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The Forum

The Greater Research Opportunities Undergraduate Student Fellowship Newsletter
December 2003

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“the Earth



laughs in flowers”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Please look for our online version of **The Fellows Forum**, available at <http://es.epa.gov/ncer/fellow>

A GRO Fellow who C.A.R.E.s: Marlisa Stewart and the ECO Alumni Program

Graduate student Marlisa Stewart is more than just a former ECO Intern

and GRO Fellowship alumna; she is a mentor for current ECO Associates as part of the ECO Alumni C.A.R.E. program. The C.A.R.E. program matches ECO Associates with experienced environmental professionals—who have been through the ECO internship experience themselves—so that the student may sharpen his or her career development skills.

After completing her GRO Fellowship, Marlisa graduated from Grambling State University in May of 2000 with a Bachelors of Science degree in Biology. After graduation, she moved to Chicago to work for the EPA as an Environmental Scientist in the Office of Air and Radiation. She worked for three years on state air toxics

program regulation development, environmental justice and children's health issues. Currently, she is a graduate student at Tulane University in New Orleans working toward a Masters of Public Health degree in community

health sciences with a concentration in maternal and child health.

Why would Marlisa join the ECO Alumni program when her post-ECO career is progressing so smoothly? She was kind enough to answer that question:

“It's always been a joy of mine to help others go down the same roads I've taken. So, ECO paired me with Associate Jasmine Muriel. We conversed about three times, so I was able to be as thorough as possible in answering her questions. I enjoy doing all I can to help make those who come after me, have a rewarding experience. I take sharing my knowledge and



ECO Alumni Program Director Meryl Brott gets into an engaging discussion with Marlisa Stewart.

personal experiences seriously because it will only help make their decisions easier. I believe having a C.A.R.E. link can only help those trying to reach their professional goals. Having a C.A.R.E. link can serve multiple



ECO/GRO alumna Marlisa Stewart is always ready and willing to pitch in—anytime, anywhere!

capacities: in developing networking connections in different agencies, providing a professional mentor, or just in giving advice on what doors opened (and how they got them open) for them when they were at that same point in their lives. Linking Associates with professionals already in the environmental field can only help to expand their career opportunities. It would be my pleasure to serve as a link again.”

ECO invites all its Associates to take advantage of the wealth of knowledge and skills available through the Alumni C.A.R.E. program. Our alumni are eager to pass on what they have learned to the next generation of environmental leaders. Please contact alumni program coordinator Meryl Brott at 617/426-4783 x132 or alumni@eco.org to learn more.

ECO and the US EPA: Partnering for Diversity Success

by Kristie King

Created in response to the critical need to increase the presence of people of color in the environmental field, ECO's Diversity Initiative has been involved in increasing diversity for over thirteen years. Since that time, it has been a national leader in diversifying the environmental field, creating a long-term impact and permanent change on the nation's environmental community. It is an innate component of the organization demonstrated by its inclusion throughout programs, placements, our organizational strategic plan, and our mission.

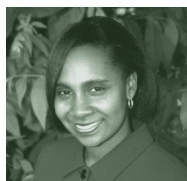
The success of ECO's Diversity Initiative can, without doubt, be attributed to our

long-term partnership with the US EPA. ECO has been in collaboration with EPA for nearly 20 years, since 1985, introducing and exposing thousands of students of color to environmental career opportunities and increasing their knowledge of environmental issues, techniques, policies, and processes. We are very proud of the relationship we have with the agency because it is a true demonstration of two entities possessing shared values and priorities and developing programs and opportunities that foster those values and priorities. Increased diversity in the environmental field is a focus for ECO and the US EPA.

Effective outreach and relationship building are key to any successful diversity effort. This has been one of our primary goals in our work with the Greater Research Opportunities (GRO) Undergraduate Student Fellowship Program. Our involvement is indicative of our commitment and years of partnering and building a strong program with EPA. We are excited about the continued work ECO and the US EPA do together to make this program successful and stronger each year.



Kristie King is ECO's Diversity Initiative Manager.



Na'Taki Osborne: The rest of the story

In the last issue of the *Fellows Forum*, you were introduced to Na'Taki Osborne, a 1994-95 GRO Fellow and current Sustainable Communities Organizer with the National Wildlife Federation in Atlanta. Na'Taki is one of the many ECO interns who discovered a passion for the environmental field through her EPA internship. Na'Taki has been able to parlay that passion into a successful career in which she won recognition from the leaders of the environmental movement and President Clinton himself. When we left off with Na'Taki, she was explaining how her experience with the EPA in Region 4 had opened her eyes to something deeper than mere "environmental protection."

Fellows Forum: What was the most significant experience you took away from the GRO fellowship?

Na'Taki: The most significant experience that I took away from the fellowship was my experience working with communities who were impacted by neighboring Superfund sites. I will never forget the stories of struggle and suffering that the community members shared at my first public meeting, and I will never forget the manner in

which one of the community leaders challenged me to think about my role in the movement and whether I was going to be a help or a hindrance to seeking justice. I knew from that moment that no matter what sector (government, non-profit, community, etc.) I chose to work in, I had to ask myself those same questions and that for me, I could only work where I would not have to fight through red tape, unwillingness, politics, racism, or other forces to do the right thing.

FF: What advice would you give to future GRO Fellowship classes?

Na'Taki: I would tell [future] fellows to use their experiences to gain a greater depth of knowledge about and appreciation for environmental issues. Pay attention to contacts and resources that will be of assistance after the completion of the fellowship program. The field is wide open...use the fellowship experience as a stepping stone that can lead you to even greater opportunities and life lessons.

Thank you Na'Taki for taking the time to speak with us. Best of luck!

EPA announces the
2003–2004 GRO Fellowship Class!

The EPA has announced the fourteen undergraduate students who will make up the 2003-2004 GRO Fellowship class. ECO and the EPA are happy to welcome these talented students to the GRO Fellowship family!

Tesha Boado	California State University—Fresno Major: Molecular Biology	Ruth Le'au	University of Hawai'i—Manoa Major: Biology
Melody Covington	Norfolk State University Major: Biology	Alexander Moore	Howard University Major: Chemistry
Danielle Goode	North Carolina A&T University Major: Electronics Technology	Jermaine Perry	North Carolina A&T University Major: Bio-Environmental Engineering
Milan Griffin	Spelman College Major: Political Science	Daberat Perez-Rivera	Universidad Metropolitana Major: Environmental Science
Sarah Jamison	Spelman College Major: Biology	Avonelle Rodney	St. Thomas University Major: Biology
Shara Johnson	Alabama A&M University Major: Natural/Life Sciences	Ericka Thomas	Norfolk State University Major: Chemistry
Millie Gonzalez	University of Puerto Rico—Humacao Major: Microbiology	Meredith Titterton	Texas A&M University Major: Marine Science

GRO Fellows Well-represented at 2003 ECO Conference

by Natasha Plumb

The Environmental Careers Organization Conference held in Washington, D.C. on July 25, 2003 was an event worth experiencing. Comprised of about 200 exceptionally talented



GRO Fellow Natasha Plumb (center) at ECO's 2003 Career Conference with other ECO Associates from Region 5.

students, the ECO Conference served as a medium for our ideas to meet and our voices to be heard about today's environmental issues. The highlight of the conference was the team activity in which all the interns were separated into different environmental areas like toxics, energy, air, water, environmental justice, poverty,

to name a few. In those groups, we as interns worked together to come up with all the reasons why our area was important to environmental stability. We also fought to make sure it was implemented in the legislative policies on the environment. It was amazing: we all used our academic knowledge as well as the information we learned working at our respective EPA sites and collectively created an environmental policy that was not only rational but maintained the stability of the environment. The ECO conference gave me an opportunity to network and make lasting contacts that I'm sure will be beneficial in the future.



GRO Fellow Natasha Plumb (left) brainstorms sustainable environmental solutions with other ECO Associates during the collaborative morning activity.

Natasha Plumb interned with the EPA Industrial Chemical Branch of the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics in Washington, DC where she worked on green chemistry issues. ECO invites the majority of our Associates to join us at our annual conference. This year we held a much smaller event, due in part to the lack of funding. DC-area GRO Fellows were invited to attend the conference, which featured distinguished speakers, networking sessions and career development workshops.



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The Environmental Careers Organization
179 South Street
Boston, MA 02111

The EPA recently changed the name and parameters of its Minority Academic Institutions Fellowship Programs. The former EPA "Minority Academic Institutions" (MAI) undergraduate and graduate fellowship programs are now called the "Greater Research Opportunities" (GRO) Undergraduate Student Fellowship program, and the "Greater Research Opportunities" (GRO) Graduate Student Fellowship program. The closing date to apply for the GRO Fellowship has been extended to January 6, 2004. Please see the updated solicitations on the EPA NCER website for details on changes to the eligibility criteria. The fellowship will remain very much the same in form and content, with generous academic scholarships, excellent opportunities for career development, and an intensive twelve-week summer internship at a host EPA facility coordinated by ECO. Visit http://es.epa.gov/ncer/rfa/current/2004_gro_undergrad_fellow.html for more information.

Check out ECO's new GRO Fellowship website

ECO has made some major changes to the GRO website at <http://www.eco.org/indexEPA.html>. We are expanding our services everyday, and we hope to make the ECO websites integral parts of our internship services with message boards and other real-time communication tools that our Associates can use. But for now, **recent additions to the GRO website include:**

- The recent ten-year survey of GRO/MAI Fellows describing the impact their ECO experiences had on their careers.
- An electronic version of the latest Fellows Forum newsletter.
- Comprehensive information and application procedures for the GRO program.
- Details on how you can host a GRO Fellow this summer.



GRO Fellows Olivia Penrose at work during her internship in environmental chemistry at Norfolk State University.

The ECO websites change almost everyday. We hope to expand our page so that it will serve as a place to bring all our interns together to share resources, information and support. Check it out today!