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UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center Celebrates Milestone: Welcoming the 50th AmeriCorps Member

Incline Village, NV — The UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center (TERC) is thrilled to announce a significant milestone in its collaboration with the Sierra Nevada Alliance AmeriCorps Partnership program: the arrival of its 50th AmeriCorps member. This achievement underscores the ongoing commitment of UC Davis TERC and the Sierra Nevada Alliance Program to fostering workforce development, environmental stewardship, education, and conservation in the Tahoe Basin and beyond.

The AmeriCorps program, often called the "domestic Peace Corps," was created in 1993 and is a national service initiative that provides individuals with opportunities to tackle critical community needs. Through the Sierra Nevada Alliance Program, UC Davis TERC has partnered with AmeriCorps to recruit passionate, talented young professionals from all over the country who are eager to make a tangible difference in conservation and environmental education. Together, these organizations are building a workforce development pipeline that empowers young people to embark on meaningful careers in conservation and stewardship.

"I feel that our AmeriCorps members are an engine for conservation work in the Sierra Nevada region," says Jenny Hatch, Executive Director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance. "Many organizations across the Sierra depend on our AmeriCorps members to help them conduct their fieldwork, monitoring, and restoration efforts, as well as much of the environmental education and volunteer engagement."

Sierra Nevada Alliance has placed approximately 450 AmeriCorps members in positions around the Sierra Nevada over the past 18 years. The AmeriCorps program supports Members by paying a living stipend in return for their service work, but the real value delivered to them is in the mentoring that members receive to prepare them for their careers.

"We see it as an opportunity for early-stage professionals to get some real, practical, hands-on experience," says Nicole Laubach Ferretti, AmeriCorps Partnerships Manager for the Sierra Nevada Alliance. "Many members are recent graduates with science degrees, some with psychology, communications, or non-science degrees, and this is their chance to get 11 months of service experience to develop concrete skills with both stewardship and soft professional skills that make them much more well-rounded professionally and opens the door to jobs in the conservation field."

Host sites for AmeriCorps members can be agencies like the Forest Service or Nevada Division of Forestry, tribal communities, schools, jurisdictions, utility districts, or non-profit organizations like the TERC.

“Host sites can really be any entity that is in need of capacity building to help them uplift their conservation work,” says Hatch.

However, host sites must be willing to put time and effort into mentoring AmeriCorps members for the program to work well.

“Host organizations must have a passion for mentoring early-stage professionals. They must believe in the volunteer ethic and that this is an opportunity for young people to develop into who they want to be professionally,” says Ferretti. “It is very much a mentoring program because having members come and leave each year isn't easy; it's an investment in emerging professionals. This is what makes TERC and its Education and Outreach Director, Heather Segale, who has mentored 50 members, so special.”

Segale runs UC Davis TERC's Education and Outreach program, which has hosted two to three AmeriCorps members annually since 2007.

“These AmeriCorps members bring their passion, energy, and enthusiasm each year and help us deliver field trips, special events, and exhibits,” says Segale when asked why the AmeriCorps program is essential to UC Davis TERC. “We could not offer the programs we provide without these extra team members.”

AmeriCorps members at TERC have assisted in educating approximately 68,000 people since the program began.

Segale believes in investing time in mentoring AmeriCorps members because it delivers so much value to them.

“TERC provides an excellent ‘foot in the door’ for these new college graduates looking for career opportunities,” says Segale. “They have one to two years of service where they can learn about managing a science center and organizing educational programs and volunteers. This is an invaluable experience as they work to determine their next steps along their career path.”

Segale is assisted in mentoring AmeriCorps members by Alison Toy, TERC's Education Program Manager and former AmeriCorps member who transitioned to full-time employment at TERC after completing her 11 months of service in 2012.

“Mentoring is a lot of work,” says Toy. “We have so many programs happening, and there is so much to learn; it sometimes takes AmeriCorps members months to be able to do all of the service tasks required of them, but, in the end, one of the things we feel really proud of is the number of AmeriCorps members we've mentored here who have stayed and continued their conservation work in the Tahoe Basin.”

Organizations like the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the Tahoe City Downtown Association, and the Tahoe Fund have all hired UC Davis TERC AmeriCorps alumni.

“I think that TERC has an excellent reputation for producing hard-working, intelligent AmeriCorps members who are going to be amazing employees to any organization here in the Basin,” says Toy.

Rebecca Williams, Sierra Nevada Alliance's AmeriCorps Partnership Program Director, keeps the picture beyond the Tahoe Basin in mind.

“If we look a level up and remember that our program is part of a national service organization, our members can plug into that pipeline for careers across the country, whether it is conservation, disaster relief, or dealing with food insecurity,” says Williams. “AmeriCorps members are real force multipliers for good.”

The impact of these 50 AmeriCorps members extends far beyond the numbers. Each individual has contributed uniquely to the center’s mission, leaving a legacy of environmental stewardship and education that resonates throughout the Tahoe community and the Sierra Nevada. From developing engaging educational curricula to supporting groundbreaking research, these members exemplify the power of service in action.

“I enjoy working with each AmeriCorps member individually and really enjoy the mentoring role. I am so proud of what they accomplish and very grateful for their service on behalf of our community and TERC,” says Segale.

As TERC celebrates this milestone, it reaffirms its commitment to fostering a culture of conservation and stewardship through partnerships like those with AmeriCorps and the Sierra Nevada Alliance Program. Looking ahead, the center remains dedicated to inspiring and equipping the next generation of environmental leaders.

For more information about the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, the Sierra Nevada Alliance Program, or AmeriCorps, please visit tahoe.ucdavis.edu, sierranevadaalliance.org, or americorp.gov

Media:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QqPiB4dc6Npil073CEhme91CruR9SuTf?usp=sharing>

About the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center

The UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center is dedicated to interdisciplinary research and education to advance the knowledge of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and their interactions within natural and developed Earth systems and to communicate science-informed solutions worldwide. You can also visit the UC Davis Tahoe Science Center on the north shore of Lake Tahoe to learn about the lake ecosystem, why it's changing, and how we can protect Lake Tahoe and keep it clear and blue together. Learn more at tahoe.ucdavis.edu or plan a trip to the UC Davis Tahoe Science Center in Incline Village by visiting tahoe.ucdavis.edu/tahoesciencecenter. If you would like to donate to support our research or education and outreach programs, you can do so here: <https://tahoe.ucdavis.edu/giving>

About the Sierra Nevada Alliance

Since 1993, the Sierra Nevada Alliance has protected and restored Sierra lands, water, wildlife, and communities. Our mission is to unite people and organizations to protect Sierra Nevada ecosystems and communities. Our vision is that every Sierra ecosystem and community is healthy, resilient, and collectively cared for through thriving partnerships as a legacy for future generations. If you would like to donate to support Sierra Nevada Alliance's work, you can do so here: <https://sierranevadaalliance.org/donate/>