

## **RSEN Graduate Program**

### **Competitive Graduate Student Assistantships**

Supported by the Steve Rubenstein Gift Funds

Purpose: Provide initial support to recruit highly qualified graduate students who will bring unique perspectives, experiences, and skills to the RSEN Graduate Program and who would otherwise not be able to seek admission to the RSEN MS or Ph.D. graduate programs in Natural Resources due to limited support.

Note: The assistantship policies for the Masters in Leadership for Sustainability and Ph.D. in Transdisciplinary Leadership and Creativity for Scholarship programs in the RSEN are governed separately by those programs.

Justification: We take it as given that few students who aspire to enter the Natural Resource MS or Ph.D. programs could do so without substantial personal support (stipend and tuition). This assistantship program will provide support to students who might not otherwise be able to enter these programs in the RSEN. It will also provide RSEN faculty with initial resources to recruit student populations who can bring their unique lived experiences and viewpoints to the RSEN, as well as those who share a commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming climate in RSEN and the University. *A key intent of the assistantship program is to provide initial support that will allow a student to secure continuing support from other sources to complete their graduate studies and research.* For this reason, students – especially Ph.D. students – should use this two-year assistantship period to seek additional support for their research.

Applicability: This assistantship opportunity is intended to support students who seek admission to the M.S. or Ph.D. programs in Natural Resources in the RSEN. Students who seek admission to the Ph.D. program in Transdisciplinary Leadership, Creativity and Sustainability or the M.P.S. in Leadership for Sustainability program may apply for scholarships available separately through those programs.

Description: For students who seek admission the M.S. or Ph.D. programs in Natural Resources, the DeHayes-Rubenstein Graduate Student Assistantship program will provide *up to two years* of support for qualified graduate students at either the M.S. or Ph.D. level. The assistantship will provide 12 months of stipend and tuition support over two years. In the first year of the assistantship (semester 1 and 2), support will be in the form of a 20h/week Graduate Research Assistantship. In year two (semester 3 and 4), support will be in the form of a combined 10h/week teaching assistantship and a 10 h/week research assistantship. The assistantship will also include a 20h/week research assistantship for two (2) summers. In each of the two years, this assistantship will support the stipend at the current RSEN mandated level, graduate student health benefits, and full tuition (up to 18 credits per academic year and 5 credits per summer at the per credit rate appropriate to the residency status of the student). Students supported by this assistantship will be responsible for paying their comprehensive fees and

must work with their mentors to secure the funds necessary to support the operational costs, travel expenses, and other expenses needed for their research. They should also plan to secure *all* support needed for year three (3) and beyond, to complete their research program. This is especially important for Ph.D. students, whose graduate tenure is typically longer than two years.

Criteria: This assistantship is designed to support *exceptional* students who have the potential to offer new insights to the RSENR community and beyond. Students may be from US or from any country that the US State Department allows to reside in the US for educational purposes. Potential candidates should be competitive at the highest level. Only faculty whose primary appointment is in the RSENR are eligible to request an assistantship. Priority will be given to faculty mentors at the Assistant Professor level, followed by Associate Professor, and finally Full Professors. A professor may request support for only one student annually via this assistantship program. Preference will be given to faculty members that do not currently have a student supported by this program. Assistantships will *not* be held for pending proposals or for an unspecified student. These assistantships are intended to secure specific candidates who would otherwise choose to attend another graduate program.

Process: Any faculty member whose primary appointment is in the RSENR may request an assistantship by writing the [RSENR\\_Grad\\_Coordinator@uvm.edu](mailto:RSENR_Grad_Coordinator@uvm.edu) prior to 1 January of the fall term in which the student intends to matriculate. This request should include the student's name and outline any existing funding already available to support the student, if any. The prospective student must complete and submit an application to the UVM Graduate College on or before 1 January preceding the fall term in which they intend to start.

Prior to the second full week of the spring semester, the Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development will appoint an ad hoc committee of three (3) non-conflicted, RSENR Graduate Faculty members to evaluate the application materials of those students who have been identified previously for this assistantship. The ad hoc committee will consider each student's 1) Scholarly Preparation and 2) Societal Involvement.

Scholarly Preparation will be assessed based on four criteria, each with a 3-point scale (3 outstanding, 2 notable, and 1 average), yielding a range of scores from 4-12 points. The four criteria are:

- Strength of academic record
- Extent and diversity of previous research experience
- Strength of external letters of reference regarding scholarly preparation
- Articulation of scholarly goals in personal statement

Similarly, Societal Involvement will be assessed based on four criteria, each with a 3-point scale (3 outstanding, 2 notable, and 1 average), yielding a range of scores from 4-12 points. The four criteria are:

- Past involvement, advocacy, and/or leadership in civic or service organizations

- Strength of external letters of reference regarding societal involvement
- Articulation of societal goals in personal statement
- Potential to advance the mission and vision of the RSENR, and enhance our commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment

The Scholarly Preparation and Societal Involvement scores will be summed, yielding combined scores of from 8-24 points. The ad hoc evaluation committee should use these scores primarily as a preliminary guide (versus an inflexible filter) to identify potentially worthy candidates for this scholarship.

The ad hoc evaluation committee should decide which candidate(s) is(are) most deserving of this assistantship, based on the criteria outlined above and the number of scholarships that are available to offer. The Associate Dean will provide this latter information to the ad hoc evaluation committee prior to their deliberation. The ad hoc committee should provide a prioritized list of top candidates that is somewhat greater than the number of available assistantships so that the Associate Dean has flexibility to make fewer or more offers based in changes in available funds and/or the number of students who ultimately accept these assistantships. The Graduate Program Coordinator will prepare assistantship offers. Any offer that is declined before or not explicitly accepted by the April 15<sup>th</sup> decision deadline will be offered to the next most deserving candidate.

Faculty review: 3/21/2022  
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