

## Kneifel Plays with Fire

Edited by Emily Pritchard

*Rebekah Kneifel, an Anthropology/Archaeology Graduate Student, has been interning with the U.S. Forest Service at the Missoula Fire Science Laboratory. When asked about her favorite part, Kneifel replied, "The experiments, of course! I get to burn things for credit!" But she also understands the importance of the experience, "The internship has set the stage for my future by introducing me to the right network of people and giving me experience in research science."*

### **What is your internship all about?**

"I am an archaeological lab technician working on a project called ArcBurn. I have been assigned the duty of conducting thermal experiments on archaeological (and simulated archaeological) artifacts. These experiments will show us the potential damage wildfires can cause to southwest archaeological sites."

"I work in the lab approximately 20 hours per week, which is a perfect amount of time to balance my other responsibilities. This is my second year of graduate school, which I was already planning on using for thesis-focused work. This internship gave me the opportunity to satisfy required credit toward my degree while collecting the thesis data. "

### **Why did you decide on this internship and how long will it run?**

"This internship is allowing me to get credit for collecting thesis data, which is expanding on an aspect of ArcBurn. It was great thesis motivation to make this work a mandatory part of my weekly schedule."

"I will only be getting internship credit for this position for Fall 2014, but have been doing the work here since May 2014 and will continue through December 2016. I am actually already an employee. I was hired in May 2014 to do work for them over the summer in order see how my work ethic meshed with the project and the team. After the summer, Dr. Loehman said I can continue in this position through 2016 because that is when the grant will end. Once this project is over, Dr. Loehman has a few other prospects regarding ArcBurn in other regions of the United States, for which she has expressed interest in my assistance as well."



**How did you get connected to this opportunity?**

“Dr. Douglas MacDonald, an Anthropology Department professor, recognized that my thesis interest was similar to the work of Dr. Rachel Loehman at the Fire Lab. Dr. MacDonald kindly gave me the project background and encouraged me to contact Dr. Loehman about any opportunities she had available.”

**What has been the most rewarding part of this experience?**

“I have been given quite a bit of freedom and responsibility this internship. It’s nice to be given tasks and then ask questions as they come rather than be micromanaged.”

**How has your participation in the internship impacted your life in general?**

“This experience has provided me an opportunity to streamline my thesis while getting credit and actual work experience. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to get your face and name out into the work force prior to graduating.”

**Have there been any challenges you have needed to overcome for this experience?**

“Many of my challenges relate to the freedom that I enjoy most in this internship. I feel I have gained better communication skills and more initiative, because when I get stuck, it’s my responsibility to ask questions and collaborate on the next phase of work.”



**What advice do you have for other students looking for similar experiences?**

“I would recommend entering any position with a sense of confidence. It’s ok if you don’t know how to do everything you’re tasked with, that’s why you’re doing the internship. As long as you’re comfortable asking questions, you can feel confident that you’re performing to the best of your ability.”

**Has the internship reaffirmed your career goals or changed your mind in anyway?**

“Yes. This experience has shown me that there are niches in my field of study that parallel my thesis interest. I am also fortunate that the experience has provided me the post-graduation employment opportunities.”

**In one sentence, describe your internship experience.**

“The internship has set the stage for my future by introducing me to the right network of people and giving me experience in research science.”

**Anything else?**

“If you are interested in more information of the Fire Lab, please visit [www.firelab.org](http://www.firelab.org). There are great opportunities for students in field relating to fire management, ecology, forestry, engineering, and more. For internship opportunity questions, please contact Dr. Colin Hardy at [chardy01@fs.fed.us](mailto:chardy01@fs.fed.us).”

