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Year: Senior

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Organismal Biology Research Analysis at the University of California

As a graduating senior and aspiring graduate student, I chose to explore research diversity within organismal biology focused disciplines. As a Californian, I was particularly interested in focusing on the University of California as it is considered one of the most research-focused postsecondary educational systems in the nation. My preliminary work showcases the broad interests of faculty members in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology or Integrative Biology Departments. I gathered data from websites of all practicing research faculty who were contributing to undergraduate curriculum through their teaching. I also gathered data from each faculty members' publications that came out over the past five years. From the websites and publications I recorded information on where faculty research takes place (field, lab, or both), where field studies are conducted, if studies are within biodiversity hotspots, and whether researchers are focused on marine or terrestrial organisms/ systems. Using collected data, I then categorized faculty as either an ecologist, evolutionary biologist, or both. These preliminary data were analyzed in R. I found that UC faculty generally study in both lab and field settings, that field studies are present in every continent, that there seems to be more focused interest in studying terrestrial systems, and that the biodiversity hotspots receiving the most attention are Indo-Burma, Polynesia/ Micronesia, and the Caribbean. I hope that my study will motivate researchers to keep their websites current. I also hope these results will help to inform students researching biology graduate programs and also motivate UC faculty to pursue research efforts in other biodiversity hotspots around the globe.