
SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM IN ECOLOGY

Experiential, place-based inquiry in an immersive field setting

20 undergraduates live and work at the Forest for 11 weeks in paid research positions

Funding Needed: Each student's experience costs \$14,000



PHOTOS: Students and mentor collect field data, student prepares to measure greenhouse plants, interns at the summer BBQ

THE CHALLENGE

Field research experience builds the commitment, confidence, and skills necessary to ground a career in finding solutions to global climate and biodiversity crises. Yet, **research opportunities are hard to find, especially ones that combine field work with STEM training and professional development.** Since 1993, Harvard Forest has helped to fill this gap. With support from the National Science Foundation, Harvard Forest has supported 732 students in a summer of independent research. By NSF's program design, most of these students come from outside of Harvard. Here we seek funding to sustain this program into the future **and** to include more students from Harvard College.

OUR SOLUTION: RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNITY

By every metric, the Harvard Forest Summer Research Program in Ecology is a success. Most program alumni report their summer experience was 'extremely' or 'very' important in defining their long-term career goals. The majority of alumni go on to graduate school in environmental science, and at least 31 now are university faculty. Our success lies in the immersive experience – students live at Harvard Forest in the same rural landscape where their field research takes place – and in the professional networks students build here. Our summer mentors come from colleges and universities throughout the Northeastern US, and students can connect to the many ecological research and professional networks for which Harvard Forest is a national and global hub.

We engage undergraduates in the entire process of academic **RESEARCH with top scientists in the field**, from defining a research question to analyzing data and presenting results and conclusions. Students base their research questions in long-term, site-based projects that bring together ecology, computer science, geoscience, atmospheric science, conservation policy, and more. With **evidence-based EDUCATION practice**, we help learners grow from student to scientist through weekly professional development workshops and invited seminars that build marketable skills, create professional networks, and introduce career paths related to ecology and the environment. And through **COMMUNITY support** including shared residential housing, meals that bring students and mentors together, and informal field trips, students create lifelong bonds that build their sense of belonging in the world of STEM.