

Georgia Coastal Ecosystems Long-Term Ecological Research Program

Diversity Plan

The Georgia Coastal Ecosystems Long-Term Ecological Research (GCE-LTER) program is committed to sustaining and enhancing diversity within our ranks. The GCE-LTER Diversity Plan is based on and consistent with the key goals of the University of Georgia's Diversity Plan (<http://diversity.uga.edu/pdf/UGADiversityPlan-7-27-2011.pdf>).

The overarching goal of the University of Georgia's Diversity Plan is to sustain and enhance a learning and work environment that is diverse and inclusive, where individual differences are valued and serve as a source for collective empowerment. UGA embraces diversity in all forms at all its locations, with the goal of creating an inclusive environment where all persons of the University community are respected. Diversity includes, but is not limited to, groups defined by race, nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, disability and/or health status, gender identity/expression, veteran status, geographic origins, and socio-economic status.

The five goals of the UGA diversity plan are to:

1. Enhance and sustain an institutional climate that values and welcomes diversity and inclusion.
2. Increase the recruitment and retention of diverse students, with emphasis on those who are historically underrepresented.
3. Recruit, retain and support advancement opportunities for a more diverse faculty and staff.
4. Expand partnerships that increase diversity-related research and program initiatives with businesses, communities and organizations.
5. Integrate diversity and inclusion into established systems of accountability.

The GCE-LTER (gce-lter.marsci.uga.edu) is a large research program administered through UGA, with participants from a number of other institutions. The program provides a particular locus where people of many different backgrounds and perspectives join together to actively advance knowledge in ecology and ecosystem dynamics through research, education and outreach. In all of our activities we seek to respect, value and learn from each other's differences.

The GCE-LTER is well positioned to contribute to several of the UGA diversity plan goals. **The primary strengths** that the GCE-LTER brings to this plan are 1) we are a major, long-term research program that can provide a context and administrative support for a long-term diversity initiative, 2) our scientists have an international reputation that leads to multiple opportunities for research collaborations, both across the US and globally, and 3) we have sufficient financial resources that we can target some of our funding directly towards fulfilling this plan. **The primary challenge** facing the GCE-LTER Diversity Plan is the continued underrepresentation of women and especially minorities in science and engineering fields nationwide.

The specific objectives of the GCE-LTER Diversity Plan are:

- 1. We will provide international research opportunities** to our members that will expose them to scientists and students from different cultures. To accomplish this, we will encourage participation in international research opportunities through NSF and other agencies. To date, GCE-LTER scientists have participated in international research trips to France and China, and have submitted grant proposals to fund exchange opportunities between the US and France. We will seek to build on these accomplishments in future years.
- 2. We will sustain and seek to increase the number of women within our ranks** until these are consistent with the proportion of women in the national population. To accomplish this, we will seek to ensure that there are no discriminatory obstacles that limit the success and advancement of women within our ranks. Currently, the GCE-LTER is led by a woman, and women constitute 33% of our ranks at the principle or affiliate investigator level, and 45% of our ranks at the post doctoral, technician, and graduate student level. We will seek to build upon these accomplishments in future years.
- 3. We will sustain and seek to increase the number of underrepresented minorities within our ranks** until these are consistent with the proportion of these groups in the national population. To accomplish this, we will seek to ensure that there are no discriminatory obstacles that limit the success and advancement of underrepresented minorities within our ranks, and will provide targeted opportunities for participation in GCE-LTER research by underrepresented minorities at the undergraduate level. To date, our record in this area has been poor, due to the overall low numbers of underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. Currently, the GCE-LTER ranks are 92% white and 8% Asian. We are now working with the Peach LSAMP program to offer 1-2 undergraduate research positions each summer that are targeted at underrepresented minorities.
- 4. We will sustain and seek to increase the geographic representation of our members.** As a program whose primary mission is research, our success is best ensured by recruiting the best appropriate scientists to our group, regardless of geographic and institutional affiliation. To accomplish this, we will seek to recruit participants to our ranks from across the nation, and, as appropriate, from across the globe. Currently, our researchers come from 8 institutions located in 7 states. We will seek to sustain and build on this level of geographic and institutional diversity in future years.
- 5. We will document our progress toward meeting these objectives annually.** We will assess our progress towards meeting these objectives, and reevaluate them, on an annual basis when we provide our annual report to the National Science Foundation. Our annual reports are publically available at our web site (<http://gce-lter.marsci.uga.edu/>).