

This proposed NSF REU Site will enhance undergraduate experience in scientific methods and analyses in a long-term research project at the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Ifugao, Philippines. Students in this proposed REU program will be actively involved in investigating highland economic and political responses to the arrival of the Spanish in the northern Philippines. Although the Spanish failed to colonize the northern Philippine highlands, preliminary analysis of the archaeological record from Ifugao suggests drastic landscape and social transformations ensued after c. AD 1600. To determine the impacts of Spanish colonialism in highland Philippines, this research program will conduct subsurface excavations, spatial modeling, and analyses of faunal and paleobotanical samples, artifacts, and human osteological remains. As a proposed REU Site, the project will recruit junior- and senior-level undergraduates from a wide-range of backgrounds, home institutions, ages, gender, and ethnicity, with emphasis on underrepresented and female students. We will strive to focus our recruitment on minority-serving institutions, including community colleges, by utilizing the institutional connections of the UCLA Academic Advancement Program-Center for Community College Partnerships.

Intellectual Merit:

The research program investigates the political and economic impacts of Spanish colonialism in highland Philippines, particularly, in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Ifugao, Philippines, where the most extensive rice terraces in the world are located. Previous models suggest that the rice terraces are at least 2,000 years old. Recent archaeological information, however, indicates that the agricultural marvels were constructed after the arrival of the Spanish in the northern Philippines at c. AD 1600. In addition, rapid social and environmental change occurred in the region shortly after AD 1600. This research provides another perspective to our understanding of Spanish colonialism, which has largely focused on the Americas.

Students participating in the project will be actively involved in the research design, data collection, and laboratory analysis of archaeologically retrieved materials. Students receive intensive training in archaeological field methods, faunal and botanical analyses, human osteology, and, artifact identification and cataloguing. Through the collaboration between UCLA (lead institution), U Washington, U Wisconsin-Madison, U Philippines, the National Museum of the Philippines, and the Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement, Inc., students in this REU program will receive intensive mentorship during and after the program.

Broader Impacts:

The Ifugao rice terraces are rapidly deteriorating and the Ifugao people are losing both their tangible and intangible heritage to changes brought about by economic and political transformations. The rice terraces are examples of landscapes and the assimilation of Ifugao social organization to that of the state together with the low status given to farmers and the rapid disappearance of traditional knowledge could further spell degradation of the terraces. One of the overarching goals of this study is to contribute to heritage conservation programs in Ifugao, in both tangible and intangible heritage. As such, this proposed REU Site engages the community by promoting direct and active participation of descendant communities. The project also helps with the establishment of a community museum and on-site museum to complement the development of indigenous culture and history curriculum. This program also aims to encourage undergraduate students to pursue STEM-related and anthropology graduate studies.