M.S. Candidate Opportunity – Effects of Microplastics in Estuaries

TITLE: M.S. Graduate Research Assistantship (RA)
CLASSIFICATION: Full-time, M.S. Thesis Option
AGENCY: Environmental Institute of Houston (EIH)
WEBSITE: www.eih.uhcl.edu

JOB DESCRIPTION:
The University of Houston-Clear Lake places its highest priority on serving a diverse body of students in every aspect of their university experience. UHCL’s teacher-scholars and interdisciplinary staff provide high quality, student-centered undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare students to thrive in a competitive workplace and to make meaningful contributions to their communities. UHCL fosters critical thinking and lifelong learning through a strong legacy of vibrant community partnerships complementing its historical focus on teaching, research, creative activity, and service. Campus is located in a beautiful natural area adjacent to NASA and the Armand Bayou Nature Center, five minutes from Galveston Bay and Clear Lake, 30-minutes from the Gulf of Mexico, and 30-minutes from Houston’s City Center.

As part of the UHCL campus, the Environmental Institute of Houston aims to advance understanding of the environment through interdisciplinary research, education, and outreach. Currently, Dr. George Guillen (Executive Director of EIH and Professor at UHCL; https://www.uhcl.edu/science-engineering/faculty/guillen-george), and Dr. Marc Mokrech (Senior Research Scientist at EIH and GIS Lecturer at UHCL; https://www.uhcl.edu/science-engineering/faculty/mokrech-marc) are recruiting multiple M.S. candidates for work related to effect of sea-level rise on microplastic distribution, comparisons of shoreline microplastic monitoring techniques, and impacts of microplastics on Texas Diamond-backed Terrapin (Malaclemys terrapin littoralis; “terrapin”) populations along the central and upper Texas coast.

This is an excellent opportunity for recent graduates and aspiring biologists interested in pursuing a Master’s degree in Environmental Biology focused on geospatial analytics, estuarine ecology, and herpetology. Incumbents will gain valuable experience conducting field surveys in estuarine environments and analyzing data directly related to coastal habitats and species conservation. Selected student(s) will be responsible for conducting an applied thesis research project under direction of Dr. George Guillen and/or Dr. Marc Mokrech. The student(s) will be responsible for learning various field and laboratory techniques and will work closely with an interdisciplinary team of scientists and fellow graduate students.

This posting is recruiting multiple Research Assistant (RA) positions starting in the Spring 2024 session. Final award is contingent on successful application to, acceptance by, and enrollment in the UHCL Graduate Program (https://www.uhcl.edu/admissions/apply/graduate/) Environmental Science M.S. thesis-option (36-hour) (https://www.uhcl.edu/academics/degrees/environmental-science-ms). This posting is only for U.S. domestic candidates. This position will not support or sponsor international candidates.

LOCATION: Based in Houston, TX; includes travel throughout Texas.

STIPEND: $2,600/month during summer months (1.0 FTE); $1,300/month during fall and spring semesters (0.5 FTE); travel expenses during field work covered by grant funds; relocation expenses not provided; in-state tuition waivers provided as part of RA position for qualified candidates.

QUALIFICATIONS:
Applicants should possess or be graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in ecology, biology, wildlife science, environmental science or a closely related field no later than December 2023. Applicants must be willing to

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travel for field work; but are required to have lodging on or near campus for day-to-day activities. Additionally, a successful candidate will:

**Required**
- Have excellent academic credentials and recommendations from previous institution(s).
- Meet acceptance criteria for the Environmental Science Program Graduate School (M.S. thesis option) at UHCL (official application deadline for New Degree-Seeking Students is January 5, 2024; for out-of-state students: all application documents should be submitted by December 1st to ensure eligibility for in-state tuition waiver in Spring 2024 semester).
- Possess a valid driver’s license and be physically able to drive university vehicles and vessels.
- Understand that there is an academic commitment to work on their given project in a full-time capacity and ensure timely completion of their thesis project.
- Be willing to travel up to 14 days at a time and work long hours (10+) outdoors during summer months.
- Be in good physical condition (able to lift 50+ lbs.), able to traverse difficult terrain, have a positive attitude, and be able to work equally well in a team environment or independently.
- Be organized and able to accurately and efficiently collect environmental and biological field data.

**Preferred**
- Have previous experience in scientific data collection and assisting with or conducting biological monitoring assessments (including fisheries, wildlife, etc.).
- Be prepared to (or hold) an FAA remote pilot certificate.
- Have a working knowledge of aquatic wildlife collection and handling.
- Have experience in maintenance, calibration, and operation of field and lab environmental data collection equipment.
- Have experience with vessel and/or UTV operation and traveling with trailers up to 25’ ft. in length
- Be able to swim under your own power.

**Additional Notes:** Applicants must pass a criminal background and motor vehicle background check prior to hiring. This is a grant-funded position and hiring is contingent on application, acceptance, and enrollment in the UHCL Graduate Program.

**HOW TO APPLY:** Interested candidates should submit a cover letter, resume, unofficial transcript, and contact information for three references (including at least one familiar with the candidate’s undergraduate work) to Dr. George Guillen (guillen@uhcl.edu) and Dr. Marc Mokrech (mokrech@uhcl.edu) before applying to the UHCL Graduate Program. Reference letters can also be sent as part of the application packet. Interested candidates should also copy (cc:) Mandi Gordon (project manager and Senior Biologist at EIH; gordon@uhcl.edu) when submitting documents.

**START DATE:** January 16th, 2023 (contingent on enrollment, course registration, and eligibility; concurrent with first day of classes)

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE:** Friday October 6th, 2023

**CONTACT:** Dr. George Guillen, (281) 283-3949, guillen@uhcl.edu *e-mail preferred
Dr. Marc Mokrech, (281) 283-3960, mokrech@uhcl.edu *e-mail preferred
Mandi Gordon, (281) 283-3794, gordon@uhcl.edu, *e-mail preferred