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Triton College Student and Instructor Dive into Ocean Research with STEMSEAS

Both Conducted Research at Sea for 12 Days



Students aboard the STEMSEAS R/V Atlantis did scientific research with a Conductivity, Temperature, Depth Sensor with Sampler Rosette.

RIVER GROVE – For Triton College student Trinity Barrueta, spending 12 days at sea conducting oceanic research with the STEMSEAS program was “the most exciting thing I’ve ever done.” Barrueta was one of just 15 undergraduate students selected nationwide for the expedition.

Funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), STEMSEAS (STEM Student Experiences Aboard Ships) provides ocean excursions for students to conduct real-world research and foster a sense of belonging in STEM fields—science, technology, engineering and math.

Dr. Sheldon Turner, chair of Triton College's Science Department, was one of three faculty members aboard the expedition. According to Dr. Turner, more than 300 students applied for the experience. "Students were selected not only based on GPA, but their interest in science and commitment to scientific research."

Leaving San Diego on June 1 and landing in Dutch Harbor, Alaska on June 12, students used the ship's onboard science labs to conduct geoscience and oceanography research. Working in teams, the students conducted projects with planktosopes, fluorometers, multi-beams, virtual machines, other technologies.

"My group focused on the concentration of fluorescent light and how it correlates to the temperature and solidity of water," said Barrueta. "We used the ship's fluorometer and instruments to find data."

Barrueta's group also dropped a SQUID (Sampling QUantitative Internal-wave Distribution) float to tell the salinity of the water and used a planktoscope to measure the plankton.

While life at sea brought challenges—many on board experienced seasickness early in the trip—Dr. Turner said the group gradually acclimated.

"The amazing kitchen staff helped with getting adjusted to life on the ship," said Dr. Turner. "There was a full kitchen and a crew to help make our stay more comfortable. We were given three meals a day, with delicious food options, and plenty of snacks and coffee at any time of day."

Both Barrueta and Dr. Turner described the experience as unforgettable and hope to participate in future voyages. Dr. Turner encourages more Triton students and faculty to take part in STEAMSEAS.

"I missed the ocean the moment I flew home from Alaska," said Barrueta.

The expedition and the STEMSEAS Program is funded by the National Science Foundation through a grant to Columbia University and Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). STEMSEAS is also supported by a partnership with the University National Oceanographic Laboratory Systems (UNOLS).

To read the students' blog during the excursion, visit stemseas.org/2025/06/.

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ABOUT TRITON COLLEGE Triton College is an institution of higher education dedicated to student success. Triton offers more than 120 degree and certificate programs designed for students to realize their career aspirations and effectively compete in a global economy. The college campus spans 110 acres in River Grove, Illinois, holds classes at satellite locations and offers online learning opportunities. Triton's exemplary faculty and staff work to provide high-quality, convenient and affordable educational opportunities to more than 10,000 students each year. Triton College is a member of The Community Colleges of Illinois and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Learn more at triton.edu/.