Request for Applications: NSF-funded Research Experience for Undergrads (REU) for the project “Broadening Participation in STEM.” PI: Dr. Sarah Ovink, Department of Sociology, Virginia Tech.

Project and Scope of Work: This REU Supplement will support two undergraduates for 20 weeks to participate in data coding and analysis for Dr. Sarah Ovink’s NSF-funded project, “Broadening Participation in STEM: Intersectional and Institutional Influences on Underrepresented Minorities’ College and Career Pathways in Longitudinal Perspective” (BPS). BPS consists of 6 waves of longitudinal interviews with 113 STEM and non-STEM majors from diverse backgrounds who were undergraduates during Wave 1 in 2015. REU participants will receive (a) training in Dedoose, a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software package (CAQDAS) (b) mentoring from myself and potentially graduate students associated with the project.

Training will take 12–15 hours. Then, participants will code and write analytical memos based on interview data, meeting regularly as a team to compare notes, receive mentoring, and track progress. Mentoring will include two regular components: (1) weekly check-ins using email or Slack messaging services; (2) biweekly team meetings, either in person or via Zoom, depending on pandemic conditions.

By the end of the research experience, each participant is expected to produce: (1) a substantial number of thematic memos (≥10) that will contribute to manuscript development, and (2) a final report, in the form of a thematic analysis brief (4–8 pages, or equivalent to the “findings” portion of a peer-reviewed manuscript) and a presentation draft. Assuming successful completion of the REU and these two deliverables, REU participants may be added as authors to conference presentations and manuscripts. REU participants will gain skills in social science and qualitative research. The skills participants will gain through this REU supplement will be important resume-builders for careers in the social and humanistic sciences, and prepare you to apply to advanced degree programs at top universities.

Hours: 15 hours/week; flexible time-shifting available to account for students’ other obligations.

Salary: This NSF REU will support 2 undergraduate students on weekly stipends, from August 2021 to February 2022. Each student will be expected to work 15 hours per week over 20 weeks, or a total of 300 hours per student. Each student will receive a stipend of $225 per week.

Skills: No prior skills required, but some familiarity with the following may be a plus:
- Spreadsheet/database management
- Data coding of any type
- Prior undergraduate research
- Time management, working under deadline, and balancing school/work/other responsibilities

Selection Criteria: I will primarily consider the following in making selection decisions:
(a) interest in social science research and topics of diversity and inclusion;
(b) experience and/or enthusiasm for learning coding and analysis of qualitative data;
(c) writing skills and/or enthusiasm for learning social science writing methods and conventions;
(d) critical thinking skills and ability to work independently.

Apply: Please send resume and a brief (one-page) letter of interest outlining your interests and any previous experience by 5pm on Thursday, August 19, 2021. Incomplete packets will not be considered. Please include “NSF REU Sociology” in the subject line.

Expectations: Teamwork with other students, clear communication on a regular basis whether in person, over email or Slack, accountability that tasks will be completed, active participation in weekly/biweekly meetings and other project goals, and enthusiasm for learning and being challenged.

DEI Statement: Diversity, equity and inclusion in scientific endeavors are important BPS project values. Students who identify as first-generation and/or members of historically marginalized groups are encouraged to apply. Applicants are invited to use the cover letter to explain any personal experiences that may have influenced your interest in the project or your academic record.

Questions? Please contact Dr. Sarah Ovink at sovink@vt.edu