

SPIN & GEOPATHs

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This summer SSRF partnered with the University of California, Santa Cruz, to bring in research interns as a part of the National Science Foundation-funded GEOPATHs program. GEOPATHs is part of the *Improving Undergraduate STEM Education* (IUSE) initiative and stands for *Pathways into the Geosciences - Earth, Ocean, Polar and Atmospheric Sciences*. The goal of the program's internship component is to provide geoscience graduate and undergraduate students with real world work experience and an opportunity to build skills through service learning. Our partnership allowed students to use their research skills and science backgrounds to help mitigate local toxic plastic waste accumulation through our SPIN (Sustainable Procurement Integration Network) project. Students were also able to gain new skills in business communication, independent research, and personal accountability.

SPIN, also known as *Waste Not, Want Not*, was created in response to local waste management issues regarding food-service waste. It is our goal to simplify refuse systems and stymie the waste-stream in the greater Monterey Bay area, in accordance with state and local policies, by providing food service-based businesses with the information and tools necessary to convert to using only non-toxic compostable or recyclable materials. We are also working with municipal waste recovery teams and governing bodies to ensure that properly sorted refuse is appropriately managed, as we have found through the course of the project that many areas still do not offer composting, though legally required to do so. Our GEOPATHs Interns were integral in laying the foundation for this project by creating working databases of materials, manufacturers, and food-service businesses and policies in our project's domain. For the next phase of SPIN, we are looking for enviro-chemist students and research faculty to partner on a materials study to determine the toxicity of "eco"-marketed plastics. If interested, please give us a call at 831.708.5836.