

Northern Ecosystem Research for Undergraduates (NERU)
(IRB #5103)
Focus Group #1 Outline

Overview: This first focus group is to be conducted as the students are wrapping up their first four weeks of preparation on the UNH campus, and are about to leave for Abisko Sweden. At this point, students have familiarized themselves with the program, read a number of foundational journal articles, been partnered with a faculty research mentor, developed a research plan for their project, and done much of the preparation for their field work.

Conducting groups and reporting results: The group of nine will be divided into two sub-groups—those working with PI Varner, and a combined group of those working with Co-I's Bryce and Hobbie. All short-term data reporting will be aggregated for the entire group, as to protect participant identities (due to low *n* value). Medium-term summative data may be disaggregated by group, and reported to project PI, if the evaluator feels that individually identifiable statements can be avoided. The goal of this disaggregation would be to evaluate project design in relation to the differing time commitments of the PI and the Co-I's.

Goals of the focus group(s):

Provide formative data in two forms:

- Short-term: feedback to be communicated immediately to NERU PI's, with a goal of adapting to expressed needs or concerns of participants.
- Medium-term: feedback that will inform programmatic design for the remainder of the program.
- Summative data: collect feedback that will inform project results that are reported upon completion.

Overarching question: Do you feel prepared to conduct the research that you have proposed?

Probing questions:

- Have you been able to find adequate background research (review of literature)?
- How well do you understand the specific field techniques that you will have to use?
- How well do you understand the specific laboratory techniques that you will have to use?

Overarching question/statement: Describe the support that your research mentor has provided.

Probing questions:

- Is your mentor available outside of formal NERU activities?
- Have you been incorporated into your research mentor's lab group?
- Is there a specific technician or graduate student who has taken on a secondary mentoring role?

Overarching question: What sort of programmatic changes could be made (or what should be left the same)?

Probing questions:

- How would you describe the balance between formal whole-group activities, research group activities, and self-directed work time?
- What are some thoughts on the process of choosing a research project and mentor?