Georgia Coastal Ecosystems LTER

Member of the NSF Long Term Ecological Research Network

2026 GCE Internship application

Georgia Coastal Ecosystems LTER
Summer Internship Application

The Georgia Coastal Ecosystems Long Term Ecological Research site (GCE) was established by the National Science Foundation in 2000. The study domain encompasses three adjacent sounds (Altamaha, Doboy, Sapelo) on the coast of Georgia, U.S.A., and includes upland (mainland, barrier islands, marsh hammocks), intertidal (fresh, brackish and salt marsh) and submerged (river, estuary, continental shelf) habitats. The GCE field site is based at the University of Georgia Marine Institute on Sapelo Island, and the program is administered at the University of Georgia Department of Marine Sciences in Athens, Georgia. Over 60 participants, representing 14 academic institutions and agencies, are currently involved in GCE research and educational programs.

The GCE LTER is looking for undergraduate interns for summer 2026. Some opportunities are limited to students who have not yet graduated. All positions will receive either a stipend or an hourly salary. Most internships last ~8-10 weeks between May and August. However, start and end dates are flexible based on the schedule of the intern and supervisor. Please read the position descriptions carefully as some positions have different requirements, dates, and/or locations. Depending on available

funding, we may not fill all these positions.

Applicant Information

Contact Information

First name

Last name

Name you would like to be called

Email Address

Current Address

City

State

Postal Code

Country

Citizenship (Note: Only U.S. citizens and permanent residents are eligible for most internships)

- ◯ US
- ◯ Permanent Resident
- ◯ Other

Demographic Information

On a voluntary basis, please provide us your demographic information.

Gender

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Other
- ◯ Prefer not to categorize

Ethnicity (check all that apply)

- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hispanic-Latino
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Pacific Islander
- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Other

Please specify

Prefer not to categorize

Disability (if you have a disability, please provide us with more information so that we understand any necessary accommodations)

Are you a member of LSAMP?

- Yes
- No

Are you a first generation college student? (Definition: You parents or guardians do not have a post-secondary degree. You are still considered first generation if your parents/guardians have attended college, but did not complete a degree program.)

- Yes
- No

Education

Transcripts are not needed at this time. Applicants who are accepted into the program will be required to provide an official transcript for verification.

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Institution Where Currently Enrolled

Current Class (e.g. Junior)

Overall GPA

Major

GPA in Major

Expected Graduation (month and year)

For UGA applicants only:

810 number

Have you even been on the UGA payroll before?

Please list any completed coursework (including grade earned) in the physical or life sciences, mathematics, computer science, or other relevant field.

Course 1

Course 2

Course 3

Course 4

Course 5

Research Interest

The following research opportunities are open for summer 2025. Please read the position descriptions carefully as some positions have different requirements, dates, and/or locations. Below the descriptions, you will be asked to rank each position by preference.

Tracking Ecological Variability Across Habitation Transitions in Coastal Salt Marshes. Supervisor: Steven Pennings (University of Houston) and Amanda Spivak (University of Georgia). The intern will help study how variability in ecological communities changes across habitat transitions along a salt marsh-to-creek bank gradient. This individual will be part of a multi-disciplinary team and contribute to collection and processing of samples representing plant and benthic invertebrate communities. On a daily basis, the intern will report to Steven Pennings, but will interact with Dr. Spivak during periodic field campaigns. Collections will involve long days hiking through uneven and soggy terrain in salt marshes and upland borders, working with marsh plants and invertebrates, digging in soils, and

observing ecological features (e.g., crab burrow holes). Field days can occasionally be up to 10 hours or more depending on tides and require carrying 40 lbs or more. Experience with coastal field work is desirable but not required. This position will be based on Sapelo Island, GA for ~10 weeks during May-August; housing will be provided and reasonable travel expenses to and from Sapelo Island will be reimbursed. This position will receive a stipend equivalent to $15/hr. This position is limited to students who have not yet graduated.

Variability across salt marsh-to-upland elevation gradients. Supervisor: Amanda Spivak (University of Georgia) and Steven Pennings (University of Houston). The intern will help study variability in ecological and biogeochemical processes along elevation gradients in salt marsh to upland transitions. The intern will assist with a range of lab and field tasks and preliminary data analyses. This includes preparation for sampling trips (e.g., vial cleaning and labeling), sample collection and notetaking in the field, and measurement of gas fluxes between plants and soils and the atmosphere (CO_2, CH_4). Following sampling trips, the intern will be involved in laboratory analyses and data entry and visualization. The intern will work closely with and report daily to Dr Spivak and a postdoc in the Spivak lab, and will interact with Dr. Pennings when on Sapelo Island. The intern should be comfortable with long days in the field (up to 12 hours or more depending on tides) and be able to carry 40 lbs or more. Field days in the summer can be hot, buggy, and muddy and involve hiking over uneven (and squishy) terrain with sensitive equipment and samples. The 10-week internship (May-August) is based at UGA's Athens, GA campus but will involve several multi-day trips to Sapelo Island (GA) where the field sites are located. Housing in Athens will not be provided. Reasonable travel expenses to and from Athens will be reimbursed, and travel expenses to and from Sapelo for field work (including food and housing) will be covered. This position is limited to students who have not yet graduated. This position will receive a stipend equivalent to $15/hour.

Geospatial Analysis of Coastal Ecosystems' Primary Production and Effects of External Drivers. Supervisor: John Schalles (Creighton University). This position, in June and July, involves field, laboratory, and computer work for the Georgia Coastal Ecosystems LTER project at the University of Georgia Marine Institute on Sapelo Island, Georgia. On workdays, the intern will report to John Schalles. The intern will receive training in marsh and coastal water sampling, satellite and drone imagery acquisitions, use of ENVI and Pix4D geospatial software for imagery processing and analysis, and use of MINITAB's multivariate statistics, including Random Forest, to identify and rank external variables that best explain four decades of spatial-temporal patterns of Spartina alterniflora and Juncus roemerianus and newer data on phytoplankton chlorophyll in Georgia's ten main estuaries and adjacent waters. The intern should be comfortable with some long days in the field and ability to carry some heavy loads (up to 40 lbs). Experience with small boats and computer data processing are desirable but not required. Housing will be provided and reasonable travel expenses to and from Sapelo Island will be reimbursed. This position will receive a stipend equivalent to $15/hr. This position is limited to undergraduate students who have not yet graduated.

Field assistant in coastal science. Supervisor: John Williams (GCE LTER lead technician). The intern will work as a general assistant to the GCE technicians on Sapelo Island. Duties may include assisting in water quality sampling, plant and invertebrate monitoring, boat and flux tower maintenance, helping a variety of research groups with field work, and light construction. On a daily basis, the intern will report to John Williams and the other GCE technicians. This position will be primarily in the field, often in small boats, and will require strenuous physical activity and irregular hours. The position will be based on Sapelo Island, GA for ~10 weeks during May-August, but we can also consider applicants wishing to work for ~10 weeks in the Fall or Winter. Housing will be provided and reasonable travel expenses to and from Sapelo Island will be reimbursed.

This position will receive a stipend equivalent to $15/hr. This position is open to all undergraduate students and recent graduates.

Recovery from disturbance in intertidal marshes. Supervisor: Steven Pennings (University of Houston). The intern will assist with monitoring two experiments in intertidal marshes that are designed to understand factors that affect marsh recovery from disturbance. This will include sampling marsh soils, plants and invertebrates; and some laboratory work processing soil and plant samples. The intern will enter data and have the opportunity to learn how to graph data in R. On a daily basis, the intern will report to Steve Pennings and his graduate students. The intern should be comfortable with long days in the field and have the ability to carry 40 lbs or more. The position will be based on Sapelo Island for ~10 weeks during May-August; housing will be provided and reasonable travel expenses to and from Sapelo Island will be reimbursed. This position will receive a stipend equivalent to $15/hr. This position is limited to students who have not yet graduated.

Salt marsh molecular ecology. Supervisor: John Wares (University of Georgia). The intern will support field collection of environmental data and specimens, as well as learning genomic methods to distinguish organisms by environmental drivers. In addition to learning proper field collection and tissue preservation methods, the intern will be involved in laboratory work associated with specimen curation and genotype-by-environment analysis. On a daily basis, the intern will report to Anderson Smith, a Double Dawg MS student with whom Wares has been working for approximately 2 years, as well as Wares; all interactions will be advised by Wares. The intern should be able to support long field days for 7-10 day periods of field collections. The position will be based in Athens, Georgia for ~8 weeks between June and August 2026, with 1 or 2 extended trips to Sapelo Island. Other time will be spent in the Wares lab at the University of Georgia processing tissues and data. Housing in Athens will not be provided. Reasonable travel expenses to and from Athens will be reimbursed, and travel expenses to and from Sapelo for field work

(including food and housing) will be covered. This position will receive a stipend equivalent to $15/hr. This position is limited to students who have not yet graduated.

Marine Science Communications and Media internship.
Supervisor: Nuette Gordon and Jonah Rigdon (UGA Marine Institute). This internship offers an exciting opportunity to support and amplify coastal and marine research and education activities at the UGA Marine Institute on Sapelo Island during the peak summer season. The intern will play a key role in science communication through dynamic social media engagement, helping to share the story of coastal ecosystems with diverse audiences. Key responsibilities include the development and implementation of creative strategies for science communication across social media platforms, capturing and curating compelling content from ongoing research and educational activities, and engaging with diverse audiences to promote awareness of coastal and marine science. Background experience in communications and social media management, proficiency with digital tools and content creation platforms, the ability to work independently, and being comfortable working outdoors in challenging conditions (mud, heat, insects) are required for this internship. The position will be based on Sapelo Island for ~6 weeks (16 May – 27 June 2026). Housing will be provided and reasonable travel expenses to and from Sapelo Island will be reimbursed. This position will receive a stipend equivalent to $15/hr. This internship is open to undergraduate and recently graduated students.

Please rank the available positions in order of interest:

Drag your choices here to rank them

Tracking Ecological Variability Across Habitation Transitions in Coastal Salt Marshes.

Variability across salt marsh-to-upland elevation gradients.

Geospatial Analysis of Coastal Ecosystems' Primary Production and Effects of External Drivers.

Field assistant in coastal science.

Recovery from disturbance in intertidal marshes.

Salt marsh molecular ecology

Marine Science Communications and Media internship

You may also read the research interests of our project investigators here . If any of our investigators are doing research that particularly interest you, provide their names and the part of their research you are interested in. (There is a possibility, but no guarantee, that an opportunity will open up with these researchers.)

Additional Information

Statement of Interest

Briefly describe your post-graduation plans and career goals, and specify your reasons for wanting to participate in this internship program. (1300 characters, approx. 200 words, max)

Skills and Experiences

Explain any past experiences or specialized skills that may be relevant to these projects, such as experience in field or laboratory settings, equipment or software you have used, etc. (1300 characters, approx. 200 words, max)

Personal Statement

The GCE REU Program values interns who share the trait of perseverance. Please describe any hardships (physical, educational, economic, social or otherwise) that you have overcome in pursuing your academic goals. Please don't feel obligated to share highly personal details here. (1300 characters, approx. 200 words, max)

Additional Information

Describe any school activities, clubs or programs you have participated in, including offices held and academic honors earned, that are relevant to these internships. Also describe any relevant experience with non-school clubs, activities, programs or conferences. (1300 characters, approx. 200 words, max)

Optional

Please share any additional information about yourself not addressed by this application or any concerns you have with participating in the GCE REU Program. (1300 characters ,approx. 200 words, max)

References

Please provide the name, title, and contact information (email and/or phone) for two professional references (i.e. professor, teaching assistant, employer, supervisor, etc.).

Reference 1

Name

Title

Institution

Email Address

Phone

Reference 2

Name

Title

Institution

Email Address

Phone

Please attach a CV or resume to accompany your application.

File 0 of 1 Max file size: 50.0MB

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To submit your application, click the Done button below. Please review your application before submitting (you may not make changes once your application is submitted).

Please click the box below.