

the GRO Forum



Environmental Protection Agency Greater Research Opportunities Undergraduate Student Fellowships

issue 2, 2008

where are they now? Catching up with GRO Alumni

Gregory Crawford

Gregory Crawford was a GRO Undergraduate Fellow while a student at Wiley College, Marshall, TX, where he earned a Bachelor's in Biology with a minor in Environmental Science. Wiley College was recently in the national spotlight due to the 2007 feature film *The Great Debaters*, directed by and starring Denzel Washington. The movie tells the story of the 1935-36 Wiley debate team's outstanding season, which included the first debate in the United States between teams from white and African-American colleges.

While a student, Gregory conducted his first environmental investigation, studying pollutants and fish kills in Caddo Lake, which covers 26,800 acres in Louisiana and Texas. Graduating from Wiley a year earlier than planned, Gregory then pursued graduate studies at the University of South Florida and Walden University. He earned a Masters of Science in Public Health (MSPH) degree, and is currently enrolled in a doctoral program.

In 1996, Gregory had his GRO summer internship at EPA Region 4, Atlanta, GA. Recalling the professional aspects of his internship, Gregory said, "I was able to work with and assist other scientists with a Maximum Achievable Control Technology standard for hazardous pollutants. It was primarily targeted at dry cleaners, to control hazardous air pollutants that they either were emitting or had the potential to emit in the atmosphere." He also has unique personal memories of that time, as he was able to attend events and experience the excitement surrounding the Games of the XXVI Olympiad, held that summer in Atlanta.



Gregory credits the internship with providing him the opportunity to interact with fellow scientists, understand the mission of EPA and other environmental organizations, and develop a network of contacts, including some who contributed to his accepting a job at EPA after graduation. Gregory worked in Region 4 as an Environmental Scientist, where he conducted regulatory planning for states related to compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). There, he became interested in criteria pollutants, such as ozone and its contribution to asthma, and urban heat islands in metropolitan cities. "Because of this interest in public health," Gregory said, "I was able to secure a position at CDC as a Health Scientist and have worked on and served as the lead scientist/investigator for research programs and projects related to air pollution, asthma, and volcanic gases." CDC, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and is the primary Federal agency conducting and supporting public health activities in the United States.

Gregory is currently the Deputy Branch Chief for the Air Pollution and Respiratory Health Branch at CDC's National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH). NCEH seeks to promote health and quality of life by preventing or controlling those diseases or deaths that result from interactions between people and their environment.

His experience as a GRO Fellow helped to develop Gregory's perspective on the environment. "It provided me the opportunity to get a first-hand experience in how I could contribute in making the environment a better, safer

place," he said. Gregory urges Fellows planning for their internships to "think beyond" the internship itself: "Start to think about what you would like to do in the future and how the summer internship can be a step in that direction. Relate and convey to people what really interests you and how you can potentially make a contribution."

fellows' reflections - summer 2008 GRO internships

Cynthia Williams

GRO Fellow Cynthia Williams traveled cross-country from Howard University, Washington, DC, to work on the Toxics Release Inventory at Region 9 HQ in San Francisco. Cynthia writes about her summer:

"It has influenced me to make a difference at home and school. I have started recycling on a regular basis and spreading the word to organizations I am a part of on campus. Currently, I am awaiting more information from Headquarters about ways to implement more programs on my campus and in my home of Washington, DC. I will be getting more information on how I can spread the word about Indoor Air Quality at my school, which has never been done on the college level. I've been telling my family and friends about things they can do. And, honestly, I can say it was because of this experience here at Region 9."

Rachael Lane

Rachael Lane, a GRO Fellow from Emporia State University in Emporia, KS, interned at EPA's Atlantic Ecology Division in Narragansett, RI, where she studied the emerging contaminant PBDE-209. Rachael reports:

"My project fit within the mission of this EPA branch by providing a confirmation of an emerging contaminant in an ecological system."



GRO Fellow Joseph Ifokwe shows off the prestigious Annual Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Award presented by the Green Chemistry Program in EPA's Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Washington, DC.

Contaminant confirmation allows for additional research to be done concerning the congener's fate and effect in the ecosystem. Overall, my internship proved to be an incredible experience. It allowed me to get a glimpse into the work of an environmental scientist. All the projects I worked on were fascinating and allowed me to explore new lab techniques."

Joseph Ifokwe

EPA HQ in Washington, DC, was the internship location for Joseph Ifokwe, University of North Texas, Denton, TX. About his summer working with the Green Chemistry Program, Joseph writes:

"The Green Chemistry Program is an important player in the vision for cleaner industry processes, and EPA performs a service to humanity in that capacity. The members of the program obviously have a passion to contribute to the greater good, or else they would have used their skills elsewhere, and they seem content with what they do. After interacting with my mentors over the summer, I think I have a clearer career goal now than before the internship."

Jay Feitshans

Jay Feitshans traveled from Albright College, Reading, PA, to Region 4 HQ, Atlanta, GA, for his GRO summer internship. Jay worked on a volunteer water quality monitoring project, and writes:

"This project taught me people skills and work planning. Any future work I might do in community interface projects will benefit from the people skills I learned during this project. The project also required my interdisciplinary skills as an Environmental Science major. I enjoyed working with the highly-motivated people of the EPA, and working outside of the office. My work this summer confirmed my interest in a career in Public Health. The internship experience was excellent."

introducing the 2008-2009 GRO fellows

Charisse D. Carter

Norfolk State University
Norfolk, VA
Major: Biology

Brandi N. Clark

Missouri University of Science and
Technology
Rolla, MO
Major: Civil Architecture and Civil
Engineering

Naveed Davoodian

College of the Atlantic
Bar Harbor, ME
Major: Biology

Annie L. Putman

Michigan Technological University
Houghton, MI
Major: Chemistry

Nadine S. Dodge

Skidmore College
Saratoga Springs, NY
Major: Environmental Science

Kyle D. Hellevang

University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, ND
Major: Chemical Engineering

Elizabeth A. Huyser

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI
Major: Engineering

William D. Shipman III

Morehouse College
Atlanta, GA
Major: Biology

Nathan Jones

University of Arkansas-Fayetteville
Fayetteville, AR
Major: Biology and Engineering

Todd Louis Massari

Roger Williams University
Bristol, RI
Major: Biology/Marine Biology

Jonathan L. McKinney

Missouri University of Science
and Technology
Rolla, MO
Major: Environmental
Engineering

Lan M. Tran

Virginia Wesleyan College
Norfolk, VA
Major: Earth and Environmental
Science

Tyler S. O'Dell

Lake Superior State University
Sault Ste. Marie, MI
Major: Chemistry and Fire
Sciences

Adam M. Olszewski

Mercyhurst College
Erie, PA
Major: Biology

Joshua L. Pierce

Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX
Major: Environmental Toxicology

Joseph Statwick

Joseph Statwick (Occidental College, Los Angeles, CA) spent his summer internship in Edison, NJ, with the Monitoring and Assessment Branch of the Department of Environmental Science and Assessment in Region 2. There, he did everything from preparing paperwork to calibrating equipment to crewing a 65-foot research vessel. Joe writes:

"Having been given these responsibilities has not only given me invaluable leadership experience, but has also shaped my desires for the future. I found, quite unexpectedly, that I have as much passion for the oceanographic sciences as the terrestrial ones, which may drastically alter my potential career paths as I consider a future in ocean sciences."

Austin Kana

Austin Kana, a GRO Fellow from Hobart College, Geneva, NY, also worked on the Community Energy Challenge out of Region 1 in Boston. According to Austin:

"This work has spurred a genuine interest in energy policy for me, both for energy efficiency and renewable energy. I became interested in energy policy prior to this internship, and this experience has solidified that. The personal interactions with the communities were the most valuable part of the internship for me, as opposed to communication via email or phone, because the face-to-face interactions gave me a chance to witness first-hand how these towns operate when it comes to energy and the environment."

Hannah Bruce

Hannah Bruce, from the Missouri University of Science and Technology (Rolla, MO), interned at the North and South River Watershed Association in Norwell, MA, a partner of Region 1 in Boston. Hannah says:

"As an engineering student, this internship offered me a different view of environmental work. I plan to maintain contact with the people I have worked with this summer, both because they are very knowledgeable in their fields and because they were so very welcoming and friendly to me."

Valerie Horstman

Valerie Horstman, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, interned at Region 1 in Boston, MA, where she worked on the Community Energy Challenge. Val says:

Akosua Dosu

GRO Fellow Akosua Dosu, Spelman College, worked at Region 4 HQ in Atlanta on the Performance Track Program, which recognizes businesses for environmental excellence. Akosua reports:

"This summer was full of learning and meeting new people. I really appreciated this experience. This summer has also helped me sharpen my communication skills. As a representative of such an important government agency, I had to be very conscious of my phone interactions with companies and EPA partners. I also learned what to look for when researching companies who are committed to environmental excellence. The internship and the people with whom I had a chance to speak definitely influenced both my future career and academic goals."

Elan Mitchell

Elan Mitchell, a GRO Fellow from Spelman College (Atlanta, GA) supported the Green Building Workgroup at EPA HQ in Washington, DC. She writes:



Zach Hicks, GRO Fellow, takes a rare break from working on the Grassroots Mercury Education Project at EPA Region 8 HQ, Denver, CO.

"My favorite part about the internship was the conversations I had and the people I met. Region 1 staff members were very friendly and helpful, and I thoroughly enjoyed hearing about their interests and experiences. As a GRO Fellow, I was unable to drive a government owned vehicle. This restriction worked in my favor as I had wonderful opportunities to get to know my coworkers when they accompanied me on site visits. By asking questions, I discovered that many people shared some of my interests, and they helped me learn much more than if I had only done my assigned project."

Zachary Hicks

Zachary Hicks traveled to Region 8 HQ in Denver, CO, from Colgate University, Hamilton, NY, to work on the Grassroots Mercury Education Program, reaching out to Hispanic and Latino communities about the dangers of mercury. Zach says:

"Overall, the fellowship was an incredible experience. The EPA, particularly the Environmental Justice program, seemed genuinely concerned with the application of their mission statement and it was visible not only in my project but in all the projects I studied while at EPA. The project also taught me much about my own academic interests and myself. As an Environmental Geography major, it became clear to me this summer that although studying the various aspects of environmental hazards in a classroom is easy, the application of such education in difficult cultural situations is much different."



Hannah Bruce collects a water sample during her GRO summer internship at the North and South Rivers Watershed Association, Norwell, MA, arranged through EPA Region 1 in Boston.

Terri Ambrose

During her internship in Edison, NJ, GRO Fellow Terri Ambrose of Spelman College, Atlanta, GA, participated in fish surveys as part of the National Rivers and Streams Assessment. Terri writes:

"We officially began the survey on July 1, 2008 with a site on the Delaware River. Some river sites were difficult. There were times when we had to walk the boat through shallow water, lift heavy equipment, and capture heavy fish. However, the experience was never dull and always an adventure. I learned a great deal during my summer internship. This internship has increased my interest in aquatic biology and in the water quality of my state. I also learned that although field work can be fun, it is not something in which I would want a career."



GRO Fellow Val Horstman (L) with her internship mentor, Shubhada Kambli (R), on the way to Martha's Vineyard to discuss the Community Energy Challenge with the local school superintendent.

"I thoroughly enjoyed being actively engaged in communities affected by the policies that I was attempting to help implement. I had the opportunity to see how EPA implemented environmental policy. I greatly enjoyed and benefited from my internship experience this summer. I met, engaged, or was in the company of individuals who are primary thinkers and chief crafters of environmental policy at EPA."

Amy Combs

Amy Combs, GRO Fellow from the University of Memphis (TN), studied marine organisms called mysids at EPA's Atlantic Ecology Division (AED) in Narragansett, RI. Amy reports:

"My summer internship with the EPA has only strengthened my impression of the EPA, its employees, and its missions. I was very impressed with the research facilities and the EPA's goals and programs, which I did not know much about before my internship. I worked with many very intelligent and dedicated researchers and other professionals. My overall experience during my internship at AED was wonderful."



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Hannah Fink

GRO Fellow Hannah Fink, Lafayette College, Easton, PA, interned in Athens, GA, at the National Exposure Research Laboratory. About studying disinfection by-products in drinking water, Hannah writes:

"The employees at the EPA were all very welcoming and treated me as another professional and not just an intern. It was an amazing experience working with Dr. Susan Richardson. She is brilliant in her field and a wonderful person for whom to work. Many of the employees gave me feedback on my upcoming honors thesis project and ideas for graduate school, which has been incredibly helpful."

Juandalyn Coffen

Juandalyn Coffen, a GRO Fellow from Spelman College, Atlanta, GA, studied disinfection by-products in drinking water at EPA's National Exposure Research Laboratory in Athens, GA. Juandalyn says:

"This summer allowed me to grow as an individual through some of the challenges I had to face early on in my internship. During the first two weeks, I was given lots of information regarding my project goals in the lab that required me to have to learn and remember a lot of chemistry. However, although my project advisor had to be absent for a few weeks, it allowed me to research the information I was not sure about to get a better understanding of certain methods and concepts. I believe that this helped me to become more self-reliant by establishing some solutions to various problems and concepts before approaching my project advisor."



Hannah Fink (L) and Juandalyn Coffen (R) demonstrate a shakeout procedure during their GRO summer internships investigating disinfection by-products in drinking water at the National Exposure Research Laboratory in Athens, GA.