

Summer Internship Report 2017

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Research Station
Athens, Georgia**

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

I worked as a research assistant/field technician on a collaborative project that is studying the effects of the Rock Mountain, Rough Ridge, and Chimney Tops 2 fires that occurred in the fall of 2016. The main objective for the duration of my internship was to establish permanent research plots that will be used for the long-term monitoring of potential delayed mortality of trees in the plots. It is hypothesized that this would be primarily from the consumption of fine roots located in the soil organic layer that was burned, and that the species composition of the site would influence the severity of this. My primary responsibility was to correctly identify the species of each tree within our plots, in addition to recording all of our initial data.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

During this internship, I was able to gain valuable experience working with the initial stages of what will become a long-term research project. Time-sensitive field work in such a diverse landscape required developing the ability to assess issues as they arose and decide on the best solution possible with all factors considered, which will be an invaluable skill moving forward in my professional career.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

I was the only member of our research team who had spent extended time studying the diverse forests of the Southern Appalachian region, which was all done during my time at Sewanee. I was not only responsible for identifying the trees in our research plots, but taught my coworkers how to identify them as well.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

As a research team, we spent many long days working in the field together, and we were able to utilize each member's specialized skills to solve any issues or questions that arose, and maintained respect for differing opinions.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

I had originally not planned on attending graduate school, but I enjoyed working with the academic/research side of forestry, and now plan to attend graduate school in the future. My position was also extended for an additional 16 weeks after my 10 week internship, so I will continue to gain more useful work experience.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

The members of our research team had a variety of education levels, employment histories, and geographic locations, so we were all specialized in a different region and element of the study. This allowed for us to pool our knowledge for all to have a more holistic understanding and analysis of the research project itself and the area being studied.

Words of advice for future interns (housing, transportation, etc.)?

Fully utilize the Sewanee network (professors, alumni, fellow students, etc.) when looking for housing or information about a new area.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

I cannot begin to thank the donors for my internship funding enough for providing me with this incredible opportunity, especially since it was presented so last minute. I have truly enjoyed every part of my experience, and I am extremely fortunate that my position was extended beyond the initial internship. That would not have been possible without this funding, and I am sure that additional career opportunities will continue to arise in the future.