

## Statement of Interest:

There are numerous reasons why I am interested in an opportunity with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. The program provides a unique opportunity to study tropical flora up close and hands on. I am an excellent fit for this opportunity because of my prior experience and qualifications, I would provide many unique assets to the program, and the program would help further my academic and career aspirations.

I am currently majoring in Bioengineering with a concentration in Computational and Systems Biology. I will be graduating in December of 2015. While I have background in bioengineering in general, I focus specifically on genetic analysis, and computer science and I am especially interested in pursuing a career in plant breeding or horticulture. I have many experiences that would prepare me for being a productive, full time member of a lab, including internships and independent research. I'm comfortable around the lab and I am comfortable in front of a computer and can easily switch between the two. I am also comfortable and enthusiastic about working in the outdoors and harsher climates if required.

I lived in the mountainous areas of New York for a large portion of my life. The summers there consist of almost constant rain and low temperatures. There are also challenges involving local wildlife such as bears, spiders and aggressive insects. I have gone on hiking and camping trips in the wilderness that have lasted multiple weeks. I feel that this has prepared me for other hostile environments.

This opportunity interests me particularly because it would give me the chance to work with different fields than I can at school. The bioengineering curriculum at University of Illinois focuses more on medical applications and cellular interaction. It's my aspiration to have a career working with and researching plants, something that I don't get much exposure to. I'm very enthusiastic about having the opportunity to work with plants in a more hands on manner and would be thrilled to be able to research at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Experience of this variety would enable me to enter a career in the field I'm interested in with the confidence and background knowledge needed.

The research projects being explored during the program match my own interests. I'm interested in researching how plants propagate, which makes me excited about Carlos Jaramillo's research on seeds and fruits. In my current plant genetics research I am tasked with genetic sequencing so I already have a good background regarding Andy Jones's tropical tree research.

During my time as an undergraduate my biggest challenge was my sophomore year. My program has a notoriously hard curriculum and I was taking a full course load as well as holding down two jobs and multiple extracurricular obligations. The workload was intense. The solution was strict time management to ensure that all my work was completed. During this time I discovered the importance of leisure activity, even if it has to be scheduled, for maintaining good mental health.