

REACH IGERT: Frequently-Asked Questions

1. What's an IGERT?

IGERT stands for **I**ntegrative **G**raduate **E**ducation and **R**esearch **T**raineeship. IGERT is funded by the US National Science Foundation at over 100 universities across the US.

2. What is REACH?

That's the acronym for a new IGERT at UC Davis -- **R**esponding to **R**apid Environmental **C**hange: from genes to ecosystems, science to society. This IGERT is an extension of the Biological Invasions IGERT, which was funded from 2001-2008. In the REACH IGERT, we will develop a multidisciplinary understanding of the biological and social mechanisms needed to respond to rapid environmental change. For more information, see <http://reach.ucdavis.edu>

3. What's a "traineeship"?

A training program consists of a curriculum funded by a grant from an agency such as the National Science Foundation or National Institutes of Health. The curriculum is established to fulfill a particular strategic goal of the agency. Students participating in the program are "trainees" and faculty are "trainers".

4. What's involved in the REACH training program?

Two quarters of a course designed to introduce students to the disciplines involved in response to rapid environmental change; a quarter-long internship; participation in a day-long workshop on working with the media; participation in a quarter-long seminar on responsible conduct of research; and completion in your second year of a collaborative, student-driven, interdisciplinary project on some aspect of response to rapid environmental change.

5. How does REACH benefit trainees?

First, there's the stipend – two years at \$30,000 per year – plus fee waiver. Second, the training program is superb. One trainee commented, "There is background, there is theory, there is application. Discussions with real-world people who've been out there and hands-on projects have given us confidence to know that we can be effective. And it makes us better scientists." Third, the interdisciplinary project provides a capstone that will enrich your graduate school experience in innumerable ways. Last but not least, our IGERT trainees typically have formed a closely-knit cohort while simultaneously being part of the larger national (and increasingly well-known) IGERT community.

6. What is required to apply to REACH?

You must...

- a. apply to a doctoral program (NSF requirement) at UC Davis as an incoming student
- b. be a US citizen or permanent resident (another NSF requirement)
- c. have an advisor willing to endorse your full participation in REACH;
- d. complete the application at <http://reach.ucdavis.edu/admissions/admissions.html> and send it to our academic coordinator, Carole Hom, at clhom@ucdavis.edu.

7. Does REACH grant degrees?

No, it's an "add-on" to your regular degree program.

8. Do I apply to a grad program first, or REACH first, or what?

Neither: you apply simultaneously. We will coordinate REACH admissions with decisions made by your graduate program. You can be accepted to a grad program and REACH, or your grad program but not REACH.

9. Why only incoming students?

We've found that it's not in the best interests of the student to participate in our IGERT as an advanced student: the second-year project, which for advanced students would occur in year 3 (or later), conflicts with the student's dissertation research.

10. What do you mean by "have an advisor willing to endorse your full participation in REACH"?

REACH takes time. It's probably no more time than a TAship but still... In particular, we want to ensure that advisors recognize that the second year project will take students out of their lab at a time when many second-year students are devoting every waking hour to developing a dissertation project.

11. My graduate program doesn't assign advisors until the second year. What do I do?

In some fields, it's essential to identify an advisor at the time of application. In others, advisors aren't designated until later...but even in these situations, most faculty still are willing to discuss being your prospective advisor. So, contact faculty with whom you'd like to study **before you apply for graduate admission** and discuss with him/her whether you'd be a good fit for their research group and for REACH.

12. What about the second-year project? That's part of my dissertation project, right?

Not exactly. The second-year project, the capstone of the REACH, is a collaborative interdisciplinary project that is developed by the trainees working as a cohort.

13. Ummm...so someone's advisor gets to pick the topic?

No one's advisor does: this is something that the **trainees** develop out of their shared interests, with guidance from a REACH trainer who agrees to mentor the cohort for the project. The project has to deal with some aspect of response to environmental change, and it has to be interdisciplinary. For examples of projects from the BioInv IGERT, see <http://reach.ucdavis.edu/programs/project.html>

14. Do IGERT trainees typically take more time to graduate?

In our experience, no: our trainees have finished their PhDs in normative time. The internship and second-year project give them additional breadth and perspective, and they don't have to TA while funded by the training grant.

15. What do IGERT alumni do?

All our alumni to date are working in positions of their choice: they are postdocs at academic institutions or permanent staff at agencies or non-profit organizations.

Got other questions not addressed here? Send an e-mail to our academic coordinator, Carole Hom, at clhom@ucdavis.edu.