

For Immediate Release
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Ferris student receives research grant from Pierce Cedar Creek Institute

BIG RAPIDS – Bret Muter, a senior Environmental Biology major at Ferris State University, has received a grant from Pierce Cedar Creek Institute to conduct a summer research project at the biological field station south of Hastings.

Pierce Cedar Creek Institute recently awarded 12 such grants through the Undergraduate Research Grants for the Environment (URGE) program. The field station is made up of a consortium of 11 Michigan colleges and universities, including Albion College, Alma College, Aquinas College, Calvin College, Central Michigan University, Cornerstone University, Ferris, Grand Valley State University, Hope College, Olivet College and Western Michigan University. An advisory board comprised of two representatives from each school oversees the consortium.

The URGE program provides a \$3,000 stipend for students conducting summer research at the Institute, along with up to a \$3,000 facility mentor stipend that can be used for equipment purchases, general expenses, travel or training needed for conducting the research project. Additionally, each grant award allows for up to \$4,000 in room and board expenses for the student and faculty mentor. Students will begin arriving at the Institute in early May and will stay through August.

Muter plans to study the effects of walking trails on the community of macroinvertebrates (insects) in grasslands and forest habitats. Although a walk trail is certainly less destructive than a road, it may have an impact on some of the smaller members of the biological community. To small invertebrates, even a narrow trail could fragment their habitat.

The Saginaw resident will split his time between the Institute, collecting samples, and Ferris, where he will process the samples. Muter, who is eager to take part in the URGE program, believes undergraduate research gives him a unique introduction to professional biological research, which will be an asset when participating in graduate research projects.

He was recommended to the URGE program by his Ferris professors, Karen Strasser and Phil Watson. Recently selected as Ferris' 2005 Truman Scholarship nominee, Muter has a minor in English/professional writing and serves as president of the Outdoor Club.

Pierce Cedar Creek Institute is a four-year-old, non-profit organization located on 661 acres of land that features forest, wetlands, upland forest and fields, a lake and a stream. The previous owner of the majority of the property, naturalist Dr. H. Lewis Batts, protected the land from development or degradation, and most of it has remained untouched for the past 50 years. The Institute is funded through a foundation created by the late Bill and Jessie Pierce in 1988.