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2016

## NPS STEM Interns Spread the Word, While Learning Professional Development

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Naval Stem, 2015 Year in Review. p. 36-37.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/50231>



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# NPS STEM INTERNS SPREAD THE WORD, WHILE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY ALISON KERR, NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

**A**fter working with Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) faculty doing hands-on research this summer, select interns volunteered to present their personal and professional stories to local middle and high school students. NPS STEM Internship Coordinator Alison Kerr and NPS Graduate Writing Center coach Marianne Taflinger worked with these students to refine their messages and organization of material. Their PowerPoint presentations served as a backdrop on how to present information, cope with presentation anxiety, answer questions and command the stage. Each student rehearsed and received feedback from NPS professionals.



Amara Borchers, a senior at Santa Catalina High School, said, "I was really nervous, but I volunteered to do this so I could learn how to do presentations ... it will help me with presentations in the future." Borchers served as a 2015 SEAP intern at NPS with Dr. Susan Sanchez of the SEED Center, mapping the spread of malaria using an agent-based modeling system. (U.S. Navy photo by Alison Kerr)

Recently, several of these volunteers gave presentations to Walter Colton Middle School STEAM (STEM with Arts) classes. More than 125 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students attended the presentations. Information on STEM internships was also offered.

By cultivating a group of near-peers, former NPS interns gain valuable experience that will help them better communicate future scientific work, as well as increase interest in local schools through exposure to young STEM professionals. Near-peers complement traditional mentor-student relationships by exposing students to beginning researchers—younger students find it easier to approach and emulate them because of the closeness in age. Near-peers also can discuss similar experiences and challenges, transform stereotypes, offer insights about how to communicate with professors/mentors and provide strategies for career paths.

Besides the experiential learning and mentoring relationships interns garner through summer internships, NPS also recognizes professional development as vital for these young students.

With the support of ONR, NPS' SEAP and NREIP 2015 summer interns experience many professional development opportunities throughout the summer.

These experiences encourage participating interns to grow their professional development skills and empower them to see themselves as contributors and role models. Their experiences also cement the power of giving back and establish habits of professional generosity throughout their future careers.

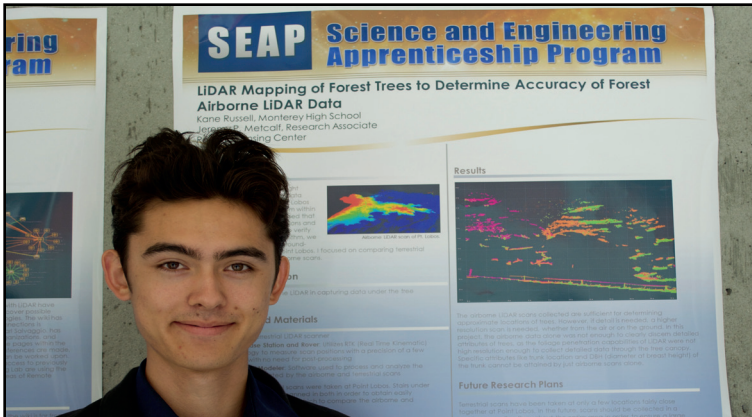


Carson Vogt recently earned his master's in robotics from the University of Edinburgh. He served as an NREIP intern with Dr. Tim Chung and the ARSENL lab during the summers of 2013 and 2014. Soon to return to Scotland for his PhD, he brought two quadcopters he built and goggles so students could have a quadcopter-eye view as it flew. (U.S. Navy photo by Alison Kerr)

The **Naval Postgraduate School (NPS)** provides relevant and unique advanced educational and research programs to increase the combat effectiveness of commissioned naval officers. Its headquarters are located in Monterey, California.



Interns lead a tour of their lab. The work they are doing for their cohort that solidifies their knowledge and polishes presentation skills. Interns in attendance get exposure to a wider array of naval projects. (U.S. Navy photo by Alison Kerr)



Interns complete weekly exercises to compile research poster components, learn scientific writing techniques and present their posters at a research showcase. (U.S. Navy photo by Alison Kerr)



Stephan Edgar, a volunteer student service intern, is a Monterey Peninsula Community College student, studying computer science and has applied for an NREIP internship for next summer. (U.S. Navy photo by Alison Kerr)



Special guest STEM professionals share their experiences, inspiration and opportunities with NPS STEM interns. Speakers included NPS President Ronald Route, Provost Douglas Hensler, various faculty members, Dr. Leedjia Svec (a NASA AMES scientist) as well as representatives from the NPS Scholarship for Service and the SMART programs. Anita Borg Institute International Initiatives lead and Silicon Valley Society of Women Engineers President Dr. Claudia Galvan, pictured above, came for a special event with female interns. (U.S. Navy photo by Alison Kerr)