

Graduate Assistantship (SPGA) job description

Title: Freshwater mussel conservation in tributary networks: a case-study in the Lower Grand River, MI, USA, Special Projects Graduate Assistantship

Terms: full-time (20 hours per week); August 25, 2025 – May 2, 2026; offered to a full-time student; stipend of \$6,500 per academic semester (Fall '25 and Winter '26) provided by a University Special Projects Graduate Assistantship (SPGA). Nine (9) credits of tuition waiver will be provided for the Fall '25 and Winter '26 as part of the SPGA. The SPGA is a one-year award. Funding in year-two via this funding mechanism is not guaranteed.

In addition, spring/summer stipend support totaling \$8,500 will be provided by Biology MS program and support from funding partner the John Ball Zoo for two summers.

Total compensation for this position includes stipend totaling \$21,500 and 18 credits of tuition waiver for year one.

Responsibilities: In addition to course-work expectations the student's workload would be approximately allocated in the following ways:

- field work (15% of time in Fall/Winter)
- data analysis (20% Fall/Winter)
- literature review (10% Fall/Winter)
- report writing (40% Fall/Winter).

Total hours worked as part of the SPGA in Fall/Winter = 20 hours per week. Although not part of the SPGA, during the Spring/Summer terms, the candidate will be completing the majority of their field research and will not be taking classes.

Detailed description of responsibilities: The successful applicant will conduct a thorough literature review of freshwater mussel ecology, biology, and management. Primary responsibilities will be to implement a survey protocol that covers the main tributary rivers of the Lower Grand River, and identify locations of target taxa for future mussel propagation. Additional responsibilities include data entry and data-base management, statistical analyses and report writing, bi-monthly (every other month) meetings with JBZ & GVSU project PI's and participation in public education and outreach activities with those entities.

Qualifications: A Bachelor of Science degree (or commensurate), relevant experience including some experience with freshwater mussel taxonomy, willingness to obtain SCUBA certification (if not already certified), and a basic understanding of stream ecology, and aquatic ecosystem management. A valid driver's license is required. Skills preferred, but not required include knowledge of small boat operation and maintenance, boat trailering, and certification in SCUBA, CPR and First Aid. Student must be fully admitted to the GVSU Biology graduate degree program and in good academic standing, i.e. must have, and maintain throughout length of GA contract, a 3.0 or higher GPA.

Work Station: The Biology MS program maintains two graduate student offices with multiple study carrels, access to computers and printers, and access to relevant equipment and supplies maintained by the Biology MS program.

Orientation: Incoming students are required to attend both a GVSU Graduate School

and Biology MS orientation sessions. Both stress laboratory and field safety, DEIA and Title IX obligations and expectations, covering frequently-asked-questions, and going through the Biology MS Student Handbook. This occurs at the beginning of the Fall 2025 semester.

New GA Orientation is Friday, August 22, 2025, 3:00-4:00pm in Loosemore Auditorium on the downtown Pew campus.

Supervision and Evaluation: Students are regularly evaluated by their major advisor (e.g., weekly or bi-weekly meetings).

Selection Process:

All GA positions must be posted in Workday. Students will apply via Workday

- i. Advertising: This special-projects GA would be advertised in a number of locations, including relevant professional societies.
- ii. Information requested: Includes transcripts, three letters of recommendation, and a statement of interest. The GRE is optional. Before students are admitted to the BIO MS program, they must have identified a faculty mentor with whom they are willing to work.
- iii. Screening/interviewing: This process is carried out by the Biology Graduate Program Committee and involves a careful review of applicant materials, initial ranking based on experience, GPA, three letters of recommendation, and statement of interest, and finally a phone and/or face-to-face interview.
- iv. Eligibility: To be eligible, the applicant must be fully admitted to the BIO MS program.

Contact Information of supervisor:

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