



Scholars Program Increases Student Interest in Pursuing Conservation Careers

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An overview of the Scholars for Conservation Leadership Program. Participants attended the Land Trust Alliance Rally Conference, an annual meeting of conservation professionals, and participated in related activities. Image from Spence & Leggett (2024).

Over the last several years, programs have been introduced in the conservation field with the goal of increasing diversity in the workforce. However, there is still a lack of diversity in the field with people of color making up less than 12% of total staff working

with general conservation and environmental organizations.

The Land Trust Alliance, a national nonprofit land conservation organization, and the USDA Forest Service developed a pilot initiative called the Scholars for Conservation Leadership Program (SCLP). The program was designed to expand career development opportunities to undergraduate students of color who are interested in pursuing a career in conservation. Through SCLP, students engage in career development activities and events, network with and receive mentorship from conservation practitioners, and attend a national conference. During the program, students were asked to complete pre- and post-surveys to share their experiences and perspectives.

Researchers reported results of the surveys recently in *Natural Sciences Education*. They found that the pilot SCLP achieved the goals of expanding career development opportunities to students of color and increasing their interest in pursuing a career in conservation. All surveyed scholars said they would recommend the SCLP to their peers, and the Land Trust Alliance plans to continue the program in the future.

Adapted from

Spence, P. L., & Leggett, Z. H. (2024). A pilot program to expand career opportunities in conservation for students of color. *Natural Sciences Education*, 53, e20136. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nse2.20136>

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