PhD position: Biodiversity and community ecology of coastal marine ecosystems (Univ. of Virginia)

PhD opportunity: Biodiversity and community ecology of coastal marine ecosystems (University of Virginia)

The Castorani Lab at the University of Virginia is recruiting one PhD student to study the biodiversity and community ecology of shallow marine ecosystems in coastal Virginia. The student will be advised by professor Max Castorani (https://castorani.evsc.virginia.edu/), and join UVA's highly interdisciplinary Department of Environmental Sciences (http://www.evsc.virginia.edu/) and collaborative Virginia Coast Reserve Long-Term Ecological Research program (https://www.vcrlter.virginia.edu/).

The student will undertake observational and experimental field studies of benthic invertebrate and fish assemblages in temperate coastal ecosystems, as well as analyze existing long-term community data. Focal study habitats include seagrass meadows, oyster reefs, and salt marshes within the coastal lagoon–barrier island system of Virginia’s Eastern Shore. The student will have opportunities to contribute to highly collaborative long-term studies in the Virginia Coast Reserve and Santa Barbara Coastal (http://sbc.lternet.edu/) LTER programs. Although research in the Castorani Lab is primarily motivated by fundamental ecological questions, there are opportunities for applied research related to coastal habitat restoration (seagrass, kelp, oysters) and commercial aquaculture (oysters, clams) with partners at The Nature Conservancy and the National Park Service.

At the time of enrollment, highly-qualified applicants will have an undergraduate or master's degree in biology, ecology, fisheries, or a related field. Ideal candidates will have experience in field ecology, ideally having carried out experiments within marine or aquatic ecosystems; knowledge of the biology of marine organisms; strong quantitative skills; and data analysis experience using R. Ability to work well as part of a research team is a necessity.

UVA has a highly interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Environmental Sciences (http://www.evsc.virginia.edu/academics/graduate/), offering training and conducting research in ecology, geosciences, hydrology, and atmospheric sciences. Graduate students accepted into the program are typically supported through a mixture of teaching assistantships and research assistantships that provide a competitive stipend, tuition, and health insurance.

Those interested should send the following items, as a single PDF, to Dr. Max Castorani (castorani@virginia.edu): (1) a brief description of their background, career goals, motivations for pursuing a graduate degree, research ideas, and why they are specifically interested in joining the Castorani Lab; (2) a CV with academic and professional experience (including GPA); (3) contact information for 2–3 references; and (4) a writing sample.

The application deadline is January 15, 2019 for enrollment in Fall 2019, however serious applicants should express their interest as soon as possible.