



ANNUAL REPORT 2022: NAGT/USGS COOPERATIVE SUMMER FIELD TRAINING PROGRAM

The 2021-2022 cycle for the NAGT/USGS Cooperative Summer Field Training Program marked the 57th year of what is now one of longest running science internship programs in the nation. More than 2,559 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, 43 students were nominated by field camp directors, and 35 of those students completed an application for the program. After receiving 30 geology-based proposals from USGS scientists and after the proposal review panel met and matched students to projects, a total of 24 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 the 2021-2022 cycle:

- The Secretary Burmeister distributed letters soliciting nominations for qualified students to field camp directors seeking nominations in September 2021. The deadline for nominations was 30 October 2021.

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

We continued the practice of requesting that Field Camp Directors submit nominations that include brief descriptions of the attributes of each nominee. These perspectives greatly help 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 November, 2021, letters were sent to all 43 nominees from both NAGT and USGS congratulating them on their nomination and instructing them on how to apply using the USAJOBS website. Of those, 35 students (81% of nominees) completed the application by the December 17 deadline.
- The USGS solicited internal proposals from scientists wishing to host an NAGT intern in the fall. A total of 30 proposals were received, and ultimately 20 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 2021-2022 cycle saw the continuation of COVID-19 pandemic-related impacts to program offerings, which resulted in some postponements and cancellations. Because of the incredible fluidity of programs during the pandemic and in recognition of the additional work-related stresses field camp directors have faced during this period, Secretary Burmeister decided to temporarily suspend the collection of program-related data during the pandemic. During this period, he explored new ways of improving this process to improve the quality of data collected and encourage greater compliance. We plan to resume the collection of these data using a new set of survey tools in fall 2022.
- The USGS maintains a running geology field camp list (www.usgs.gov/geosciencefieldcamps) that currently contains 128 active field camp programs that have been cross-checked by the YES office and NAGT. This list will be checked and updated by Spring 2022 using data collected by Secretary Burmeister in Fall 2022.

- However, all of the nominees received in the 2021-2022 cycle came from camps offered in face-to-face, in-person formats. One student nomination from a student unable to participate in the 2020-2021 cycle was accommodated this year.
- Program evaluations are sent to both scientists and interns toward the end of the summer 2022 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 the Annual Joint NAGT/USGS Internship Business Meeting in fall 2022. Evaluation results are summarized (anonymously) and will be distributed in both printed or electronic formats.
- 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 2020 and 2021 the COVID-19 pandemic afforded this program the challenge and opportunity of hosting virtual internships rather than the traditional in-person situation. In 2022, a few internships have either been virtual or partially-virtual and partially in-person, as many scientists have discovered that their project opportunity could be conducted as such. This has allowed some interns the option not having to physically move to another part of the country for a summer position, which is often a barrier to those who cannot afford the expenses of relocating. 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 so these internships could continue, including utilizing the previously unprecedented option to work virtually where possible.
- In the spring of 2022, the USGS Human Resources department underwent a transition which caused hiring delays in many positions (not just internships, but all federal hires across the bureau). As federal employees, interns may not begin work on their project until their hiring paperwork is complete and thus some interns could not start their employment until later in the summer than anticipated. The YES office intends to have a discussion with the Human Resources department to determine what steps will be in place next year to ensure that hiring delays are not so extensive in the future.
- For the third year, in 2022 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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