Georgian Court University

Undergraduate junior Katy Bevaart measures Asiatic Sand Sedge effects on plant diversity and abundance on coastal sand dunes.

Located a mere 10 miles from the ocean, Georgian Court University offers a wealth of research opportunities for students of the marine sciences through a biology master's program and baccalaureate programs in biology, chemistry, physics and natural sciences. Georgian Court's 14:1 student-to-faculty ratio maximizes student-faculty interaction as well as opportunities for hands-on research experience. Courses such as Aquatic Biology, Principles of Ecology, Environmental Biology, Estuarine Ecology, Conservation Ecology, and Ecology and Environment of New Jersey expose students to New Jersey's marine and estuarine environments through laboratory exercises, field trips and research vessel excursions. Through these courses and independent research, students explore, investigate and learn from the diverse ecosystems of nearby Island Beach State Park, Barnegat Bay, Sandy Hook and Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, both undergraduate and graduate students can earn degree credit by enrolling in courses offered by the New Jersey Marine Sciences Consortium. Meet a few of our students who are getting a head start on their careers through research opportunities at Georgian Court University:

Like many of our students, Katy Bevaart, a junior, has been involved in research since the summer of her freshman year. Katy's research focuses on assessing the impact of the invasion of Asiatic Sand Sedge upon the diversity and abundance of native plants in New Jersey's coastal dunes.

Courtney Rella, a senior aspiring to a career in genetics, has also been participating in research since her freshman year. Courtney is looking for genetic differences in sea grass plants living in more polluted regions of the Barnegat Bay, relative to those growing in clearer waters. If such differences exist, managers could pick grasses that are genetically better suited to life in polluted areas for replanting in those environments.

As a mother of four, senior Audrey McGough is typical of a growing number of women who attend Georgian Court after having been out of school for several years.

Dr. Louise Wootton and undergraduate senior Audrey McGough setting up an experiment to determine which type of seagrasses amphipods prefer.

Audrey is investigating the relative value of two different kinds of seagrass as food for amphipods, or "scuds," the small freshwater crustaceans eaten by fish and other larger animals living in the Barnegat Bay.

Jim Burkitt is one of many graduate students pursuing a master's degree in biology. Jim's research focuses on the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map the extent and expansion rate of Asiatic Sand Sedge in coastal dunes. The maps Jim is creating for his thesis will be part of a database for monitoring this damaging plant species and facilitating development of control strategies.

Jim presented his research at a recent meeting of the Society of Limnology and Oceanography, and both Katy and Audrey presented their research at Coastal Zone 2003 and the Fourth Annual Conference on Bioinvasions. Katy and Audrey are also looking forward to seeing their research in print in the Journal of Biological Invasions. To learn more about these students' research and similar research projects going on at Georgian Court, please visit http://gcconline.georgian.edu/wootton_L/students.htm

Founded in 1908 and sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, Georgian Court University is a comprehensive university with a strong liberal arts core and a special concern for women. A forward-thinking university that supports diversity and academic excellence, Georgian Court serves over 3,000 Women's College and coeducational evening and graduate students of all faiths and backgrounds.