GREENING YOUTH FOUNDATION

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SURVEY RESULTS

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The purpose of this survey is to discover why diverse conservation interns are not staying in the field post-internship, utilizing GYF alumni as a study group.
MEET THE BYU INTERNSHIP TEAM

Brigham Young University: Ballard Center

The Ballard Center opened its doors in 2003 and has continued to grow since then to what is today the largest University-run social impact program in the world. In the 2018-2019 academic year over 2,500 students participated in Ballard Center classes, competitions, internships, and research. Another 5,800 students participated in one-time Ballard Center events such as the Peery Film Festival, TEDxBYU, and other clubs. The Ballard Center was designated in 2012 and 2018 as a Changemaker Campus by Ashoka U the leader in supporting social impact education at universities throughout the world. The following Ballard Center students partnered with Greening Youth Foundation to engage in research to improve the conservation field for underrepresented youth and do what BYU’s center of change does best: make an impact.

Pamela Patton: Pamela is from Walla Walla, Washington and is studying Philosophy and Psychology at Brigham Young University. She is also a student-athlete who plays rugby! In her freshman year at BYU, a lot of her free time was spent volunteering in youth groups, especially the Special Olympics, and this sparked a fire in her to continue in this path of volunteer work throughout her entire college career. She is also a part-time photographer and expert in Adobe softwares.

Ethan Woodruff: Ethan has lived in several states in the US, but he has spent the last several years in Hughson, California. His hobbies include swimming, water polo, painting, and dancing. Ethan loves working with children as well as youth. He has served on several committees and team leads for his church as well as his high school. Ethan also has a limited business background through his participation in Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA).

Whitley Sargent: Whitley grew up on a small farm in Heber City, Utah. She loves getting to know different people and their culture and language. Whitley received her Associate’s Degree in Social Science from BYU-Hawaii before transferring to BYU to pursue the Experience and Design Management Program. She is also working on a minor in Non-Profit. Whitley has worked a lot with youth and refugees as she has taught English as a Second Language and coached youth soccer.

Christina Packard: Christina grew up in a small town called Vidor, Texas. Christina is currently a Junior, pursuing studies in the advertising program. Her passion since childhood has been team-building. She loves finding ways to involve her teammates in a way that captures their talents and strengths. Christina comes from a background of videography, video editing, and helping content look attractive and presentable. She is currently in the advertising program at BYU and specializes in project management.

Susan Davidson: Susan grew up in Northern Virginia and has loved being able to access urban landmarks in Washington, D.C., and enjoy outdoor activities in the Blue Ridge Mountains. She now studies Economics at BYU, and minors in International Development and Environmental Science. Susan now works at the Ballard Center for Social Impact as a career development specialist. She has discovered a passion for social impact careers and loves to spend time helping students find knowledge and skills that allow them to pursue their passions.
Executive Summary

The Greening Youth Foundation’s (GYF) mission is to engage under-represented youth and young adults, while connecting them to the outdoors and careers in conservation. GYF’s cultural based environmental education program engages children from local communities and exposes them to healthy lifestyle choices in order to create an overall healthy community. GYF believes that youth and young adults from diverse backgrounds can greatly benefit from the career opportunities presented within the state and federal land management sectors. Accordingly, GYF continues to develop and strengthen partnerships with land management agencies to provide service and internship opportunities for youth and young adults thereby creating pathways to conservation careers.

GYF offers a variety of internship programs for students to gain experience in conservation; however, most interns do not continue working in conservation after their internship. GYF is seeking to understand why participants in their programs typically leave the field. To address this, GYF collaborated with a team of students at BYU in order to distribute a survey asking previous interns to share their experiences about their GYF internship and their current experience in conservation, or lack thereof. This survey is intended to help evaluate the shortcomings, if any, Greening Youth might have in their operations, and to provide insights and recommendations that can be presented to their federal partners. The findings in this report are beneficial for GYF and similar foundations, their interns, partners and alumni alike.

The survey was distributed to 600 former interns. It was advertised on social media and includes results from non-GYF conservation interns as well. It consisted of questions about their experience as interns and how this could have been improved, their reasons for their choices in a current career, and how their experience in their current careers was influenced by race and underrepresentation. The survey was open for three weeks and received 159 responses. During this time a randomly selected group of 5 alumni were personally contacted to answer the questions from the survey directly.

The results of the survey were analyzed over a period of four weeks and can be viewed below. They provide substantial insight for GYF and their internship program, while personal interviews show details about the personal struggles alumni have faced in their careers. Our findings indicate that although underrepresentation in conservation is a consideration for students and interns, they face more technical challenges to finding employment.

In addition to these findings, three recommendations to address these concerns are proposed. Each recommendation can be implemented individually or in tandem; each is designed to overcome the obstacles indicated by survey respondents to make GYF more effective in helping them find careers in conservation. We also acknowledge that there is work to be done on the federal side as well, although we do not offer recommendations for them in this report.
Background and Objectives

As stated, Greening Youth Foundation’s mission is to engage underrepresented youth with the outdoors. People from racially diverse backgrounds are underrepresented in the conservation and environmental sector, and typically have fewer existing channels with which to pursue these types of careers. To address this issue, GYF operates numerous internship programs for underrepresented youth to gain experience in conservation with a number of partner organizations. While this is effective in introducing interns to the field of conservation, students struggle to gain full-time jobs after their internships. 11% of GYF interns find full-time employment in conservation after their internships. GYF is seeking to grow this number of interns directly hired after their internship.

The objective of this project was to develop an understanding of how race affects youth seeking jobs in the conservation sector. GYF partnered with our team at Brigham Young University to better understand how to assist GYF youth in the conservation sector. Specifically, GYF wanted to explore more in-depth how diversity or a lack of diversity impacts the full-time job search for GYF interns and alumni as well as other diverse conservation interns looking for full-time employment. Additionally, our goal was to propose practical solutions to assist these youth in finding more success in attaining conservation careers.

Our team divided this assignment into two primary objectives:

1) Design and administer a survey to current and former GYF interns to collect data on their experiences with race, conservation, and job-seeking.
2) Produce a report of our findings from our survey and any additional research, including analyses and recommendations.

Data on the experiences with race in the conservation field were collected from both alumni and current interns of the GYF internship program and those outside of GYF (about 10% of respondents) looking for jobs. These data help explain why only a small fraction of GYF interns find full-time employment in conservation, and how to help interns find more success in the transition from internships to careers.

Definition of Keywords

**Conservation:** The private and public jobs that protect the natural environment. They include managing landscapes, habitats, species and access to natural areas.

**Diversity:** In the context of this report, diversity refers to racial diversity and those that are racial minorities. Some instances of diversity are self-reported, so personal definitions may vary.

**Inclusion:** Acceptance of diverse races and members of other racial groups. All instances of inclusion are self-reported, so personal definitions may vary.
Methodology

Our team, together with Greening Youth Foundation (GYF), determined that our goal in our research was to determine why so few GYF interns gain full-time employment in conservation after completing their internships. We hypothesized that issues with diversity, inclusion, and/or discrimination are what compel GYF interns to leave the conservation sector and find employment in other industries. We collected quantitative data through surveying current and former interns and gathered qualitative data through in-depth interviews with former interns. Our priority during data collection was focusing on documenting the personal experiences of interns in order to validate our hypothesis, or to determine other factors that affect employment in conservation.

Quantitative Method: Survey

Our primary method of data collection was a survey distributed to current and former GYF interns. To begin our approach, we determined the number of responses from GYF interns needed to produce statistically significant results. Our team consulted with Dr. William Christensen of Brigham Young University and found that out of a population of 600 current and former interns, our survey required 235 respondents to achieve a 5% margin of error with a 95% confidence interval. In simpler words, with a total population of 600 interns, we only need to communicate with 235 of them.

The survey consisted of thirty-seven questions, including multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-response questions (see the appendix for a complete list of survey questions). The survey was also pathed so that each respondent answered different questions depending on what their current status is (i.e. alumni working in conservation or current interns). Using Qualtrics, a survey-development software, 600 current, and former GYF interns were emailed and invited to take the survey. The survey was made available for four weeks, from February 26, 2020, to March 19, 2020; when it was closed, it had received 159 responses. Even though our number of responses was below the number we wanted, our survey is valid because we randomly selected people from the population of interns and we got more than thirty responses.

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To ensure respondents would be as truthful and open as possible, all responses were kept anonymous and confidential. Responses were grouped together, with no identifying information attached. Only GYF staff and designated researchers (including our team and several support staff) received access to the survey responses. Any trends or conclusions drawn from the survey results are available to GYF staff and designated researchers only.
Qualitative Methods: Interviews

In order to gain a better insight into the possibilities for improvement of the interns’ experience, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 3-4 GYF Alumni. GYF Alumni were contacted through email to set up a 5-10 minute phone interview. Participants’ responses were recorded.

Gaps and Limitations in Our Findings

We recognize that responses did not all follow the same trend, and there were gaps in our findings. One limitation in our conclusions is that there were marked differences between phone interviews and survey responses. Most interns who received phone interviews indicated that race was a significant barrier to entry in conservation. However, the survey did not show trends towards racial prejudice as a significant issue, which is contrary to our hypothesis. Another limitation in our results is the number of survey respondents. The number of responses were not high enough to achieve our desired level of confidence. This limited response could mean we are lacking sufficient data, but we also acknowledge that the existing trends are fairly strong. Along with this, not every respondent answered all the same questions so it shrinks the amount of respondents considerably. That being said, we have full confidence that the information we’ve found and conclusions we have drawn are still applicable to the conservation sector and GYF.
Analysis and Results

Not all questions were available to every respondent. Sets of questions were provided to respondents based on their professional status: current GYF interns, former interns, and respondents not affiliated with GYF each answered different questions centered around their status. Additionally, questions were optional to respect the respondents wishes to withhold information. Because of these aspects of the survey, not all questions were answered by all respondents. Data derived from questions with limited responses will be indicated as such.

Summary Results

Professional Status

- GYF alumni, not currently working in conservation
- GYF alumni, currently working in conservation
- Current GYF intern
- Working/worked in conservation, not affiliated with GYF

Race/Ethnicity

- African American
- Latino or Hispanic
- Caucasian
- Asian
- Two or more
- Native American
- Prefer not to say
- Other/Unknown
**Gender**
- Female
- Male
- Non-binary/Third gender
- Prefer to self describe

**Age**
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64

**Education**
- Current college student
- Graduated from college less than two years
- Graduated from college more than two years

**Key Insights:**
The average survey respondent is an African American, female, GYF alumni, graduated from college 2+ years, and not currently working in conservation.
Diversity and Inclusion

Results show that overall, students have had positive experiences being a racial minority in their internship sites. However, we also received results indicating that there is still an issue with the treatment of minorities. One intern reported that it is “difficult to be spoken to about systems of oppression by individuals unaware of their own privileges and showing indifference toward the complete lack of diverse representation in these positions of power” in the conservation field. Other interns suggested that struggles with racism came from people of the surrounding rural towns near the site in which they lived during the internship. An alumni of GYF expressed their concern with microaggressions in the conservation field even after their internship. This intern had the police called on them multiple times for surveying a park site. They were confronted and asked to prove where they had gotten their uniform and that they were actually a park ranger.

Racism and discrimination are still issues facing interns in conservation, and these should be addressed; however, there is no trend in these data signifying that interns are leaving the field because of it. On internship sites, issues with diversity and inclusion appear to be isolated incidents. On a scale of one to five, with five being the most diverse and one being the least diverse, interns report the diversity of their sites as 2.77 on average; in lay terms, this is medium diversity. Despite a lack of particular diversity on most sites, interns overwhelmingly describe their sites as very inclusive. On a scale of one to ten, with ten being the most inclusive and one being the least inclusive, internship sites are reported as a 7.92 on average, or, in other words, highly inclusive.
Isolation and Loneliness

Loneliness was most frequently reported as the most challenging aspect of the internship for students. Many students indicated a need to have more connection at their sites with GYF, other interns, and staff on site. They often felt distant from others participants and expressed a desire for a “better connection with GYF interns or (to have) at least one fellow intern on site.” Multiple respondents reported that these connections were happening in their area. One intern said, “meeting other interns through a conference and working with others in internships in my region helped me learn I wasn’t the only one,” but this experience is less common. Most interns felt that there needed to be more communication between other interns, their site, and GYF.

Responses to “What do you feel has been the greatest challenge you have faced in your internship program?"

Key Insights:

- Of 43 responses, the most common single issue selected was loneliness and/or isolation
- Of respondents that answered other, responses included "communication between [GYF] and myself," "support from GYF," and "being away from family"
- Interns have additional issues surrounding loneliness, such as feeling supported by and connected to those outside of their internship site
Lack of Support at Site

Responses to "What do you feel has been the greatest challenge you have faced in your internship program?"

Lack of support from coworkers and supervisors was the second most frequent issue reported. Answers under other included additional issues with internships. Several respondents spoke about their experiences as an intern and lack of opportunities to practice and learn new skills and to do a variety of tasks on site, another area for improvement for interns. One intern reported that they didn’t have "enough opportunities to practice what [they] learned," another responded that they had a "lack of support."

Respondents also reported how supported they felt in their internships. While the majority felt supported by GYF during their internships, most respondents did not feel supported by supervisors at their sites. From 48 responses, on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the most support, respondents rated the support from GYF an average of 8.32. However, when asked to rank the support of supervisors on a scale of one to five, responses gave an average of 1.63, from 93 responses (to compare these on the same scale, interns have an 83% satisfaction with GYF, but a 32% satisfaction with their site supervisors). Respondents expressed the desire to receive more knowledge from GYF and their site supervisors. They felt that they needed more guidance on the job, more career advice after their internship, preparation for conditions on site, and help making contacts. Interns report that they are not receiving the attention that they need to feel successful in multiple areas, however, this is more common with site staff than with GYF.

Support From GYF (left) vs. Support From Supervisors

Five is most support, one is least support.

Data were converted to a five point scale from a ten point scale.
Lack of Opportunity

Responses to "What about the conservation sector keeps you from entering the field?"
Selected responses, edited for clarity. Fifteen out of forty responses specify lack of job opportunities.

- Positions in my geographic area
- Hard to get a job and research funding
- Haven't found an opportunity
- No position related to my major
- Can't get an interview
- Keep applying but not getting selected
- Job opportunities
- Difficult to get in to door with secure positions
- Hard to find a job without a year of experience
- Lack of opportunities
- Amount of jobs available
- Trying to find a job has been a struggle
- Tried but was unable to enter
- Applications were ignored

Responses to "Why have you chosen to leave the conservation field?"
Selected responses, edited for clarity. Ten out of twenty-eight responses specify lack of job opportunities.

- Could not find a job
- No jobs
- Need for a job
- Couldn't land job
- Employment opportunities and stability
- Didn't get hired
- Couldn't find a job
- Haven't been able to find a job
- Lack of jobs
- No opportunities in conservation

GYF has been successful in helping racial minorities find excitement and be engaged in the conservation field by placing hundreds of participants in conservation internships. Former interns maintain this excitement, and have not deliberately chosen to leave the field. The majority of respondents who had already completed their internship reported that no particular issue “prompted” them to leave the sector. Former interns have attempted to remain in the conservation sector, but fail to find suitable employment due to lack of opportunity in the field. Interns are excited about their work, but find they are unable to continue in the field because of a lack of jobs or inability to land jobs. Many students report feeling unprepared to find jobs after leaving their internships, and lack the skills needed to find a job in the competitive field of conservation.
Recommendations

These survey results raise several issues that can be addressed to help underrepresented youth find careers in conservation. With this knowledge, we have developed recommendations that, with additional research and testing, may help alleviate these issues. Recommendations are detailed below.

Mentorship Program

Many GYF alumni felt lonely and isolated during their internship and that GYF had insufficient contact with them, which left them confused about their progress. Under an alumni-intern mentorship program, GYF Alumni will volunteer to mentor current interns and help them be equipped and prepared to not only land a job in conservation, but also to handle any adversity or challenges throughout their internship. Alumni mentors can contribute by contacting students and offering guidance and advice during their internships; leading workshops (online or in-person); practicing job-search skills; and providing professional connections for interns. The mentorship program will connect those with expertise in the field and that are passionate about helping future generations with current interns.

Alumni mentors will be assigned interns to connect with over the course of their internships. Mentors and interns can interact on a dedicated GYF app, or on another platform that allows messaging, video calls, and progress updates. Benchmarks to learn skills in managing the internship experience and job search will be put in place for interns, and their mentors will ensure that they are making progress and meeting goals. Benchmarks can include informational and formal interviews, updating resumes, or completing online learning in professional development.

Needed for this project:
- Trial group of mentors and interns to test program design
- A training program with expectations for mentors and interns
- GYF staff and/or system to monitor mentors and create necessary materials
- Online platform that allows live conferencing (Zoom, Skype, etc)
- Online messaging system or app that centralizes communication between mentors and interns
Job Fair

A major issue interns identify is a lack of job opportunities in conservation. Hosting a job fair will put interns and employers in one place and make existing opportunities more readily available. The purpose of a conservation job fair will be to increase connections between the interns and potential employers. These can include other organizations like GYF, federal and other government agencies, and private organizations.

GYF can vet organizations that attend and compile information that will help students identify employers that match their skills and interests, and learn from the attendees. Additionally, GYF can prepare interns by helping them build and refine their resumes, providing tips and tricks for making new connections and setting up interviews, and offering support from staff during the event.

A conservation job fair will only be successful if quality organizations with available jobs are able to attend. An event of this scale is difficult to execute because of the number of outside organizations that are involved, in addition to logistics and planning, and it may be most effective for GYF to host different fairs throughout the year to allow different organizations to attend. Because of the work required to host a job fair, it requires a significant amount of work from staff, whether existing staff or a new member dedicated to these events.

Needed for this project:
- Member/s of GYF staff to organize and execute job fair
- Businesses who are willing to hire
- Materials for interns to prepare interns for the job fair
Designated Staff Member

Because there are a variety of challenges facing interns, and a variety of methods to address these challenges, GYF should have a place to house their career development work. To do this, GYF can hire and/or retrain a GYF staff member to manage all career development of interns and alumni. This person will lead workshops on resumes and the job-search process, prepare students for the realities of being an underrepresented youth in conservation, offer support during the internship to the interns, and provide any information or connections that interns and alumni may need.

A staff member will also make the previous recommendations more feasible. Career development staff will be available to oversee alumni-intern mentorship and monitor participants and their progress. They can set expectations and create materials that alumni and/or interns need to learn and succeed. A staff member can also oversee career-oriented events, such as job fairs. This person can manage connections with outside organizations and make these connections more accessible to interns and alumni by hosting events that allow job-seekers and employers to interact.

GYF has had tremendous experience in aiding students in their careers in conservation process. Utilizing the expertise of an organizations that is passionate about careers in conservation and providing interns with access to this information will help them be more successful in their internships and careers.

Needed for this project:
- A training program for GYF staff member/s
- Funding for staff member/s salary
Next Steps

As a final recommendation to GYF and their federal partners, it has come to our attention that an annual survey, similar to this, should be distributed to alumni asking about the concerns they are having on site with staff, their experience as an intern and their relationship with GYF, or internship coordinator.

We suggest basing survey content off this report to get more consistent findings over time and to be able to see improvements. The main objective must be to uncover both the problems students are most burdened by and solutions that directly respond to the students’ complaints. In addition, we acknowledge the need to survey more in depth the experience interns are having with diversity and inclusion. We have just skimmed the surface in that regard and highly suggest looking further.

One of the most impactful ways to gather crucial information about GYF’s improvements is through communicating directly with their interns and alumni. While a survey will reach a larger pool of interns, interviews will more likely lead to significant insights as well as show your students you care and are involved in their concerns.
Conclusion

Greening Youth Foundation is working hard to address their concerns with underrepresented youth leaving the conservation sector. GYF applauds the 11% of overall interns finding full-time employment in conservation after their internships, and knows there is room for growth as well. The survey discussed and analyzed has given further insight to this problem.

There is a lack of opportunity for students to find jobs in the conservation field. While interns are qualified, persistent, and driven to find employment, jobs in conservation are not readily available, which makes it competitive to apply and be successful. This reaches all in the conservation field, not only GYF. Those that are not alumni of GYF also found it difficult to find jobs.

Interns don’t feel that they are receiving the preparation necessary to be successful at their site at in finding jobs after their internship. Both interviewees and survey respondents said they wished that they had been aware of what it would be like living in rural culture so far from their own. Some find themselves frustrated and surprised at how they are treated in a new environment and culture. They also feel ill prepared by their site staff to fully perform their functions as an intern, and many struggle to transition to full-time work after their internship.

It is key for both GYF and their partners to understand the needs of their interns. They feel lonely and far away from others like them, and wish for more connection with GYF and other interns. Knowing this will be helpful for sites to understand how to help their interns have a successful experience and for GYF to develop what they are doing to connect interns in their program at different sites.

Finally, it is still clear that interns have some difficulty with microaggressions and discrimination in their internships, whether it be from the local community, co-workers, clients, or supervisors. While not all interns had these issues, it is a problem that should be considered by GYF, partner agencies, and other similar organizations.

The recommendations in this report were designed to address issues surrounding careers in conservation and strengthen interns coming out of Greening Youth Foundation’s internship program. They focus on intern preparation, connection with GYF and other participants and alumni, and career progression in the field. These recommendations can be mirrored and used by other organizations with similar goals to help underrepresented youth access careers in conservation. We believe that future work in this area can improve the lives of interns and make a lasting impact in conservation.
Appendix

Resources


