

FYRES Research Mentors 2013-2014

In fall 2013, the four Research Mentors included one geography major, a geography/sociology double-major, a writing/environmental studies double-major, and a biology major.

Katie Burkley



Katie Burkley is currently a senior at Calvin College, majoring in Geography with a minor in Urban Studies. She has done research within the GEO department in her GIS classes, where she collected data to map the decline of beak grass, a native plant that has been placed on the threatened species list. She is excited to be a part of FYRES and learn more about the dune systems in Michigan. After school she will pursue a backyard apiary as

well as graduate school.

Chengbi Liu

Chengbi Liu is currently a senior at Calvin College majoring in Sociology as well as Geography, which was declared near the end of his sophomore year. Over the past summer, Chengbi worked alongside Professor Jason VanHorn in the GEO Department to build a GIS web application of the Plaster Creek Watershed. Chengbi is excited to be a FYRES mentor, as well as working with students to learn more about the dunes through research. In the future,



he wants to study how the physical world and human societies can be integrated via the powerful help of GIS. Chengbi is currently applying to graduate schools and is hoping to go further in geography after he graduates from Calvin.

Natasha Strydhorst



Natasha Strydhorst is a Writing & Environmental Studies major from Calgary, Alberta (Canada). Her most memorable research project was from her Geography 181 class, in which she studied the location and health of a threatened Pitcher's Thistle population in relation to unmanaged trails. The love of the outdoors in general—mountains in particular—is what first drew Natasha to love the environment and Environmental Studies. This

will be her first year as a research mentor for Geography 181. Natasha is looking forward to conducting further research in the amazing environment that is the Lake Michigan coastal dunes.

Jake Swineford

Jake Swineford is from Naperville, Illinois and he is a sophomore this year. He is majoring in Biology with a minor in Business. Being a FYRES mentor is his first experience working for the GEO Department, yet he completed a research project last year as a FYRES student where he studied the effects of strong autumn storms on a foredune. Overall, Jake has great interest in physical geography, as well as the entirety that makes up the natural world. He hopes that he will grow in his field research techniques during his mentoring experience, where he also wishes contribute his knowledge to the greater scientific community. After undergraduate work, he plans to attend veterinary school to study large-animal medicine.

