

Please explain your interest in ecological research, your current career plans and how participating in the REU program could help you in your degree program and in your future pursuits. Be as specific as possible. Keep in mind that in evaluating applications for the REU program, we are looking for students:

My interest in ecological studies stems back to grade school when my mother handed me and my brother a \$25 gift card and set us loose in Barnes & Noble with the loose instruction, "one paperback each, anything you want." We reconvened at the self-checkout ten minutes later: my brother swiftly selected *Homicidal Psycho Jungle Cat: A Calvin and Hobbes Collection*, and I blindly bumped into the register with my nose buried in *Bradford Angier's Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants*. That week, I devoured it like candy. The following Christmas, Santa got me one of those obnoxious Audubon bird clocks for Christmas, and I loved it.

Fast forward to fall semester of junior year in college: It is finals season and just as the Carolina Wren sings its sweet and piercing theme from the old clock mounted on the southern wall of my dorm room, I realize that each of my four biology classes (Ecology, Tropics, Genetics, and Climate Change and the Carbon Cycle) has spent at least one unit on climate change. My background and interest in anthropogenic changes to ecological systems is apparent in both my academic and work experience. In addition, many of the research positions that I have held have granted me experience in both the field and the lab. I have thus discovered that I am less interested in the type of biology research that involves sitting in a hood for nine hours a day looking through a microscope with a micropipette in my hand and more interested in the type of biological research that allows me to read up on current scientific endeavors and use that knowledge to design and perform my own study in a field that is very specific to what I am interested in. All I ask for is a mentor to answer my questions along the way, lend some guidance, and facilitate the thought process.

In October of 2013, Professor Kenneth Schmidt gave a guest lecture at Williams College on the Ecology of Information. Afterwards, I sent him an e-mail listing the questions that I didn't have the opportunity to ask in person. Our continued correspondence about potential projects on dusk chorus in veeries and the effects of traffic noise on bird distributions has preserved my strong interest in developing a related hypothesis with specific predictions and structuring a procedure that will allow me to discover something new and publish those findings to inspire students just like me to continue my line of inquiry. Participating in this REU program will, above all, give me a sense of direction as to what I will write my senior thesis on and what degree program I join post-graduation. I am currently studying for the GRE and emailing potential faculty advisors of environmental or climate studies at UC Davis, UC Berkeley, Columbia, and CU Boulder. In addition, I want to be a Peace Corp Volunteer at some point in my life, when the time is right.

In the most immediate future, however, I will continue my work at TERC, a non-profit education research and development organization in Cambridge, MA. Here we have a strong interdisciplinary team of ecologists, educators, researchers, engineers, and web designers that routinely collaborate on developing several climate and environmental science competitions and projects. As an intern, I write and revise education research papers to be published and grant proposals for new projects on the horizon. Besides occasionally getting to go on field visits to nearby schools where these programs are being implemented, another one of my favorite perks of working in Boston is getting passes to various museums in the area. My first weekend on the job, I visited the John James Audubon exhibit on the "Birds of America" at the Museum of Fine Arts. His dry humor and creative methods were gripping and my fascination was a timely reminder of how lucky I am to have found my call so early.