

# Letter to Prospective Students:

My research group includes postdocs, graduate students, technicians and undergraduates. All of our research is done in small teams. Collaborative teamwork is an integral part of training at the Center for Limnology (CFL).

My students' thesis projects tend to be in three broad areas: (1) Dynamics of biogeochemical processes and food webs in lakes; (2) land-water interactions, including nonpoint pollution and the limnological role of riparian and littoral processes; and (3) adaptive management and sustainability of watershed ecosystems. The links on my web page provide more information about these projects. Also, please browse the web pages of current students and postdocs at CFL. Our publication lists are posted online, and these are a useful guide to our past research. Bear in mind that a publication records work that we were doing two to four years before the date of the publication. The leading edge of research has usually moved on by the time a paper appears in print.

Students can obtain the M.S. or Ph.D. in either of two degree programs: Limnology & Marine Science (LMS) and Zoology. LMS <http://www.engr.wisc.edu/interd/limnology/> is a flexible interdisciplinary program that is ideal for students who wish to combine two or more of the traditional disciplines in their formal academic training. Zoology <http://www.zoology.wisc.edu/> is focused on the biological side of ecology and environmental science, and is ideal for students who are coming from a biological background and expect to center their careers in biology. Students from both programs have been highly successful in the market for faculty and agency positions.

The most common form of support for my students is Research Assistantships. Almost all Ph.D. students teach for at least one year. Many of my students have been successful in winning a year or more of fellowship support. A typical mix for a 5-year doctoral program would be a year of fellowship, a year of teaching, and 3 years of research assistantship support.

Admission to our graduate programs is highly competitive. Graduate training is not amenable to "batch processing". Therefore I have only a few students at any time. In some years I accept no new students, and in other years I have room for one or two. Once admitted, however, the success rate of CFL students is high. Virtually all of our students achieve their degree goals and compete highly successfully in the job market.

The typical admissions cycle is as follows. Applications are received from September - December. The first week in January, I review files of applicants. Likely fellowship candidates must be put forward sometime in January. In February, we find out who the fellowship winners are, and conduct a second round of admissions to be supported with teaching and research assistantships. All of our decisions are made by sometime in March. Through March and early April, we host visits by accepted students. They make their decisions by mid-April. When funding is available, I encourage my new students to participate in field work during the summer before their first official semester (which begins the first week in September). By working with other students and staff in the field, incoming students learn the systems we are studying, learn

methods, and begin to ask research questions. They also become part of the team, and begin to feel comfortable as partners in our work. By the time classes officially start, the incoming students are ready to get a fast start on their graduate studies and planning for the first field season of their own thesis work.

Thanks for your interest in the Center for Limnology. Please explore our web pages thoroughly. If you have questions, please feel free to email me at [srcarpen@wisc.edu](mailto:srcarpen@wisc.edu)

Sincerely,

Steve Carpenter  
Stephen Alfred Forbes Professor of Zoology

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