Student employment opportunity at the USGS Caribbean-Florida Water Science Center in Orlando, Florida

Job Description: Lab Technician in Harmful Algal Blooms Research Laboratory
Position Type: Student-service contract
Hours: Up to 40 hrs/week (up to 8 consecutive hours/day, excluding 30-minute lunch break).
Approximate start and end dates: April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2022.
Submission due date: April 15, 2020

1. Project Description:

Harmful algal blooms are of great environmental, social, and economic concern due to their adverse effects on human health, wildlife, fisheries, recreation, and tourism. Although many algal groups have the potential to form harmful blooms, the cyanobacteria are considered the most notorious bloom-formers and can be particularly devastating due to the diversity and potency of toxins (cyanotoxins) they produce.

The Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Research Group uses a polyphasic approach to investigate the 1) ecology and taxonomy, 2) cyanotoxin-gene presence and expression, and 3) environmental drivers of cyanotoxin production of bloom-forming cyanobacteria in rivers and lakes across the US. This approach combines morphological, genetic, and ecological taxonomic markers to accurately identify and characterize toxic cyanobacterial species, the species-specific toxins produced, and the environmental or ecological triggers of toxin-gene expression.

2. Description of Student Services:

The HABs Research Group is looking for a responsible, self-motivated, and skilled recent graduate or student with laboratory and microscope experience and a background in phycology to assist with our ongoing HABs projects. The student will be expected to process incoming phytoplankton samples, prepare samples for algal identification and enumeration through microscopic examination, keep detailed and organized written and photographic documentation of species presence and abundance. The student will also be responsible for preparing unialgal cultures from HAB samples and curating the culture collection. All samples shall be prepared and analyzed according to standard operating procedures and following a set schedule for sample completion.

3. Required Expertise/Skills:

Two years minimum experience in microscopy and algal sample preparation, identification, and counting is required. The student is expected to identify algae up to genus, preferably species, level through microscopic examination and know how to use dichotomous keys and taxonomic reference material to aid in identification. The student must be proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint and know how to prepare and maintain community and environmental datasets. The student must be familiar with basic laboratory practices and safety requirements.
4. Description of Working Conditions:

Work will be performed in a laboratory and a designated microscopy room. The student will be handling potentially toxic algal species and occasionally working with dangerous chemicals and is required to wear safety apparel and to closely observe safety requirements.

5. Compensation:

Compensation is commensurate with the level of experience and achievement. Rates per hour are available at https://insight.usgs.gov/aei/offices/oa/oag/AOP/sd/studentratetable.pdf

Candidates will be evaluated based on their laboratory and phycological experience.

Student is responsible for all costs of transportation to and from the principal duty station location. The Government does not provide housing, meals or other living expenses while working at the principal duty station. Travel away from the duty station is not expected.

6. Principal Duty Station:

U.S. Geological Survey
Caribbean-Florida Water Science Center
12703 Research Parkway
Orlando, FL 32826

Please send resumes, transcripts, and at least 2 letters of recommendation to vmazzei@usgs.gov with the subject heading “Student Contract Opportunity”