

UW Oshkosh STEP extended to graduate students

by **Derek Paulus - Wednesday, March 27, 2013**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/26033/uw-oshkosh-step-extended-to-graduate-students/>

The Student Titan Employment Program (STEP) has held an important role in providing high-impact, campus-based employment for the students of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Now the program has been expanded to provide positions specifically for the University's graduate students.

The Graduate Studies Office was awarded funding during 2013's spring semester to expand the program to its students. While the specific learning outcomes are the same between STEP jobs for undergraduates and graduates, STEP positions for graduates offer the opportunity to gain experience that supplements their undergraduate education and their graduate work.

Director of Graduate Services Greg Wypiszynski said these positions relate more to the students' field of expertise and offer them experience in their field while they further their education.

Here is a look at some of the graduate STEP positions that were offered this semester and the students who have benefited from the work:

Microbiology Research Assistant: Steven Rose

Steven Rose is an Appleton native seeking a master's degree in microbiology. As a microbiology research assistant, Rose works alongside professor Sabrina Mueller-Spitz conducting protein analysis of cells.

Rose studies the changes to bacteria over time in environmental conditions compared to laboratory conditions. He said the position provides him with hands-on experience and the opportunity to become familiar with the tools he would use in the industry.

After graduation, Rose hopes to earn a Ph.D. and study diseases to learn how infectious agents cause the disease.

Research, Data Analyst and Program Planner: Jason Herman

In addition to hands-on experience, a graduate STEP position can also provide significant financial benefits, as is the case with Jason Herman.

Herman has worked in the Graduate Studies Office completing recruitment and marketing research projects since fall 2012, as well as planning the biannual [GradSchool Fest](#) by organizing the catering, reservations and marketing.

Herman said this position has helped ease his financial burden, something he said is one of the biggest worries for graduate students.

“It’s actually the University giving back to its students, in my opinion,” Herman said. “It’s one way that the University can kind of help a student... get by and promote this higher level thinking as well.”

With a desire to acquire a leadership position in higher education working in admissions or an adult learning program, Herman said his STEP position provides “unparalleled knowledge” in this area unlike any other job he has had in the past.

“None of that’s going to prepare me as well as this STEP position for getting into higher education,” he said.

Beyond STEP

Opportunities for graduate students don’t end with STEP positions, however, as there are a number of graduate assistantship positions that are offered to students that allow them to earn even more experience and more financial benefit.

These assistantships are unique to UW Oshkosh’s graduate studies programs, allowing students extensive experience in their field and the opportunity to work closely with expert faculty. The positions are paid with fixed stipends that vary depending on the number of hours worked, with the highest being over \$10,000 for a full academic year working 20 hours per week. The job also provides health care benefits to students who work enough hours.

Graduate students also have the opportunity to work student assistantship positions that are similar to graduate assistantships but exist in non-academic, rather than academic, departments of the University.

Wypiszynski said STEP positions and graduate assistantships have similar functions in that they both provide financial benefit and offer some level of experience while working with professionals.

“Certainly the learning and work experience of a STEP position is invaluable, but getting paid is important too,” he said. “The STEP positions also help grad students establish or nurture professional relationships with faculty. Graduate students who have graduate assistantships often work directly with graduate faculty.”

British Literature Research Assistant: Mary Sawyer

One student that has had the opportunity to work closely with expert faculty in her STEP position is Mary Sawyer, who is pursuing a master’s degree in English.

Since the beginning of the spring 2013 semester, Sawyer has been working as a British literature research

assistant for English professor Marguerite Helmers. Sawyer, who plans to earn her Ph.D. after graduation and teach college level English literature, is responsible for ordering books through the interlibrary loan system and collecting information to help Helmers with an upcoming study abroad tour and a conference paper, all of which are opportunities for Sawyer to work closely with Helmers.

“Working with so much access to my supervisor really leaves me feeling able to approach her with my own ideas and suggestions,” Sawyer said. “Knowing so closely what she needs for her projects allows me to offer more of my perspective, and getting her feedback, her confirmation of an idea or explanation of why something won’t work has been invaluable.”

Sawyer said the research tasks given to her by Helmers help prepare her for the work she hopes to do in the future.

“Research skills are hugely important to English academics,” she said. “Learning these techniques will help prepare me for a time when I’ll be writing and publishing my own work.”

Stream Fisheries Biologist: Michael Louison

Michael Louison has worked with biology professor Robert Stelzer over the course of the spring semester studying invertebrates from a stream near Waupaca.

Louison, who expects to graduate in the fall, said the position has provided experience along the lines of sampling techniques, as well as the process of collecting and analyzing data. He is looking to move on to earn a Ph.D. after graduation in the hopes of later finding a college level position and said this work for his STEP position is tied closely to his graduate thesis research.

Louison said he encourages other students to seek a similar opportunity.

“In the end, I’m getting paid to do a lot of the same things I was going to do for my thesis research anyway,” he said. “So I think it’s a good idea (for students) to talk to ... their adviser and see if they might have that kind of funding available.”

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh Graduate Studies](#)
- [GradSchool Fest - Spring 2013](#)