



ANNUAL REPORT 2021: NAGT/USGS COOPERATIVE SUMMER FIELD TRAINING PROGRAM

The 2021 Field Season for the NAGT/USGS Cooperative Summer Field Training Program marked the 55th year of what is now one of the longest running science internship programs in the nation. More than 2,500 students have participated in this program since it was first conceived in 1965 by William "Bill" Pecora, then the newly appointed Director of the US Geological Survey. Many of these students have gone on to become well-known leaders, influential professors and outstanding contributors to the knowledge base of geoscience. (More information about the history, operation of this program, and this year's interns can be found on our website: www.usgs.gov/undergradintern (direct link to the brochure [here](#)).)

This year, 24 students were nominated by field camp directors, and 14 of those students completed an application for the program (in addition to 4 students who were nominated the previous year re-applying due to COVID complications). After receiving 35 geology-based proposals from USGS scientists and after the proposal review panel met and matched students to projects, a total of 15 students were placed with USGS science projects. Since bringing new life back into this historic program over a decade ago, we have now gone from 8 placements in 2002, to numbers that are consistent with the historical average for this program.

Summary of information and tasks completed in 2021:

- Letters went out from NAGT to field camp directors seeking nominations of qualified students in September.

The program maintained a restriction on the number of nominees from each field camp as follows:

- One student if the camp enrollment is 20 students or less
- Up to 2 students if the camp enrollment is 21-40 students
- Up to 3 students if the camp enrollment is 41-60 students
- Up to 4 students if the camp enrollment is greater than 60 students

In order to keep the program manageable we monitor the number of allowable field camp nominees on an annual basis. For the past several years, we have continued the practice of requesting that Field Camp Directors include a brief description of the attributes of the particular nominees selected. This greatly helps the USGS Placement Panel in their efforts to place a student with a project best suited to their abilities while also helping USGS mentor scientists in preparing to conduct their interviews with students.

- In October, letters were sent to all 24 nominees from both NAGT and USGS congratulating them on their nomination and instructing them on how to apply. The application is through USAJOBS. Of those, 14 students (58% of nominees) completed the application by the December 18 deadline.
- The USGS solicited internal proposals from scientists wishing to host an NAGT intern in the fall. A total of 35 proposals were received, and ultimately 15 were matched with interns (some projects hosted more than one intern). The USGS has a broad scientific mission that includes areas beyond traditional field geology like hydrogeology, ecology, and climate change. It continues to be a challenge to educate students about the value of doing an internship in a field they had not previously considered.
- The USGS maintains a running geology field camp list which was started to provide as a service six years ago (found at www.usgs.gov/geosciencefieldcamps), where the YES office and NAGT have cross checked and identified 128 active field camps. This year turned out to be very unusual because the COVID-19 pandemic caused all of last year's field camps to close, though some were able to go virtual. The nominees the USGS received all came from either virtual camps, or were students still eligible to apply from the previous year. The field camp list for the upcoming year was updated as usual in the spring.
- Program evaluations are sent to both scientists and interns toward the end of the summer field season. USGS sends evaluations to the scientists and NAGT sends evaluations to interns. These evaluations, copies of information referenced in the bulleted items above, and detailed, multi-year comparative

program information, are usually provided in the full packets to those attending our Annual Joint NAGT/USGS Internship Meeting. Evaluation results are summarized (anonymously) and will be provided at the meeting via either printed copies or electronically, depending on whether the 2021 meeting can be held in person.

- The USGS, Youth and Education in Science Office provides cost-shared support for these intern's salaries by way of funding transfer to the science center where they will be working. This year, the YES office provided over \$4k for each project that was approved for cost-shared support. The collective support for this program is in excess of \$400,000.
- The YES office has continued the use of a new hiring authority, started in 2019, allowing us to keep these interns on board for up to 4 years (rather than the previous limit of 5 months) if the project has the need for extended assistance and the funds to support the intern for an additional amount of time. Many scientists have indicated that this is of great benefit to them, as we already know of several who wish to extend their intern's employment and plan to do so, as long as there are no conflicts with their graduate school or other plans. Many of these interns welcome the opportunity to stay with USGS longer as well, especially in times of uncertainty due to government hiring freezes and the often difficult process of obtaining a permanent federal position.
- The Federal Recent Graduates hiring program provides a much sought-after opportunity for NAGT/USGS interns to continue employment for up to three years, as long as the USGS is not under a hiring freeze, with the intent of permanent hire (if funding is available).
- The USGS continues its recently expanded partnerships with the Ecological Society of America, and the GIS Certification Institute. These new partner organizations have nominated additional exceptional students in other areas of expertise that are needed by our USGS scientists, particularly those with projects based in ecology, biology, and GIS. These partnerships have been a positive addition, as they have not only allowed the YES office to increase the number of students placed in internships using this exceptional hiring authority, but they have also served as a tool to garner additional interest in the program bureau-wide with additional geology-focused projects.
- In 2021, the lingering effects from the COVID-19 pandemic caused many of this year's internships to be virtual, as they were last year, though some were able to join in-person at least part time in the field or lab. The YES office worked extensively with HR staff, Administrative Officers, hiring scientists, and the incoming interns themselves to maximize opportunities where possible and find flexibilities in the work environment in order for these internships to continue, including utilizing the (until last year) unprecedented option to work virtually where possible.
- The YES office partnered with the USGS Early Career Scientist Network to host a series of virtual weekly Professional Development Webinars. Each week, a guest speaker or panel is invited to speak and have an open discussion with interns about various topics of importance to them, such as science communication, scientific integrity, publishing, networking, safe and inclusive workspaces, applying to graduate school, and more. These virtual sessions are meant to serve as a way to bring together all interns and early career scientists across USGS, especially during a time when they might be working remotely and have limited opportunities for collaboration with their fellow colleagues. These webinars have received an excellent attendance rate from interns and positive feedback from mentors and interns alike.

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