Summer Undergraduate Agricultural Biotechnology Research Experience

There is a shortage of students, particularly students from underrepresented ethnicities and economically disadvantaged groups, pursuing advanced degrees in agricultural sciences and seeking jobs in agricultural research or biotechnology. The goal of this program is to provide undergraduate students from Utah State University’s Regional Campuses and other two- or four-year undergraduate institutions, particularly students from underrepresented ethnicities and economically disadvantaged groups, a stimulating and educational Summer Undergraduate Agricultural Biotechnology Research Experience at the Utah State University (USU) main campus in Logan, Utah; we will refer to the program from this point forward as the SURE program.

This undergraduate summer research program is based on the hypothesis that providing undergraduate students from non-research undergraduate institutions with an opportunity to spend a summer working in a research laboratory at a major research university will help them gain confidence in their ability to pursue a higher level of education and help them recognize the opportunities that are available in agricultural research and biotechnology. This is an integrated project involving education and research. The educational objectives for this program are: (1) to provide undergraduate students, particularly students from underrepresented ethnicities and economically disadvantaged groups, with a stimulating 10 week summer research experience that is educational and potentially life changing; and (2) to build confidence in undergraduate students and motivate them to further their education by completing a Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree, and/or Doctoral degree in an agricultural science discipline and to pursue a career in agricultural research or biotechnology.

We will recruit 8-10 students per year from the USU Regional Campuses, such as our Blanding, Utah campus that serves a large Native American population, and other two- and four-year undergraduate institutions in Utah and surrounding states to spend ten weeks during the summer doing an internship in a research laboratory within CAAS at our main campus in Logan, Utah. During their 10-week internship students will learn about agricultural biotechnology and what it is like to work in a research laboratory. Students will be provided with a $4,000 stipend plus housing in a university dormitory for the time that they are in Logan. As well as experiencing what it is like to work in a research laboratory under the guidance of a faculty mentor, training sessions in research methodology and ethics will be provided. At the end of the 10-week period students will present a talk on their research. In addition, students will be expected to make a presentation to students at their home institution/campus during the fall semester following their internship. We will monitor the success of the SURE program by following the academic achievements of the students for three years after they participate in the summer research program. This information will be gathered by sending annual surveys to the students and the faculty liaisons at the undergraduate institutions.