

Creating an Impact through Environmental Law and Policy with a Focus on Environmental Science Restoration with Social Impacts

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Abstract : BOP-CCERS is a consortium of scientists, K-16 New York City students, faculty, academicians, teachers, stakeholders, STEM Industry professionals, CBO's, NPO's, citizen scientists, and local businesses working in partnership to restore New York Harbor's oyster populations while at the same time providing clean water in New York Harbor. BOP-CCERS gives students an opportunity to learn hands-on about environmental stewardship as well as environmental law and policy by giving students real responsibility. The purpose of this REU will allow for the BOP CCERS Project to further broaden its parameters into the focus of environmental law and policy where further change can be affected. Creating opportunities for undergraduates to work collaboratively with graduate students in law and policy and envision themselves in STEM careers in the field of law continues to be of importance in this project. More importantly, creating opportunities for underrepresented students to pursue careers in STEM Education has been a goal of the project over the last ten years. By raising the level of student interest in community-based citizen science integrated into environmental law and policy, a more diversified workforce will be fostered through the momentum of this dynamic program. The continuing climate crisis facing our planet calls for 21st-century skill development that includes learning and innovation skills derived from critical thinking, which will help REU students address the issues of climate change facing our planet. The demand for a climate-friendly workforce will continue to be met through this community-based citizen science effort. Environmental laws and policies play a crucial role in protecting humans, animals, resources, and habitats. Without these laws, there would be no regulations concerning pollution or contamination of our waterways. Environmental law serves as a mechanism to protect the land, air, water, and soil of our planet. To protect the environment, it is crucial that future policymakers and legal experts both understand and value the importance of environmental protection. The Environmental Law and Policy REU provides students with the opportunity to learn, through hands-on work, the skills, and knowledge needed to help foster a legal workforce centered around environmental protection while participating alongside the BOP CCERS researchers in order to gain research experience. Broadening this area to law and policy will further increase these opportunities and permit students to ultimately affect and influence larger-scale change on a global level while further diversifying the STEM workforce. Students' findings will be shared at the annual STEM Institute at Pace University in August 2022. Basic research methodologies include qualitative and quantitative analysis performed by the research team. Early findings indicate that providing students with an opportunity to experience, explore and participate in environmental science programs such as these enhances their interests in pursuing STEM careers in Law and Policy, with the focus being on providing opportunities for underserved, marginalized, and underrepresented populations.

Keywords : environmental restoration science, citizen science, environmental law and policy, STEM education

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