

Eco-Digital Storytellers

ENGAGING YOUTH IN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION THROUGH MENTORING, GEOSPATIAL TECHNOLOGY, & DIGITAL MEDIA STORYTELLING

Need – Employment opportunities in E-STEAM (environment - science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) fields are growing rapidly. Nevertheless, opportunities for experiences in science, environment, and digital media fields are not equal amongst all youth groups.



Vision – Research indicates that groups that more fully represent society are more likely to develop diverse and innovative ways of thinking. Building pathways for underrepresented students to be prepared and qualified for E-STEAM professions is important for equality and critical to maintaining the national innovation base.

Research – We developed the Eco-Digital Storytellers (EDS) program (<https://nrca.uconn.edu/eds/>), an innovative, multi-layered approach to engage collaborative teams of lifelong learners (high school students and teachers, community partners, and multidisciplinary University of Connecticut faculty and undergraduate students) to develop creative environmental storytelling projects that: 1) advocate for action to address a socio-environmental challenge or opportunity in their community and 2) use interactive and multimedia storytelling to envision an environmental future and engage local decision makers. Integrated research explores the effectiveness of increasing E-STEAM identity and career interest of students from underrepresented groups. We use state-of-the-art geospatial and digital media arts technology to enable high school students to contribute to local environmental solutions and science communication.

Impact – In two years, we have trained more than 115 high school students, teachers, and undergraduate students as they collaboratively completed 15 environmental storytelling projects to communicate their science efforts to community and professional audiences. Ultimately, our innovative program is expected to increase interest and participation by underrepresented groups in E-STEAM careers.

Who we are – The EDS program is housed within the Natural Resources Conservation Academy, which provides engaging and educational hands-on environmental experiences that lead to community action. For more information, contact Laura Cisneros at laura.cisneros@uconn.edu.

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