



Organization for
Tropical Studies

Research Experience for Undergraduates Tropical Biology in Costa Rica



**Learn how to conduct your own ecological research in the rainforest,
one-on-one with an experienced tropical biologist
(all expenses and stipend included)**

The Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) is a nonprofit consortium of over 50 universities and research institutions from the United States, Costa Rica, Australia, México, Perú, and South Africa. Since 1963, OTS has provided leadership in education, research, and the responsible use of natural resources in the tropics. OTS is committed to increasing the participation of women, ethnic minorities, and economically disadvantaged students underrepresented in the discipline. As part of this effort OTS and the **National Science Foundation** offer two Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Programs in Costa Rica to provide hands-on, field-oriented research experience for undergraduate students from the United States. One program is supported by NSF, and the other is supported by LSAMP-NSF (Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation Program).



What is this program like?

Students will complete an independent research project in the field with an experienced tropical ecologist, from the project planning stage to symposium presentation and potential publication. Twenty undergraduates will be selected through a competitive application process for an nine-week research program at the world renowned La Selva Biological Station in the Caribbean lowlands of Costa Rica. The program provides students with a first-hand insight at the challenges and rewards of tropical field ecology. Students will live immersed in a rich academic

community of researchers conducting novel tropical research, and they will attend workshops on field skills, current research in tropical biology, international research ethics, statistics, and scientific written and oral communication. Participants also have access to the social, cultural, and recreational activities of rural communities surrounding La Selva. Former participants of the OTS REU program are now pursuing successful careers in the biological sciences, including field ecology and tropical medicine.

Program Highlights

- Nine weeks of field study at a premier biological station in a diverse tropical rainforest
- Experienced scientific mentors to guide you through independent research
- Cultural exchanges with Costa Rican and international students and researchers



What are the program dates?

The program will be held in Costa Rica from **June 9 to August 10, 2016**. Students will live at La Selva Biological Station during the entire nine-week research experience.

Why work at La Selva Biological Station?

La Selva is one of the most important sites in the world for research in tropical biology. Owned and operated by OTS, it is visited annually by over 1,500 scientists from 200 institutions and 20 countries, as well as by over 200 education groups. Research at La Selva covers diverse areas, ranging from organismal to ecosystem level biology.

These studies have led to the publication of more than 3,000 scientific articles, theses and books. Two-thirds of the La Selva property (1,536 ha) houses species rich old-growth forest, while the remainder is abandoned pastures and plantations in various stages of secondary succession or experimental usage.

An extensive trail system provides access to a wide range of terrestrial and aquatic habitats. The entire property has been topographically surveyed to a high degree of accuracy, and spatially referenced data are managed on the Geographic Information System (GIS). Two well-equipped laboratories, including a large analytical lab, offer air-conditioned work space, common-use equipment, and internet connections.



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Who can apply?

The **NSF-OTS REU** program is open to undergraduates who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents enrolled at accredited U.S. institutions. Graduating seniors (May or August 2016) are not eligible.

The **LSAMP REU** program is open to undergraduates who are (1) U.S. citizens or permanent residents, (2) members of underrepresented minority groups (African-American, Hispanic, and/or Native American), and (3) enrolled in a LSAMP program. Graduating seniors (May or August 2016) are not eligible. To determine if your institution is an LSAMP member, check this website:

<http://www.pathwaystoscience.org/Institution.aspx>

What does the REU award cover?

The OTS REU award covers the cost of room and board and international travel to and from Costa Rica. Participants will also receive a generous stipend of \$4,000* for their 9 weeks of research.

*2016 stipend allowance is subject to change

What research will I do?

Student projects in previous years have investigated the ecology and conservation of various organisms and their ecosystems, such as GIS mapping of regenerating forests, behavioral ecology of understory insectivorous birds, and pesticide and climate effects on declining amphibians.

As part of the application process, students should indicate what topics they are particularly interested to study so that they can later be matched to a suitable mentor. Please visit our website at www.tropicalstudies.org/reu to see the mentors and research topics for this year.

Application Deadline

For the 2016 summer program, the application deadline is **January 31, 2016**. In order to be considered for admission to the program, complete application materials must be received by this deadline.