

Students Learn STEM in the Navy's Classrooms

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SEAP intern Ariana Rodd and her mentor Dr. Claudia Luhrs show off their summer's research at the NPS STEM Internship Research Showcase. Photo submitted.

The impact of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, Calif., ripples far beyond the research institute's fence line.

When NPS's first class of four STEM interns arrived on campus in 2007, coordinator Alison Kerr had no idea the program would grow to graduate more than 600 students in just 12 years.

"What is unique about the program is that we are the Navy's higher education institution," said Kerr, who has coordinated the institute's STEM summer internship program since the first class of students. "In addition to being researchers, [the faculty] are also educators."

With several educational and research opportunities available, every student's experience is unique.

"My responsibilities depend on what is going on in the lab, how far along the research

study is, whether there are new projects or studies beginning that day,” said Katie Mortimore, a 2018 intern in the Science and Engineering Apprenticeship Program (SEAP). “Some days are similar, but every day is different.”

In addition to participating in SEAP and Naval Research Enterprise Internship Program (NREIP), NPS partners with California State University, Monterey Bay, community colleges and high schools, making the program available to a wide variety of students in Monterey, Salinas and surrounding cities.

“We started with a small group of students from Hartnell College in Salinas. The students are often first-generation Americans, first-generation college-goers,” Kerr said.

The impact of having an award-winning STEM program at the institute extends beyond the educational opportunity.

“This program reaches out into the community. There is a richness that comes from having the students on campus for eight weeks in the summer,” Kerr said. “The students infuse enthusiasm on campus. It’s a win-win for everyone.”
