

The Potential Impacts of Working in Collections as an Undergraduate

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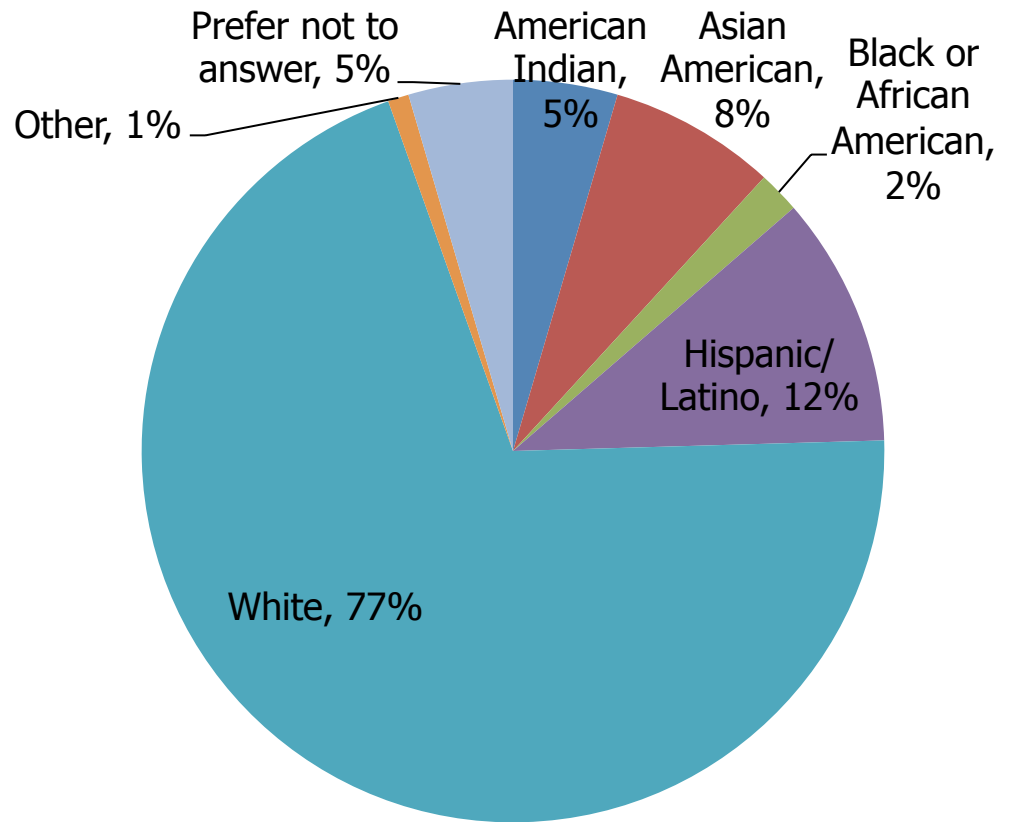
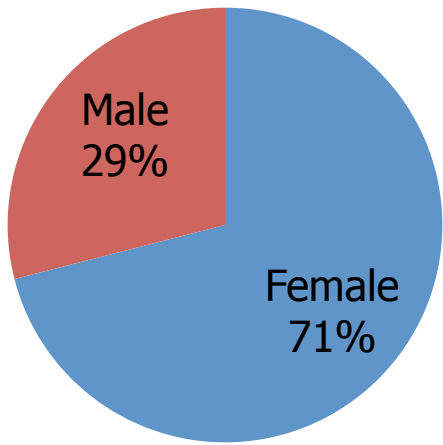
“I am in plant systematics now because I worked in the ... herbarium as an undergrad with X. She was patient, and tolerant, and calm, and honest, and sincere, and inspiring. I still don't know why she let me touch specimens, but she did. And so on and on, and r am.

Because of her, and because of the training she provided in the herbarium while I was an undergrad. A stupid, stupid unfocused and obtuse undergrad.”



Respondents

- 200 – 250
- Represented all collections, but 54% herbaria, 30% mammalogy, 23% ornithology
- 48% in the collections 2+years
- 58% paid



Percent who “agreed” with the statements While working in the collections, I...

felt like part of a community of learners or scientists.	65%
had opportunities to think creatively about the project.	59%
worked with people with different scientific perspectives.	56%
engaged in real-world science research.	58%
was willing to work extra hours because I was excited about the project.	61%
often felt like a scientist.	48%

In retrospect? All the excellent people I met and befriended. It's the best kind of networking - where one makes friends naturally, and then they go on to do awesome things and you can help each other because you're friends

The most rewarding things I experienced while working with the collection was knowing that my work was helping to preserve and organize valuable data and specimens so that they could be efficiently accessed by those who needed the information. And also the time that I spent teaching classes to elementary kids and adults. Getting someone excited about biology and the organisms in their world by sharing the knowledge you worked hard to gain is a priceless and rewarding experience.

It is hard to pin down just one aspect, but I would say the opportunity to observe first hand how the raw data and specimens are put to use on a daily basis in so many different research projects by different researchers.

Being able to meet some of the most visible people in the field and talk about their interests in not just their work but on other humanizing topics to make it seem more feasible to me that research was a career option.

Percent of Respondents who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with each statement.

Working in a collection confirmed my interest in my field of study.	67%
Working in a collection clarified for me which field of study I want to pursue.	58%
Working in a collection prepared me for advanced coursework or thesis work.	56%
Working in a collection prepared me for graduate school.	52%
Working in a collection prepared me for a job.	67%

“I began college expecting to go to medical school but now I'm thinking about becoming a researcher in the biology field. My major hasn't changed but my life goals have.”

“I was a sophomore and former physics major ready to drop out of school because I couldn't find what I wanted to do. I told my advisor that I just wanted to dig holes and work hard and she invited me to join them for a summer course in the field digging fossils to add to the collection. I was hooked so I switched my major to Earth Science and started working in the collection with reorganization and documentation and took all available geology courses.”

“I became an evolutionary biology major and am now in an ecology and evolution PhD program.”

“I wish I'd worked there earlier in my college education, I might have switched majors. By the time I started working at the collection I was already more than halfway through my engineering degree, so I stuck it out rather than commit to another year and a half of schooling to focus on pomology or the like.”