



From the Classroom to the Field: Southern University Students See Real-world Applications of Research

by Michael Gavazzi

The Eastern Forest Environmental Threat Assessment Center recently hosted students from Southern University in Baton Rouge, LA, on a field tour of research sites near Plymouth, NC. Biological scientists Michael Gavazzi and Emrys Treasure from the Eastern Threat Center's Raleigh office spent several hours with the students teaching them about different pine management operations employed at the sites and the Center's role in better understanding the impact of management and climate on carbon and water budgets and allocations. The tour included stops at recent clearcuts and thinned stands, but the highlight of the tour was seeing the eddy-flux tower, a 100-foot tall tower instrumented to help measure ecosystem carbon, water, and energy fluctuations. While the students' educations focused primarily on urban forestry, they were familiar with many of the sensors and dataloggers used at the site. Several students even had experience measuring soil respiration and sap flow through classroom experience, and asked many insightful questions about how the equipment was being employed in the research. Emrys Treasure observed that, "despite the constant buzzing of mosquitoes, the students were very engaged and seemed to enjoy learning about the real-world applications of our research."

The tour was sponsored by Dr. Enrique Reyes from East Carolina University and Dr. Zhu Ning from Southern University, and was part of a research grant Dr. Ning received to bring awareness of climate change to Southern University students and better prepare them to enter into environmental science related fields. Drs.

Reyes and Ning enjoyed the opportunity to show the students first-hand field experience and expressed an interest in returning with more students in the future. Dr. Reyes noted, "There's no doubt that the opportunity to learn hands-on about forest research will prove invaluable to their careers in forestry. Immersing students into field research, especially the work by the Eastern Threat Center, shows the potential and importance of a career in forestry sciences." In addition to the satisfaction of presenting the Center's research to a captive audience, this was also an excellent outreach opportunity as both researchers welcomed a closer collaboration with future recruitment efforts at their respective universities. Dr. Reyes has "no doubts that educational opportunities among our institutions will continue to grow."



Students from Southern University along with Forest Service employees Michael Gavazzi, Emrys Treasure, and sponsor Zhu Ning touring a research site near Plymouth, NC.