University-Bayamon
- USDA Forest Service
- Project Oversight
 - Project PI's from New Mexico and Puerto Rico
 - USDA Forest Service Recruiters
 - Education Coordinators - New Mexico & Puerto Rico
- Undergraduate Education Program
- Graduate Education Program
- High School Outreach

PROJECT EVALUATION

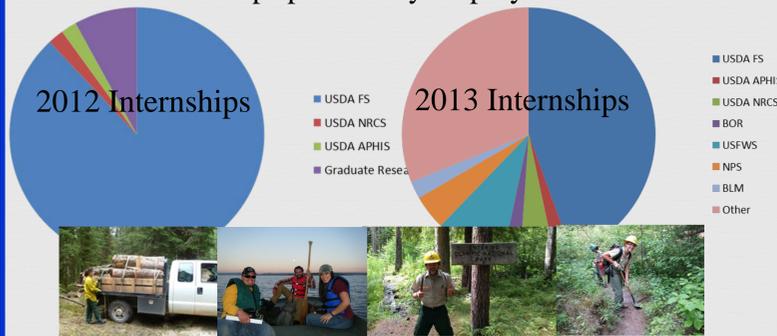
1. Number and ethnicity of students
2. Annual retention of students
3. Average GPA of program students compared all students in natural sciences
4. Research progress/GPAs of students in faculty mentoring program
5. Number /ethnicity of students in advising and tutoring programs
6. Number of students attending & presenting professional meetings
7. Database of student career choices
8. Program evaluations – students, mentors, agencies, and universities

CURRENT & RECENTLY CONVERTED INDEFINITE PATHWAYS STUDENTS

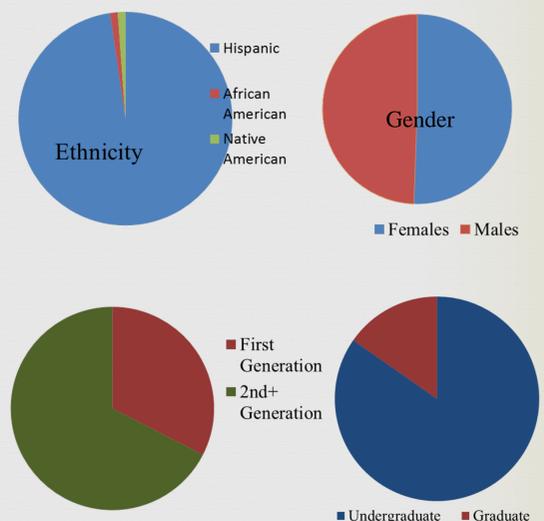


Summer Internship Placement

91 of 111 internships paid for by employer in 2012-2013



NRCT STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

