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 starting year 2 of 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 will students 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 Summer 2018 and an extension project based on those results in Summer 2019. Projects will include: a) 2 projects on agricultural production and agroecology, b) 1 project on wildlife ecology and ecosystem services, c) 1 project on forest production or reforestation, d) 2 projects on economics and farmer & public attitudes and behavior towards conservation and agriculture, e) 1 project on freshwater aquaculture and water quality.

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 including a stipend. Students will stay at a local hostel. At least 2 mentors from UT or UF will be present at all times in Belize. There are 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 2019 or Dec 2019). Students must commit to: 1) working with a mentor in Spring 2018 to develop the research project (US), 2) 8 paid weeks in Summer 2018 conducting research (US and Belize), 3) Data analysis and manuscript prep Fall 2018 (US), 4) Extension program design Spring 2019 (US), and 5) 8 paid weeks conducting extension projects Summer 2019 (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); c) forest production and reforestation-Dr. Michael Andreu (UF); d) natural resource economics-Dr. Don Hodges (UT) and farmer & public attitudes and behavior towards conservation and agriculture-Dr. Adam Willcox (UT), e) freshwater aquaculture and water quality-Dr. Cortney Ohs (UF). More information on past Belize work can be found on the UTIA International Programs website [https://ag.tennessee.edu/international/Pages/NIFA-Belize.aspx](https://ag.tennessee.edu/international/Pages/NIFA-Belize.aspx)

Application process: Please submit the following items as a single .pdf file by December 8 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