

Paid Summer Undergraduate Research and Extension Experiences in Belize

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture and the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences are initiating a 3-year project in Belize with our partners the Friends for Conservation and Development, Friends of the Vaca Forest Reserve, Cayo Women for Conservation, and the Belize Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment, and Sustainable Development.

What students will do: Students will be paired with and mentored by a faculty member from UT or UF to conduct a research project for 6-weeks in Belize during Summer 2017 and an extension project based on the research results during Summer 2018. Projects will include: a) 2 projects on agricultural production and agroecology, b) 2 projects on wildlife ecology and ecosystem services, c) 1 project on forest production or reforestation, and d) 2 projects on economics and farmer & public attitudes and behavior towards conservation and agriculture.

Study location and student accommodation: Students will conduct research with farmers in and around the Vaca Forest Reserve. This area is tropical rainforest with exceptional biodiversity, part of the Maya Mountains protected areas, and home to many endemic and threatened species. There are also farms adjacent to and within the Vaca practicing conventional and sustainable agroecological farming methods.

All student expenses will be covered by the project **including a stipend**. Students will stay in groups of 2 or 3 with a Belizean homestay family. At least 2 mentors from UT or UF will be present at all times in Belize. There are also options to receive academic credit.

Students from outside UT are highly encouraged as we will only choose a maximum of 4 students from UT.

We are interested in highly-motivated early-career students (*first and second year students, & juniors graduating end of Summer 2018 or Dec 2018*). Students must commit to: 1) working with a mentor in Spring 2017 to develop the research project (US), 2) 8 paid weeks in Summer 2017 conducting research (US and Belize), 3) Data analysis and manuscript prep Fall 2017 (US), 4) Extension program design Spring 2018 (US), and 5) 8 paid weeks conducting extension projects Summer 2018 (US and Belize). The environment in Belize is hot, humid, rugged, and buggy, therefore students must be in good physical condition and able to work in challenging surroundings.

We encourage you to investigate a potential faculty mentor's research interests and contact him or her before writing your application: a) agricultural production and agroecology-Dr. David Butler (UT) and Dr. John Stier (UT); b) wildlife ecology/ecosystem services -Dr. Emma Willcox (UT) and Dr. Bill Giuliano (UF); c) forest production and reforestation-Dr. Michael Andreu (UF); and d) natural resource economics-Dr. Don Hodges (UT) and farmer & public attitudes and behavior towards conservation and agriculture-Dr. Adam Willcox (UT). More information on past Belize work can be found on the PTECS website wec.ufl.edu/ptecs/

Application process: Please submit the following items as a single .pdf file by **December 2** to Adam Willcox (awillcox@utk.edu) note double 'l' in Willcox.

- 1) Resume or CV
- 2) 2-page essay that describes your research interests (choose one of the topics above) and why this experience in Belize will be beneficial to your academic and career goals
- 3) Academic transcript. If you are a first year, you must indicate what grades you anticipate receiving
- 4) A letter from an academic mentor or advisor

