



Gas flux sampling at University of Western Australia Future Farm with WUN Summer School participants. Photo by Alicia Hill.

Valerie Miller, a PhD student in the NSERC CREATE LRIGS program in the lab of Dr. Anne Naeth, recently attended the Worldwide Universities Network Inaugural Summer School at the University of Western Australia from January 29 – February 13, 2015. The summer school included three days at the University of Western Australia in Perth, a five day “Critical Zone Soil Science and Climate Change” workshop and retreat at the University’s Future Farm and a five day facilitated writing retreat at the University’s Albany campus. Participants included doctoral students from around the world, including individuals from Canada, the

United States, Australia, China, South Africa and England. The purpose of the event was to bring together future leaders to share global perspectives on critical zone science and climate change. Participants had a wide range of disciplines and research experiences resulting in a multi-disciplinary global focus at the event.

Activities at the summer school were wide ranging. At the Future Farm, the participants developed a research program to study the critical zone, the area and interactions between rock, soil, water, air and living organisms. Over five days, they collected data from surface soil and cores, as well as samples to analyze in the lab for various soil properties and DNA. Valerie found that the summer school was very useful in exposing her to many different field methods and she got to use the methods for an extended period of time. With the variety of disciplines, the participants were able to develop a well-rounded and cohesive research program. At the writing retreat, participants were able to attend various workshops that each provided interesting tips and techniques for approaching writing and dealing with common challenges. Valerie learned a lot about herself as a



Visual observations and chemical analysis of soil cores at University of Western Australia Future Farm. Photo by Maya Almaraz.

writer and it's an experience that will help her a lot as she writes her publications and thesis. Participants also completed daily writing group meetings where small groups of students got together and discussed challenges and asked for advice. As a result of the different disciplines and research, these writing groups provided different perspectives that helped advance writing.

The Worldwide Universities Network Inaugural Summer School was an amazing opportunity for Valerie. She had the chance to work with early career scientists from all over the world and experience different research disciplines and global perspectives. It was insightful to discuss her research with others in such a focused atmosphere. The summer school was a unique experience that will enhance her PhD program and she was very grateful for the opportunity to participate.



Valerie Miller drilling soil cores at University of Western Australia Future Farm to assess chemical and biological properties of soil for critical zone research. Photo by David Huber.