Geography Peace Corps Master’s International at Utah State University

The Geography Peace Corps Master’s International Program at Utah State University allows students to combine pursuit of a Master of Science (MS) degree along with serving overseas in the Peace Corps. Housed in the Department of Environment & Society, in the College of Natural Resources, the Geography MS provides graduates with an excellent background in natural resource-related and environmental issues, as well as in research and management approaches. The addition of the Peace Corps service period enriches student learning with real-world experiences in development and natural resource management. Upon graduation, students are highly competitive for jobs in this field.

At USU, enrolled Geography Master’s International (MI) students focus their coursework in one of three areas of interest that intersect with their Peace Corps service:

- **Sustainable Livelihoods and Community Development**: emphasizing questions of agricultural change, food security, environmental sustainability, and household and community well-being in a rural, developing world context.

- **Social and Development Aspects of Natural Resource Management**: emphasizing questions of natural resource rights, access, control, and conflicts. Students can choose to focus on a single resource domain, such as water, forests, wildlife, land, or protected areas.

- **Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Analysis**: emphasizing the acquisition of skills in remote sensing and/or geographic information analysis, with applications to developing country contexts.

The Geography MS degree requires 30 credits and the completion of a thesis (Plan A) or project (Plan B). MI students receive 9 credits for their Peace Corps service, and these credits count towards the 30-credit requirement. Students should take at least two approved courses from within their selected interest area, along with a set of recommended core courses. Specific programs of study are defined with the approval and guidance of the students’ faculty advisors and supervisory committees. The Peace Corps service also provides the basis for MI students’ theses/projects.

Students spend the first year of their programs in residence at Utah State University. During this time, students carry out coursework in preparation for Peace Corps service in the developing world. Students also use this time to identify possible Plan A thesis topics or Plan B projects, in consultation with program-affiliated faculty. This first year is followed by approximately 27 months with the Peace Corps (3 months training, followed by 24 months field placement). During their time in the field, students continue to work with USU faculty to refine thesis/project plans and carry out related fieldwork. Following Peace Corps service, students return to the USU campus to complete their theses/projects. Thesis/project completion normally takes a final 1 to 2 semesters in residence in Logan.
Affiliated Faculty: At USU, MI students have the opportunity to work closely with different faculty both within the Department of Environment & Society and across the College of Natural Resources. Faculty particularly closely affiliated with the Geography MI Program include:

- Christopher Conte (environmental history)
- Layne Coppock (pastoral systems)
- Ann Laudati (natural resource conflicts, community-based conservation)
- Claudia Radel (gender and development, conservation and development)
- Douglas Ramsey (remote sensing and geographic information analysis)
- Joseph Tainter (sustainability)

Application Procedure: Students wishing to apply to the Geography Peace Corps Master’s International Program apply to the Geography MS degree program, indicating in the application package intention to participate in the MI Program. Students are admitted on a rolling basis but are strongly encouraged to apply early due to the additional time required for separate application to the Peace Corps. Following acceptance to Utah State University, students immediately initiate their application process with the Peace Corps. Refer to the Peace Corps Master’s International web pages for additional information:

http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=learn.whyvol.eduben.mastersint

Admission Requirements: Admissions requirements follow the general requirements established by Utah State University’s School of Graduate Studies: bachelor’s degree or equivalent, 3.0 or higher GPA on applicant’s last 60 semester, score at or above the 40th percentile on appropriate admissions test (GRE or other defined by the degree program), and three satisfactory letters of recommendation. Students being considered for admission to the MI Program will also be assessed for likelihood of admission to the Peace Corps and prospects for success in potentially difficult overseas field environments.

Financial Assistance: MI students are eligible for all university scholarships and fellowships, as well as any appropriate departmental or college research assistantships and college scholarships and fellowships. Consult the USU School of Graduate Studies website for information on university financial assistance: http://www.usu.edu/graduateschool/. Consult the College of Natural Resources website for information on college financial assistance http://cnr.usu.edu/htm/students/prospective-students. To inquire about departmental research assistantships and other department job opportunities for graduate students, contact the Program Contact listed below.

USU Geography Peace Corps MI Program Contact: Dr. Claudia Radel, Assistant Professor in Human Geography, Department of Environment and Society, Utah State University, 5215 Old Main Hill, Logan, Utah 84322-5215; Telephone: (435) 797-0516; Fax: (435) 797-4048; Email: claudia.radel@usu.edu