

19-5 - UNEXPECTED BENEFITS REALIZED FROM NECESSARY RECONFIGURATION OF FIELD COURSE DUE TO COVID-19



Sunday, October 10, 2021



9:20 AM - 9:35 AM



Oregon Convention Center - B113/B114 (Hybrid Room)

Abstract

The newly formed Environmental Geology program at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) was awarded an NSF GEOPATH grant in Spring 2019 for the purpose of diversifying student participation in the geosciences by targeting female and Hispanic students. A field course was planned for Spring 2020, to be held at the Gerace Research Centre in the Bahamas, which would be followed by an in-depth lecture/lab course held on the FGCU campus in Fall 2020. Nine students were accepted, and preparations were well underway for a two-week experience when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Plans were necessarily put on an indefinite hold, and students were understandably disappointed. All nine were informed they would be automatically accepted into the 2021 field course if they desired. In Fall 2020 the six GEOPATH grant co-PIs met virtually to create a strategy to resurrect the field course for Spring 2021. Since international travel was still out of the question due to COVID-19, a new plan was devised for field research which could be accomplished within a two-hour drive of the FGCU campus. Information about the revised field course was shared with the nine students who were accepted in Spring 2020, and current students in all geoscience courses were invited to apply as well. A total of fifteen students were accepted to participate in the reconfigured field course in May 2021, with research to be carried out in North Fort Myers and on Sanibel Island, Florida. Only three of the nine 2020 participants reapplied for the 2021 field course. Students selected one of three focus areas for participation—climatology, hydrology, or mineralogy—and plans call for them to teach each other about the research methods they learned to employ in the Fall 2021 lecture/lab course. As a result of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, multiple positive benefits were realized. This includes a larger number of participants due to not traveling internationally, increased Hispanic diversity in student applicants between 2020 and 2021, and multiple students making the decision to change their major to Environmental Geology as a result of this experience. Full results of the field course experience will be shared, as well as a mid-semester update on the lecture/lab extension of the course.

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