

Students: Marissa Ohran, Rollo Simmons, Alyssa Tidwell, PJ De La Vega, and Braydon West

Advisor: Geoff Zahn

Project title: Effects of Aquatic Fungi in Utah Lake

Reflections:

Alyssa:

Working on this project has helped me to learn about collaborative efforts in the sciences, where data is shared and tools are available from outside of your own lab's resources. We haven't gotten much data back yet, but I'm looking forward to getting more practice analyzing the results and testing to see if there are correlations between the relative abundance within the fungal communities revealed in this project with the bacterial data gleaned from another project, and with other measured toxins, if the data is compatible. This practice in collaboration and in data analysis will surely come in handy later in my career, and I'm grateful for the experience afforded to me by UVU.



Marissa:

I experienced a lot of new things while working on this project, and I learned just how fun and rewarding research can be. I got some experience in field work, where at one point I almost got swallowed by a very muddy lakeshore, and I got some experience in the lab, learning how to do things like isolating DNA, and PCR, things I didn't have a whole lot of previous experience with. I also developed some confidence in myself, and was able to recognize some of my own strengths. Overall, working on this project has been a positive experience for me, and the things I've learned and experiences I've had will be invaluable to me as I continue my academic pursuits. I'm grateful to have had these experiences while here at UVU.



Braydon:

This semester-long research project has given me a great opportunity to learn from amazing peers and professors. Throughout our research I was able to learn valuable skills such as collecting sterile samples, labeling and organization, DNA sequencing, PCR, and much more. The valuable skill of working with peers from start to finish in a large research project I believe is going to help me in my future career in the dental field. Being able to organize, lead, learn, and communicate was key with our group and we can all take that with us for any future skills needed in our career. Learning from Dr. Zahn was very rewarding. He helped us and walked us through certain lab procedures and techniques. This is something I will be able to now feel more comfortable doing for future research. Overall I enjoyed this research project because it allowed me to step outside of my usual research and learn many valuable skills and lessons in the science field. My favorite part was when we collected the samples as a team. We each took turns and had a system that worked which allowed us to quickly and efficiently collect samples from Utah lake. With ups and down and challenges we were able to successfully submit our work and are now waiting for test results. It's amazing the tools and resources we have at UVU. From the professors to the equipment, I was shocked at the amount of help and caring hands that were available during this research project. Thank you UVU for providing this experience for me.



Rollo:

This experience has given me the valuable opportunity to work in the field around native bodies of water and get an in depth look at the work required to understand it. As a student intending to go into amphibian conservation, the opportunity to study and survey aquatic fungi has been invaluable as the aquatic chytrid fungus is by and large the biggest threat to long term amphibian biodiversity, and both our native Utah lake, and our native amphibians are no stranger to it. Getting this firsthand experience working with grants has provided me the confidence to further pursue and achieve more academic and research based success. Once unfamiliar to the process of university research, this has been an incredible opportunity to have the tools placed in my hands, giving me the ability to learn how to use them, and use them effectively for the betterment of water quality, conservation, and my personal educational experiences. Going forward this research project has been an incredible start to my future in research regarding aquatic fungi communities, and their interactions with the environment around them.



PJ:

The research project has given me a valuable opportunity to experience lab and field work knee high in Utah Lake. The team was great, we had many opportunities to go onto the lake and work in the lab developing our skills. We worked with DNA sequencing, PCR and how to not contaminate the samples. Dr. Zahn was insightful in his labs. He understood how to lead the class in a way that would provide challenges without much confusion. Very clear instructions, it was greatly appreciated. Previously I did not have much experience with these tools but this semester certainly showed me the ropes. This was a great opportunity to learn and use the resources from UVU. I'm excited to get back into the lab.

